COURSE GUIDE

ISS 105
INTRODUCTION TO THE *ḤADĪTH*

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CONTENTS

Introduction…… iv
The Course…… iv
What You Will Learn in This Course…… iv
Course Aims…… iv
Course Objectives…… v
Working Through This Course…….. v
Course Materials…….. vi
Study Units…… vi
Further Readings…… vii
Presentation Schedule……. vii
Assessment…….vii
Facilitator-Marked Assignment (TMAs)…….. vii
Final Examination and Grading……. viii
Course Marking Structure…….. viii
How to Get the Most from This Course…….. viii
Online Facilitation…….x

Introduction

ISS105: Introduction to the Ḥadīth is a compulsory two-credit-unit course for first-year students in the Islamic Studies degree program at the National Open University of Nigeria. This course provides an in-depth discussion of the twin concepts of Ḥadīth and Sunnah, and related matters concerning the second primary source in Islam. It is also suitable for anyone seeking to acquire some knowledge of the sciences of Ḥadīth.

The Course

ISS 105: Introduction to the Ḥadīth is a foundational course that introduces students to the science of Ḥadīth, one of the primary sources of Islamic knowledge after the Qurʾān. The course provides an understanding of the origin, preservation, compilation, authentication, and classification of Ḥadīth, as well as the efforts of classical scholars to safeguard the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It also introduces students to key concepts such as *isnād, matn, al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, Ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf,* fabrication of Ḥadīth, and modern approaches to Ḥadīth criticism. Overall, the course equips learners with essential knowledge of the Ḥadīth sciences and fosters their appreciation of the role of the Sunnah in Islamic law, theology, ethics, and daily life.

What You Will Learn in This Course

As you progress through this course, you will learn:

- an in-depth discussion of the twin concepts: *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah;*
- *hadīth al-Qudsī*;
- the importance of *Ḥadīth* and Sunnah in Muslim daily life;
- history and development of *Ḥadīth* literature;
- method of verification (*al-Jarḥ wa al-Taᶜdīl*);
- classifications of *hadith;*
- six authentic collections of *hadīth*; and
- attitude of Muslim *firaq* to *hadīth*.

Course Aims

The course aims are to:

1. recognise the significance of the Prophet's traditions as a source of guidance in Islam;
2. have clarity about *Ḥadīth* as the second source of guidance in Islam;
3. discuss the measures Muslim scholars adopted to determine the authenticity and reliability of *Ḥadīth*.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims outlined above, the following objectives are set. Each study unit also includes specific objectives to guide your learning.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- state the meaning and importance of *Ḥadīth* as the second primary source of Islamic guidance after the Qurʾān;
- explain the relationship between the Qurʾān and the Sunnah in Islamic belief, law, and practice;
- identify the historical development of *Ḥadīth* studies from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) to the era of compilation;
- expatiate on the science of *Ḥadīth* criticism (*ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*) and its role in preserving the authenticity of the Sunnah;
- differentiate between *isnād* and *matn* and explain their significance in the authentications of *Ḥadīth* ;
- describe the major classifications of *Ḥadīth*, such as: *Ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), *Ḥasan* (good), *Ḍaʿīf* (weak), and *Mawḍūʿ* (fabricated);
- explain the principles of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* and how scholars evaluate narrators;
- identify major *Ḥadīth* scholars and their contributions, including Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Malik ibn Anas, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal;
- mention the causes and dangers of fabricated *Ḥadīth* and the methods scholars used to detect them;
- appreciate the methodologies employed by classical scholars in compiling and authenticating *Ḥadīth* collections;
- evaluate modern approaches to *Ḥadīth* criticism and compare them with classical methodologies;
- apply *Ḥadīth* principles to contemporary issues in Islamic law, ethics, and social life;
- develop critical and analytical skills for assessing Islamic sources and scholarly arguments;
- strengthen your understanding of the Sunnah as a guide to personal conduct and societal development; and
- appreciate the intellectual contributions of Muslim scholars to the preservation of Islamic heritage and knowledge.

Working Through This Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units carefully and the other relevant materials listed in the further reading section. Each study unit contains SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES (SAEs) and Facilitator Marked Assignments (TMAs).

At each point in the course, you must submit assignments for assessment. The course ends with a final examination. You will also find the course components, what you must do, and how to allocate your time to each study unit to complete the course successfully and on time.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

1) Course Guide
2) Study Units
3) References
4) Presentation Schedule

Study Units

The study units in this course (ISS105) are as follows:

Module 1 Foundations of *Ḥadīth* and Sunnah
Unit 1 Introduction to *Ḥadīth* and Sunnah
Unit 2 The Position of *Ḥadīth* in Islam
Unit 3 *Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*
Unit 4 Relevance of *Ḥadīth* in Daily Muslim Life
Unit 5 Attitude of Muslim Sects (*Firaq*) Towards *Ḥadīth*

Module 2 Historical Development and Compilation of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 1 Preservation of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 2 Writing and Compilation of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 3 The Six Authentic Collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*)
Unit 4 Classification of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 5 Contributions of Key *Ḥadīth* Scholars

Module 3 Methodology and Authentication of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 1 Science of *Ḥadīth* Criticism (*'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*)
Unit 2 Principles of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*
Unit 3 Conditions for Accepting a *Ḥadīth*
Unit 4 Modern Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Criticism

Further Readings

Al-Nawawī, Y. ibn S. (2007). *Al-Taqrīb wa al-taysīr li-maʿrifat sunan al-bashīr al-nadhīr*. Dār al-Minhāj.

Al-Shāfiʿī, M. ibn I. (2008). *Al-Risālah* (A. M. Shakir, Trans.). Islamic Texts Society.

Azami, M. M. (1992). *Studies in Ḥadīth methodology and literature*. Islamic Book Trust.

Brown, J. A. C. (2009). *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world*. Oneworld Publications.

Hallaq, W. B. (2009). *An introduction to Islamic law*. Cambridge University Press.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ʿU. ibn ʿA. (2002). *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-Ḥadīth*. Dār al-Fikr.

Kamali, M. H. (2003). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence* (3rd ed.). Islamic Texts Society.

Kamali, M. H. (2011). *Maḳāṣid al-sharīʿah made simple*—International Institute of Islamic Thought.

Ramadan, T. (2009). *In the footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the life of Muhammad*. Oxford University Press.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in this course material outlines the key dates for this year to complete Facilitator-marked assignments and Facilitations attendance. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should avoid falling behind in your work.

Assessment

The course assessment comprises three components. First, there are Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs); second, there are Facilitator-marked assignments (TMAs); and third, there is a written end-of-semester examination. When tackling the assignments, you are expected to approach the exercises sincerely and to apply the information, knowledge and techniques gathered during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your Facilitator by the formal deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The work you submit to your Facilitator for assessment will make up 30% of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final written examination of two hours' duration. This examination will make up the remaining 70% of your total course mark.

Facilitator-Marked Assignment (TMAs)

Assignment questions for each study unit in this course are referred to as TMAs (Facilitator Marked Assignments). You will be able to complete your assignments using the information and materials contained in your reading and study units. However, you

should demonstrate that you have read and researched beyond the minimum required. Using other references will give you a broader viewpoint and may provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it, along with a TMA (Facilitator-marked assignment) form, to your Facilitator. Ensure each assignment reaches your Facilitator on or before the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your Facilitator before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions of time will not be granted after the due date unless in exceptional circumstances. You are encouraged to submit all assignments.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for this course will last two hours and account for 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions that reflect the types of self-testing, practice exercises and Facilitator-marked assignments (Facilitator-attended-to problems) you have previously encountered in this study material.
Use the time between the last study unit and the examination to revise the entire course. You might find it useful to review your self-tests, Facilitator-marked assignments and the Facilitator's comments on them before the examination. The final examination covers material from all parts of the course.

Course Marking Structure

The following table lays out how the course is marked.

Table I: Course Marking Structure

Stages of Assessment	Percentage of Scores
Assessments	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

How to Get the Most from This Course

Course Material

In Open and Distance Learning (ODL), the study units replace the University Lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of ODL. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecturer. Just as the lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at the appropriate points. Each study unit

follows a common format.

The first item is the table of contents, followed by an introduction to the study unit's subject matter and its integration with the other study units and the course. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives tell you what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the study unit. Use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the study unit, go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the study unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be drawn from a reading section or other sources. You will be directed as needed.

Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) are included throughout the study units. Working through these SAEs will help you achieve the objectives of the study units and prepare you for the assignments and the examination.

You should complete every SAE as you come to it in the study unit. There will also be numerous examples in the study units. Work through these when you come to them, too. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your Facilitator immediately. Remember that your Facilitator's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your Facilitator for guidance. You are encouraged to take note of the following tips:

1. Read this course guide thoroughly.
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the course overview for more details. You are expected to devote at least 2 hours per week to studying this course. The number of hours for intensive study stated above is in addition to other need-driven academic activities, such as self-help, group discussion and instructional facilitation. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the study units. Important information, e.g. details of your Facilitations and the date of the first day of the semester, is available. You need to gather all this information in one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose, you should write your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The main reason students fail is falling behind in their coursework. If you encounter difficulties with your schedule, please let your Facilitator know before it is too late for them to help you. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and objectives.
4. Assemble the study materials. Information on what you need for a unit is provided in the table of contents at the beginning of each

unit. It will always be helpful to read both the study unit you are working on and one of the materials for further reading on your desk at the same time.

5. Work through the unit. The unit itself is structured to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit, you will be instructed to read sections from other sources. Use the unit to guide your reading.
6. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by completing all your assignments carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the course objectives and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments by the due date.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have met them. If you are unsure about any objective, review the study materials or consult your Facilitator.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course, and try to pace your studies so you stay on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your Facilitator for marking, do not wait until you receive it back before starting the next unit. Stick to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your Facilitator's comments, both on the Facilitator-marked assignment form and on the assignment itself. Consult your Facilitator as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the final unit, review the course and prepare for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

Online Facilitation

As you embark on your learning journey in the Introduction to the Ḥadīth, you will have access to a comprehensive suite of resources designed to enhance your understanding and engagement with the course content. These resources have been carefully selected to exemplify the educational principles you will be studying.

Online Facilitation

Throughout this course, experienced facilitators will guide your learning through regular interaction and feedback. These subject-matter experts will moderate discussions, answer questions, clarify complex concepts, and share relevant examples from practice. The facilitators will serve as both mentors and role models, demonstrating effective digital pedagogy in their teaching.

Videos

The course features a range of instructional videos that bring theoretical concepts to life.

These include recorded lectures, demonstrations of smart technologies in action, case studies, expert interviews, and analytical commentaries. The videos are strategically embedded within modules to illustrate key discussions on Ḥadīth and offer visual models of innovative pedagogical approaches.

Course Materials

Your course materials comprise carefully structured text-based content, interactive elements, and embedded activities. They apply instructional design principles to digital learning environments, featuring clear learning objectives, explanations of concepts, practical examples, reflective questions, and assessment opportunities. All materials are designed in line with smart education principles, with scaffolded learning paths that adapt to different levels of prior knowledge.

URLs

Throughout the course, you will be directed to curated external resources via URLs. These links connect you to research papers, educational tools, exemplary smart education implementations, and communities of practice. Each URL is accompanied by guidance on how to engage critically with the resource and apply insights to your own educational context.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Sessions

This course combines synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning experiences:

Synchronous sessions include scheduled webinars, collaborative workshops, and live discussions, allowing you to interact directly with facilitators and peers. These sessions offer opportunities for immediate feedback, collaborative problem-solving, and the development of a learning community.

Asynchronous elements let you engage with course content at your own pace and convenience. These include discussion forums, reflective activities, project work, and self-assessment exercises. Asynchronous learning offers flexibility while encouraging deep engagement with concepts and their practical applications. Through thoughtful integration of these resources, the course serves as a model of effective smart education pedagogy, allowing you, as a learner, to experience the approaches you will later implement in the field of Ḥadīth.

There are 8 hours of Facilitations provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times, and location of these Facilitations, together with your Facilitator's name and phone number, as soon as you are allocated to a Facilitation group.

Your Facilitator will mark and comment on your assignments. He will also keep a close watch on your progress and any difficulties you might encounter, and will help you throughout the course. You must mail your Facilitator-marked assignments to your Facilitator well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your Facilitator and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact your Facilitator by telephone, e–mail, or discussion board if you need help. You might need help in the following circumstances. Contact your Facilitator if: You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings. You have difficulty with the self–assessment exercises. You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your Facilitator's comments on an assignment, or with the grading of an assignment. You should try your best to attend the Facilitation.

This is your only chance to have a face-to-face academic meeting with your Facilitator and to ask questions about problems encountered during your study.

To get the most out of course facilitation, prepare a list of questions before attending. You will learn a lot by actively participating in discussions.

I wish you the best of luck and success in the course.

MAIN COURSE

CONTENTS

Module 1	**Foundations Of *Ḥadīth* And *Sunnah*……**	***1***
Unit 1	Introduction to *Ḥadīth* and Sunnah……..	1
Unit 2	The Position of *Ḥadīth* in Islam……...	17
Unit 3	*Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*……	*26*
Unit 4	Relevance of *Ḥadīth* in Daily Muslim Life……..	39
Unit 5	Attitude of Muslim Sects (*Firaq*) Towards *Ḥadīth*…….	*54*
Module 2	**Historical Development and Compilation Of *Ḥadīth* ……**	**70**
Unit 1	Preservation of *Ḥadīth*…….	*70*
Unit 2	Writing and Compilation of *Ḥadīth*……..	*83*
Unit 3	The Six Authentic Collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*)…….	97
Unit 4	Classification of *Ḥadīth*……..	*111*
Unit 5	Contributions of Key *Ḥadīth* Scholars……	120
Module 3	**Methodology and Authentication of *Hadīth*…….**	***144***
Unit 1	Science of *Ḥadīth* Criticism (*ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth*)…….	144
Unit 2	Principles of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* ……..	163
Unit 3	Conditions for Accepting a *Ḥadīth*……..	*180*
Unit 4	Modern Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Criticism…….	198

MODULE 1 FOUNDATIONS OF *ḤADĪTH* AND *SUNNAH*

Unit 1 Introduction to *Ḥadīth* and Sunnah
Unit 2 The Position of *Ḥadīth* in Islam
Unit 3 *Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*
Unit 4 Relevance of *Ḥadīth* in Daily Muslim Life
Unit 5 Attitude of Muslim Sects (*Firaq*) Towards *Ḥadīth*

Unit 1 Introduction to *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Learning Outcomes
1.3 Background to *Hadīth* and *Sunnah*
  1.3.1 Definition of *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*
  1.3.2 Difference between *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*.
  1.3.3 Significance of *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*.
  1.3.4 Historical Development of *Ḥadīth* Transmission and Compilation.
  1.3.5 Relevance of *Sunnah* in Contemporary Islamic Thought.
  1.3.6 Relationship between *Sunnah* and *Ḥadīth*.
1.4 Summary
1.5 References/Further Readings
1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



1.1 Introduction

You are welcome to this class, ISS105: Introduction to the Ḥadīth. It is common for every Muslim to mention Ḥadīth without understanding its technicalities. Most of the time, when we discuss a topic or issue, we request evidence for it, such as the Ḥadīth that supports the argument. Sometimes, we also mention the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in our discussions, without knowing the differences and relationship between them.

You will be introduced to what constitutes Ḥadīth and Sunnah. This includes the definitions of both Ḥadīth and Sunnah, the differences and relationship between them, their significance, the historical development of both, and their relevance to contemporary Islamic thought. It is hoped

that you will be able to identify, technically speaking, what Ḥadīth and Sunnah are. I thank you for your attention and concentration.

As you progress through this unit, you will discover that a sound understanding of Ḥadīth and Sunnah provides a strong foundation for the study of Islam. You will also appreciate how scholars have carefully preserved and explained these two concepts over the centuries. The knowledge gained in this unit will help you engage more confidently in academic discussions, interpret Islamic sources more accurately, and develop a deeper appreciation of the Prophet's teachings and their continuing relevance to Muslims' lives today.



1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the terms: *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* from the Islamic Perspective;
- differentiate between *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* in terms of meaning, scope, and usage;
- explain the significance of *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*;
- outline the historical development of *Ḥadīth* transmission and compilation in early Islamic history;
- discuss the relevance of the Sunnah to contemporary Islamic thought and daily Muslim life; and
- discuss the relationship between the *Sunnah* and *Ḥadīth*.



1.3 Background to *Hadīth* and *Sunnah*

It is a fact that one cannot identify, know or understand something until it is introduced to one. It may also be in one’s mind that one knows what Hadīth and Sunnah are, since both are frequently mentioned and presumably practised by every Muslim. Let us briefly define Hadīth and Sunnah so that we can assess whether, truly or otherwise, our knowledge of Hadīth and Sunnah is right or wrong.

Think about how we share important family stories today. If the Prophet’s (SAW) words and actions were passed down like a massive, carefully

tracked game of telephone through verified chains of people, how do you think that system changed Muslims' trust in the final written books?

1.3.1. Definition of *Hadīth* and *Sunnah*

The term "Ḥadīth" denotes the reports conveying the sayings, actions, tacit approvals, and physical or moral descriptions of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). These reports are transmitted through chains of narrators (isnād) and preserved in written collections (kutub al-Ḥadīth). The Hadīth literature is a primary source for understanding Islamic beliefs, legal rulings, ethics, and devotional practices, second only to the Qurʾān.

Classical scholars define Hadīth as everything attributed to the Prophet (SAW), whether a statement (qawl), an action (fiʿl), an approval (taqrīr), or a description (ṣifah). This definition underscores Hadīth's comprehensive role as a historical and normative record of the Prophet's life and teachings (Al-Nawawī, 2007; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002). Modern scholars likewise emphasise that Hadīth serves as both a textual source and a methodological foundation for Islamic law and theology (Azami, 1992).

On the other hand, the term "Sunnah" means a path, practice, or established way of conduct when defined linguistically. In Islamic terminology, Sunnah denotes the normative model of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), encompassing his beliefs, behaviours, ethical standards, and the practical application of divine revelation. It represents the lived interpretation of the Qurʾān and serves as an authoritative guide for Muslim individuals and communal life.

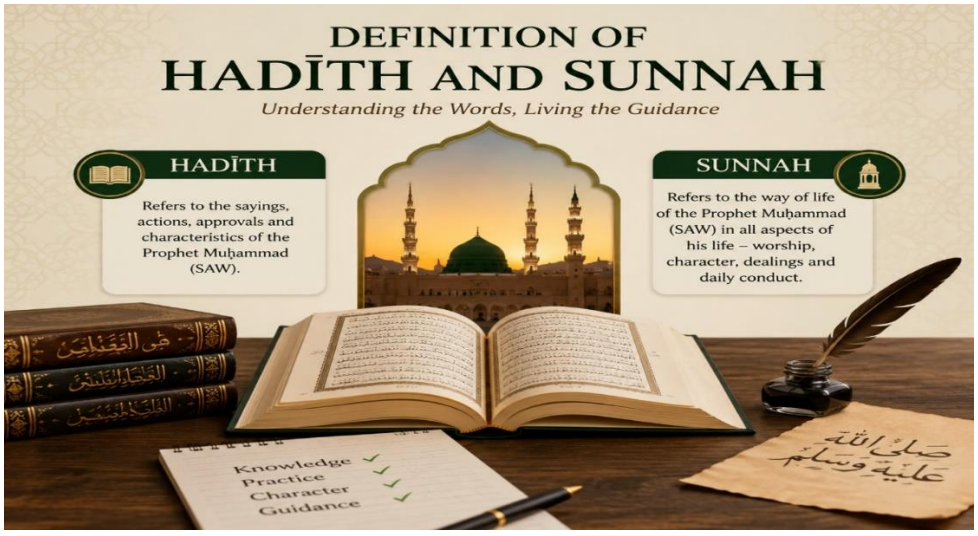


Figure 1.1 Definition of Hadith and Sunnah
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

While closely related to Hadīth, Sunnah is broader in scope. Whereas Hadīth refers to individual narrated reports, Sunnah denotes the established prophetic practice derived from the cumulative evidence of those reports. Scholars of Hadīth describe Sunnah as the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān, serving to explain, specify, and sometimes legislate rulings not explicitly detailed in the Qurʾān (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008; Kamali, 2003).

Thus, the Sunnah plays a foundational role in shaping Islamic jurisprudence, moral conduct, and religious observance, particularly in prayer, fasting, charity, and social interactions.

1.3.2 Difference between *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*

If every Ḥadīth is a vehicle carrying information, but the Sunnah is the precious cargo within it that must meet legal standards, why can we say that a person could read a weak Ḥadīth without it altering the established Sunnah?

Although the terms Ḥadīth and Sunnah are often used interchangeably in general discourse, classical Muslim scholars draw important conceptual distinctions between them, particularly in the disciplines of Ḥadīth studies (ʿulūm al-Ḥadīth) and Islamic jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh). Understanding these differences is essential for students in an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) context, as it clarifies how Islamic knowledge is transmitted, authenticated, and applied.

Ḥadīth refers to individual narrated reports attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Each Ḥadīth comprises two main components: the chain of transmission (isnād) and the text (matn). Because Ḥadīth are transmitted through human narrators, scholars subject them to rigorous scrutiny to determine their authenticity, classifying them as ṣaḥīḥ (sound), ḥasan (good), ḍaʿīf (weak), or mawḍūʿ (fabricated). Thus, Ḥadīth functions primarily as a textual and historical record that preserves prophetic reports (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002; Azami, 1992).

Sunnah, by contrast, denotes the normative and established practice of the Prophet. It is the practical embodiment of Islamic teachings, consistently observed and accepted by the early Muslim community. Unlike Ḥadīth, which may be transmitted in isolated or variant reports, Sunnah is understood as a collective and authoritative model of conduct, often confirmed by multiple narrations and continuous practice (tawātur ʿamalī). Consequently, Sunnah holds a central place in Islamic law as a binding source of legislation alongside the Qurʾān (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008; Kamali, 2003).

In summary, while Ḥadīth is the vehicle of transmission, Sunnah is the normative content derived from it. Not every individual Ḥadīth necessarily establishes Sunnah unless it meets the criteria of authenticity and acceptance. Therefore, the Sunnah may be viewed as the authenticated, applied, and enduring prophetic tradition, whereas Ḥadīth represents the documentary evidence through which that tradition is known.

Summary Table: Difference between *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*

Aspect	***Ḥadīth***	**Sunnah**
Nature	Individual reports	Established prophetic practice
Form	Textual narration (*isnād* and *matn*)	Normative model of conduct
Scope	May be authentic or weak	Authoritative and binding
Function	Source material	Legal and ethical standard
Discipline	*ʿUlūm al- Ḥadīth*	*Uṣūl al-fiqh*

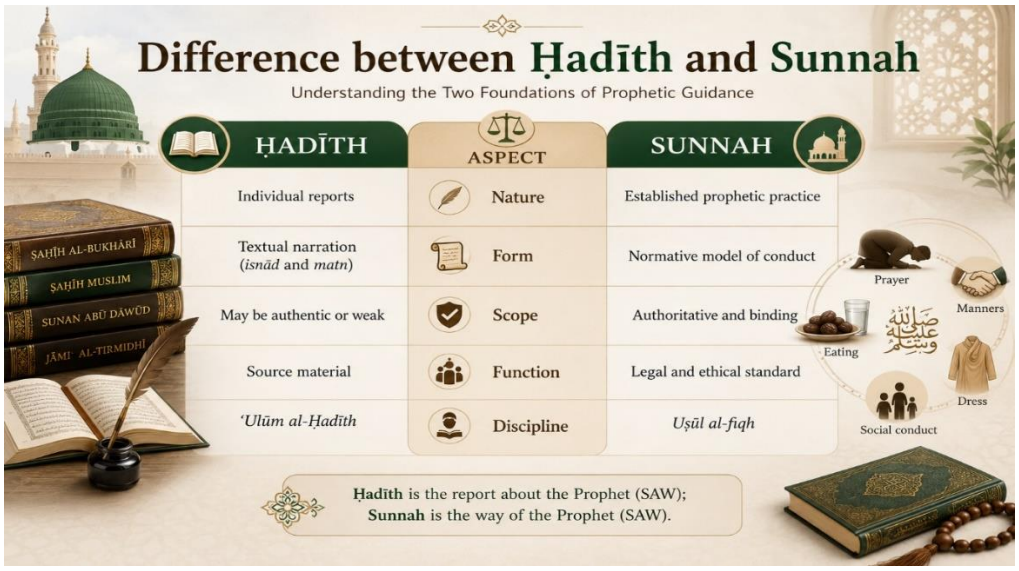


Figure 1.2 Difference Between Hadith and Sunnah
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

The Ḥadīth and Sunnah occupy a central and indispensable place in Islamic thought, law, and practice. Together, they constitute the second primary source of Islam after the Qurʾān, offering detailed guidance on belief, worship, morality, and social relations. Their significance lies not only in preserving the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings but also in ensuring the practical application of divine revelation in Muslim life.

One of the foremost significances of the Ḥadīth and Sunnah is their role in explaining and elaborating the Qurʾān. While the Qurʾān lays down foundational principles, many of its injunctions are expressed in general or concise terms. The Sunnah clarifies these commands by showing how they are to be applied in practice. For example, essential acts of worship such as prayer (ṣalāh), fasting (ṣawm), charity (zakāh), and pilgrimage (ḥajj) derive their detailed procedures primarily from the Sunnah as transmitted through authentic Ḥadīth (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008; Kamali, 2003).

Additionally, the Ḥadīth and Sunnah serve as an independent source of Islamic legislation. In matters where the Qurʾān is silent, the Sunnah provides binding legal rulings and ethical norms. Classical jurists affirm that the Prophet was divinely guided not only in conveying the Qurʾān but also in establishing normative practices that form part of Islamic law. This legislative function underscores the Sunnah's authority in shaping Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) across different schools of thought (Hallaq, 2009).

Given that the Qurʾān provides the essential spiritual blueprint, how do you think Muslim daily worship, legal systems, and personal character would look today if we lacked the Ḥadīth and Sunnah to bridge the gap between divine theory and everyday practice?

The Ḥadīth and Sunnah are also significant as a moral and ethical framework for Muslims. They present the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as the ideal exemplar of character, humility, justice, and compassion. Through recorded sayings and actions, Muslims can emulate the Prophet's ethics in personal conduct and social interactions. This moral dimension reinforces the Qurʾānic portrayal of the Prophet as an excellent exemplar (uswah ḥasanah) for humanity (Al-Nawawī, 2007).

Furthermore, the preservation of Ḥadīth literature contributed to the development of rigorous scholarly methodologies within Islamic civilisation. The sciences of Ḥadīth criticism, narrator evaluation (ʿilm al-rijāl), and textual analysis reflect an advanced intellectual tradition dedicated to safeguarding religious authenticity. These methodologies not only protected the Sunnah from fabrication but also influenced broader historical and textual scholarship (Azami, 1992).
In sum, the significance of the Ḥadīth and Sunnah lies in their role as interpretive, legislative, ethical, and methodological foundations of Islam. Without them, the Qurʾānic message would remain largely theoretical, lacking the practical, lived example necessary for comprehensive religious guidance.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. In Islamic terminology, the term Ḥadīth primarily refers to:
   A. The Qurʾānic revelations given to the Prophet
   B. The personal opinions of early Muslim jurists
   C. Reports of the Prophet's sayings, actions, and approvals
   D. The customary practices of Arab society
2. Which of the following is **NOT** part of the technical definition of Ḥadīth?
   A. Sayings of the Prophet
   B. Actions of the Prophet
   C. Tacit approvals of the Prophet
   D. Personal opinions of later scholars
3. The two essential components of a *Ḥadīth* are known as:
   A. *Qiyās* and *ijmāʿ*
   B. *Isnād* and *matn*
   C. Sunnah and *fiqh*
   D. *Naṣṣ* and *raʾy*
4. In linguistic and technical senses, the words Hadith and Sunnah respectively mean:
   A. Revelation and the legal rulings of jurists
   B. Law and the opinions of the Companions
   C. Path or way, and the established normative practice of the Prophet
   D. Report and only the written collections of Ḥadīth.
5. One major significance of the Sunnah is that it:
   A. Replaces the Qurʾān
   B. Contradicts Qurʾānic injunctions
   C. Explains and details Qurʾānic commands
   D. Eliminates the need for jurisprudence

1.4 Historical Development of *Ḥadīth* Transmission and Compilation

The historical development of Ḥadīth transmission and compilation is one of the most significant intellectual undertakings in Islamic civilisation. From the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) to the classical period of Islamic scholarship, Muslims developed systematic methods to preserve, transmit, and authenticate prophetic traditions. This development unfolded in distinct phases, each responding to the needs and challenges of its historical context.

1. Transmission during the Prophetic Period

During the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), Ḥadīth were transmitted primarily orally. The Companions (Ṣaḥābah) learned directly from the Prophet by observing his actions, listening to his teachings, and witnessing his rulings. While the Qurʾān was the primary focus of written preservation, some Companions recorded Ḥadīth in personal notebooks, including the Ṣaḥīfah of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. However, the dominant mode of transmission at this stage remained memorisation and practice, supported by the strong oral culture of the Arabs (Azami, 1992).

2. Transmission during the Period of the Companions and Successors

After the Prophet's death, the Companions became the principal transmitters of Ḥadīth. As Islam expanded beyond Arabia, the need to preserve the Prophet's teachings grew more pressing. The Companions exercised caution in narrating Ḥadīth, often requiring corroboration to prevent error or fabrication. During the generation of the Successors (Tābiʿūn), scholarly centres emerged in Madinah, Makkah, Kūfah, Baṣrah, and Damascus, where Ḥadīth transmission flourished. At this stage, the isnād system began to develop as scholars increasingly emphasised the identification of the chain of narrators to ensure reliability (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

Looking back at how the preservation system evolved, how do you think our confidence in Ḥadīth would be affected today if early scholars had not moved from purely oral memory to the rigorous, state-sponsored verification procedures of the classical period?

3. Early Compilation of *Ḥadīth*

The formal compilation of Ḥadīth began towards the end of the first Islamic century. The Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101 AH) played a pivotal role, instructing scholars such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī to collect and record Ḥadīth systematically. This marked a transition from predominantly oral transmission to organised written documentation. Early compilations often combined Ḥadīth with legal opinions and the practices of the Companions and Successors, reflecting the close relationship between Ḥadīth and jurisprudence (Brown, 2009).

4. The Classical Period of *Ḥadīth* Compilation

The third Islamic century marked the golden age of Ḥadīth compilation. Scholars developed rigorous criteria for evaluating narrators and texts, leading to the classification of Ḥadīth by

authenticity. Monumental collections such as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim focused exclusively on authentic traditions, while other works, such as the Sunan collections, addressed legal themes. This period also saw the crystallisation of the sciences of Ḥadīth, including narrator criticism (ʿilm al-rijāl) and the classification of reports (Al-Nawawī, 2007).

5. Significance of the Historical Development

The gradual, methodical development of Ḥadīth transmission and compilation demonstrates the scholarly rigour and ethical responsibility with which Muslims preserved the Prophetic legacy. These efforts safeguarded the Sunnah from distortion and provided later generations with a reliable foundation for Islamic law, theology, and ethics. For contemporary students, especially in an ODL setting, understanding this historical process enhances confidence in the authenticity of Ḥadīth literature and appreciation of Islamic scholarly heritage.

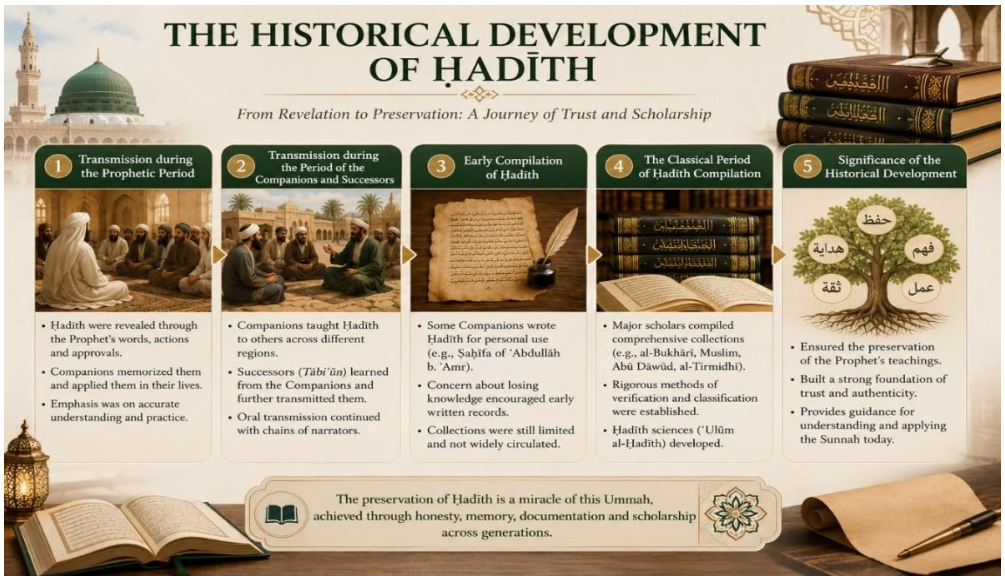


Figure 1.3 The Historical Development of Hadith

Source – AI generated image,(July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) 2

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

1. During the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him), *Ḥadīth* were transmitted primarily through _____ communication.

2. Some Companions recorded *Ḥadīth* in personal notebooks, such as the Ṣaḥīfah of _____.

3. During the generation of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*), major scholarly centres emerged in Madinah, Makkah, Kūfah, Baṣrah, and _____.

4. The Umayyad caliph _____ instructed scholars like Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī to collect and record *Ḥadīth* systematically.

5. The third Islamic century is regarded as the golden age of *Ḥadīth* compilation, producing major works like Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and _____.

1.5 Relevance of Sunnah in Contemporary Islamic Thought

Given how the Sunnah balances universal values such as justice and compassion with historical context, how do you think contemporary jurists can best use it to address modern, unprecedented dilemmas such as biomedical ethics or digital finance without losing its original spiritual essence?

In contemporary Islamic thought, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) remains a vital and dynamic source of guidance for Muslims as they navigate modern social, ethical, and intellectual challenges. Despite shifting historical and cultural contexts, the Sunnah continues to serve as an authoritative framework for interpreting Islamic values and applying them to new realities. Its relevance lies in providing normative principles, ethical models, and methodological guidance rather than in rigid historical prescriptions.

One major area of the Sunnah's relevance lies in its role as ethical and moral guidance. Modern societies face complex issues, including social injustice, corruption, environmental degradation, and ethical dilemmas arising from technological advancement. The Sunnah offers a comprehensive moral vision grounded in justice (ʿadl), compassion (raḥmah), trust (amānah), and human dignity. Contemporary Muslim thinkers emphasise that these prophetic values can be contextualised to

address present-day ethical concerns while remaining faithful to Islamic principles (Kamali, 2011).

The Sunnah is also highly relevant to Islamic legal reasoning and reform. Contemporary scholars draw on the Sunnah not merely as a collection of isolated reports but as a methodological guide to understanding the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah). Through a holistic reading of the Sunnah, jurists can distinguish between context-specific practices and universal principles, enabling Islamic law to address issues such as biomedical ethics, finance, governance, and human rights (Hallaq, 2009).

Furthermore, the Sunnah offers an enduring model of leadership and social engagement. The Prophet's approach to governance, conflict resolution, interfaith relations, and community building provides valuable insights for contemporary Muslim societies. His emphasis on consultation (*shūrā*), accountability, and mercy shows how religious leadership can coexist with pluralism and social justice. These aspects of the Sunnah are often invoked in modern discussions of good governance and civic responsibility (Ramadan, 2009).

In the realm of personal spirituality and identity, the Sunnah continues to shape Muslim consciousness in a globalised world. Through the prophetic model, Muslims find a balance between devotion and social responsibility, and between tradition and modernity. The Sunnah thus serves as a unifying reference point, anchoring Muslim identity while allowing intellectual engagement with contemporary realities (Brown, 2009).

In summary, the relevance of the Sunnah in contemporary Islamic thought lies in its role as a living tradition—one that informs ethical reasoning, legal interpretation, leadership models, and personal conduct. When approached with sound scholarship and contextual awareness, the Sunnah remains an indispensable guide for Muslims in the modern world.

1.6 Relationship between *Sunnah* and *Ḥadīth*

The relationship between Sunnah and Ḥadīth is complementary and foundational to Islamic scholarship. Although the two terms are closely related, they are not identical. Understanding their relationship is essential to appreciating how prophetic guidance has been preserved, interpreted, and applied in Islamic thought and practice.

Ḥadīth is the primary medium through which the Sunnah is transmitted. It comprises narrated reports documenting the sayings, actions, approvals, and descriptions of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Through the systematic collection and critical evaluation of Ḥadīth, scholars gain access to the raw textual evidence of the Prophet's teachings. Without Ḥadīth literature, the Sunnah would not be accessible to later generations in a verifiable form (Azami, 1992).

Sunnah, on the other hand, is the normative and authoritative prophetic model derived from authentic and accepted Ḥadīth. It is the practical, lived expression of the Prophet's guidance, confirmed by reliable transmission and, in many cases, by continuous communal practice. Thus, while Ḥadīth may vary in authenticity and reliability, Sunnah is established only on sound evidence and scholarly consensus (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008).

Since an individual Ḥadīth is merely a raw historical report, whereas the Sunnah is the final, approved model of behaviour, how do you think our daily religious practices would change if we mindlessly followed every report we read, without letting scholarly consensus filter them into the actual Sunnah?



Figure 1.4 Relationship Between Sunnah and Hadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

From a methodological perspective, the relationship between Sunnah and Ḥadīth can be understood in terms of content and evidence. Sunnah constitutes the normative content—what Muslims are expected to follow—while Ḥadīth provides the evidentiary basis for identifying and validating that content. Consequently, scholars do not derive Sunnah from

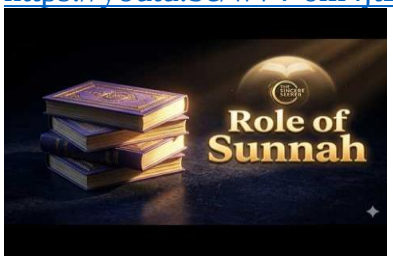
isolated or weak narrations but from a critical synthesis of authentic reports, Qurʾānic principles, and established practice (Kamali, 2003).

Furthermore, the Sunnah provides context and coherence to individual Ḥadīth. A single Ḥadīth may describe a specific incident or ruling, but its proper interpretation depends on how it aligns with the Prophet's broader Sunnah. This integrated approach prevents literalism and ensures that prophetic guidance is understood holistically rather than in fragments (Brown, 2009).

In summary, Sunnah and Ḥadīth are interdependent. Ḥadīth preserves and transmits the Prophetic legacy, while Sunnah represents the authenticated, normative expression of that legacy. Together, they form a coherent system through which the teachings of Islam are understood, preserved, and applied across generations.

You can click the link, scan the QR code, or watch the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/wv4-6m4jtZI?si=VTcaKiHm3ZDok0nN



Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) 3

Answer the following Questions:

1. In contemporary Islamic thought, the Sunnah is best characterised as:
A. A rigid set of historical rules for every era
B. A dynamic source of guidance for modern challenges
C. A replacement for the Qurʾān in legal matters
D. A purely spiritual text with no social relevance

2. Which of the following is NOT listed as a modern ethical challenge addressed by Sunnah-based values?
A. Environmental degradation
B. Social injustice
C. Corruption
D. Astronomical calculations

3. Contemporary jurists use the Sunnah as a methodological guide, especially in relation to:
A. Arabic grammar
B. *Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (objectives of Islamic law)

C. Greek philosophy
D. Tribal customs
4. The passage explains that Ḥadīth primarily serves as:
A. The Qurʾān's replacement in worship
B. The medium through which Sunnah is transmitted
C. A set of personal opinions of scholars
D. A non-verifiable oral tradition
5. According to the text, the Sunnah is established solely by:
A. Weak narrations and individual reasoning
B. Authentic evidence and scholarly consensus
C. Cultural practices of each community
D. Political authority

Scenario 1: Understanding the Importance of Authentic Prophetic Guidance

During an Islamic Studies class, Musa noticed that his classmates disagreed over a narration they had read online. Some believed it should be followed immediately because it was attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). In contrast, others argued that scholars first examine its chain of transmission and authenticity before accepting it. Their lecturer explained that not every narrated report automatically becomes an established Sunnah. This discussion encouraged Musa to appreciate the importance of understanding how the Prophet's teachings were preserved, authenticated, and applied to guide Muslim beliefs and practices.

Why is it important to distinguish between a Ḥadīth and the Sunnah when studying and practising Islam?



1.7 Summary

The transmission and compilation of Ḥadīth developed in stages throughout Islamic history. During the Prophetic period, Ḥadīth were transmitted orally, though some Companions kept personal notes. After the Prophet's death, the Companions and Successors carefully preserved Ḥadīth, and scholarly centres emerged, leading to the growth of the isnād system. Formal compilation began in the late first century, especially under ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, marking a shift towards organised written records. The third century became the golden age of Ḥadīth compilation, yielding major authentic collections and the development of Ḥadīth sciences. In contemporary thought, the Sunnah remains vital for ethics, law, leadership, and identity. Ḥadīth transmit the Sunnah, while the Sunnah is the verified normative model derived from authentic reports.

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1.8 References/Further Readings

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1.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. C
2. D
3. B
4. C
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Oral
2. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ
3. Damascus
4. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz
5. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. B
2. D
3. B
4. B
5. B

Unit 2 The Position of *Ḥadīth* in Islam

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Hadith as the second primary source of Islamic Law
2.3.1 The role of *Ḥadīth* in the Development of Islamic Law.
2.3.2 *Ḥadīth* as the practical application of Qur'anic teachings
2.3.3 *Ḥadīth* as an authority across the School of Islamic Thought.
2.4 Implications of accepting or rejecting *Ḥadīth* as guidance in the Modern Context.
2.5 Examples of *Ḥadīth* in respect of Muslim practices.
2.6 Summary
2.7 References/Further Readings
2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

Ḥadīth holds a central and authoritative place in Islam as the primary record of the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings and practices. Together with the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth forms the foundational sources for Islamic belief, law, and moral conduct. While the Qurʾān represents divine revelation, Ḥadīth provides its practical explanation and application, as demonstrated by the Prophet. The position of Ḥadīth in Islam is grounded in the Qurʾānic command to obey the Messenger and follow his guidance.

Through authentic Ḥadīth, Muslims gain insight into the interpretation of revelation, the fulfilment of religious obligations, and the ethical model set by the Prophet. Consequently, understanding the status and authority of Ḥadīth is essential to appreciating its role in Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and daily religious practice. This unit introduces learners to the religious, legal, and intellectual significance of Ḥadīth in Islam, laying the groundwork for a deeper examination of its authority and application in subsequent discussions.

You will gain a clearer understanding of why Ḥadīth has remained indispensable to Muslims throughout history. You will also appreciate how its guidance continues to shape acts of worship, legal rulings, ethical values, and everyday life across Muslim communities worldwide.



2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to;

- explain the position of *Ḥadīth* as a second primary source of Islamic knowledge;
- describe the role of *Ḥadīth* in the development of Islamic law (*Sharīʿah*), theology (*ʿAqīdah*), and ethics;
- illustrate how the Prophet's sayings and actions provide practical applications of Qur'anic teachings;
- analyse scholarly views on the authority of Ḥadīth across Islamic legal and theological schools;
- assess the implications of accepting or rejecting *Ḥadīth* as a source of religious guidance in the modern context; and
- provide examples of how specific *Ḥadīth* influence Muslim practices, such as prayer, fasting, and interpersonal ethics.



2.3 *Ḥadīth* as the second primary source of Islamic Law

Ḥadīth holds a pivotal place in Islamic jurisprudence as the second primary source of Islamic law, immediately after the Qurʾān. While the Qurʾān provides the foundational principles and general legal directives of Islam, the Ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) explains, supplements, and operationalises them. Together, the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth form an integrated legal framework that governs Muslim belief, worship, and social conduct.

The authority of Ḥadīth as a legal source rests on the Qurʾānic injunctions commanding obedience to the Prophet and acceptance of his rulings. These injunctions establish that the Prophet's guidance is divinely sanctioned and legally binding. Consequently, authentic Ḥadīth are not merely historical records but normative texts with legal authority in Islamic law (fiqh) (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008).

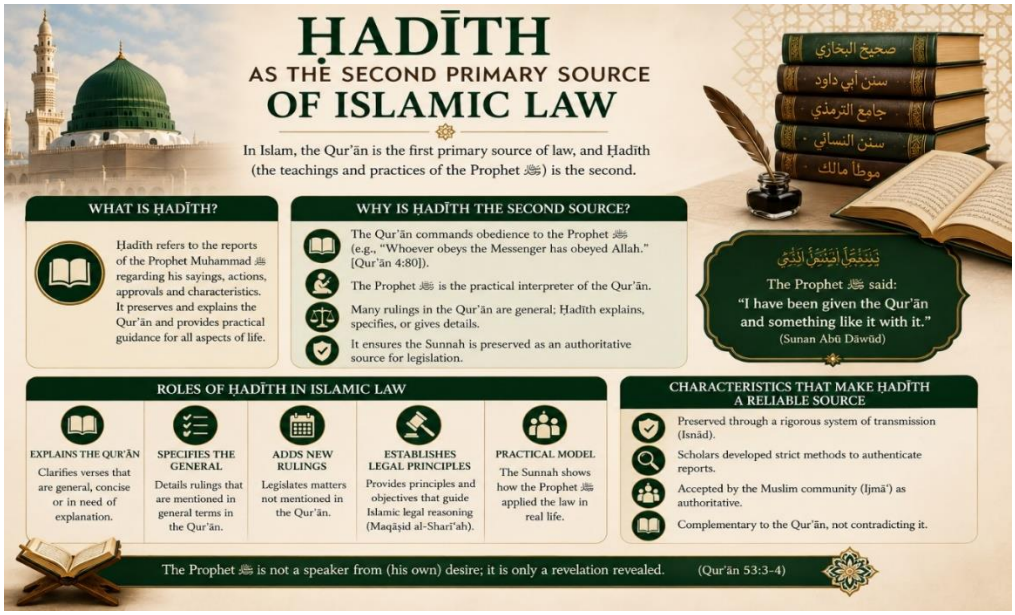


Figure 2.1 Hadith as the Second Primary Source of Islamic Law
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

One of the most important legal functions of Ḥadīth is to explain and elaborate on Qurʾānic rulings. Many legal commands in the Qurʾān are expressed in concise or general terms, leaving their precise application to be clarified by the Prophet's Sunnah, as preserved in Ḥadīth. For example, obligations such as prayer, zakāh, fasting, and pilgrimage cannot be fully observed without reference to Ḥadīth, which sets out their conditions, procedures, and legal boundaries (Kamali, 2003).

If the Qurʾān serves as the overarching legal constitution of Islam, how do you think Islamic courts and lawyers would handle complex everyday legal disputes if they could not consult the Ḥadīth as an independent, detailed case-law manual?

In addition to clarifying the Qurʾān, the Ḥadīth also serves as an independent source of legislation for matters not explicitly addressed in the Qurʾān. Through his sayings and actions, the Prophet established legal rulings on personal status, commercial transactions, criminal law, and governance. Classical jurists unanimously recognised that such rulings, when authentically transmitted, are binding on the Muslim community (Hallaq, 2009).

The use of Hadīth as a legal source is governed by rigorous scholarly principles. Jurists rely solely on authentic, reliable reports, which are evaluated through established methods of Ḥadīth criticism. This ensures that Islamic law is derived from verified prophetic guidance rather than conjecture or fabrication. Consequently, the science of Ḥadīth plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of Islamic legal reasoning (Azami, 1992).

In summary, Ḥadīth is the second primary source of Islamic law, explaining the Qurʾān, supplementing its rulings, and providing independent legal guidance. Its authority reflects the central role of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as both the conveyor of revelation and the practical lawgiver in Islam.

2.3.1 The Role of *Ḥadīth* in the Development of Islamic Law

Since early Islamic law developed dynamically from real-world cases rather than from abstract theories, how do you think the major schools of thought (Madhahib) would have developed differently if they had not used Ḥadīth as a shared, concrete anchor for debate?

Ḥadīth played a decisive role in the historical development of Islamic law (fiqh). During Islam's formative period, jurists relied on the Qurʾān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), as preserved in Ḥadīth, to resolve legal questions arising in expanding Muslim societies. As new circumstances emerged, Ḥadīth provided concrete precedents and interpretive guidance that shaped legal reasoning and judicial practice.

The emergence of the major schools of Islamic law was closely tied to scholars' engagement with Ḥadīth. Jurists analysed prophetic reports to derive legal principles, reconcile apparent contradictions, and formulate coherent legal doctrines. Over time, this process led to the systematic development of uṣūl al-fiqh, in which Ḥadīth assumed a central methodological role. Thus, Islamic law evolved not as an abstract system but as a tradition rooted in prophetic guidance (Hallaq, 2009; Kamali, 2003).

2.3.2 *Ḥadīth* as the Practical Application of Qurʾānic Teachings

While the Qurʾān establishes the foundational principles of Islam, the Ḥadīth demonstrates their practical application in daily life. Through the Prophet's sayings and actions, Muslims learn how Qurʾānic injunctions are to be understood and applied. In this sense, the Ḥadīth functions as a living commentary on the Qurʾān.

If the Qurʾān provides the pure, unchanging spiritual theory of Islam, how do you think our understanding of core virtues such as justice and mercy would change if we could not consult the Ḥadīth to see those values lived out in real-world human interactions?

Acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, clearly illustrate this relationship. The Qurʾān commands these acts in general terms, but their detailed procedures are known primarily through Ḥadīth.

Beyond ritual practice, Ḥadīth also illustrates Qurʾānic values, such as justice, mercy, honesty, and patience, through the Prophet's conduct. As a result, the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth operate together as theory and practice within Islamic teachings (Al-Shāfiʿī, 2008).

2.3.3 *Ḥadīth* as an Authority across the Schools of Islamic Thought

Despite methodological differences among the various schools of Islamic law (madhāhib), all recognised Sunni schools accept authentic Ḥadīth as authoritative. The Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools differ primarily in their criteria for evaluating and applying Ḥadīth, not in their acceptance of its authority.

For example, some schools place greater emphasis on communal practice or analogy in interpreting Ḥadīth, while others prioritise direct textual evidence. Nevertheless, the Sunnah of the Prophet, as preserved in reliable Ḥadīth, remains a shared foundation across Islamic legal thought. This consensus underscores the unifying role of Ḥadīth in Islamic jurisprudence despite juristic diversity (Brown, 2009).

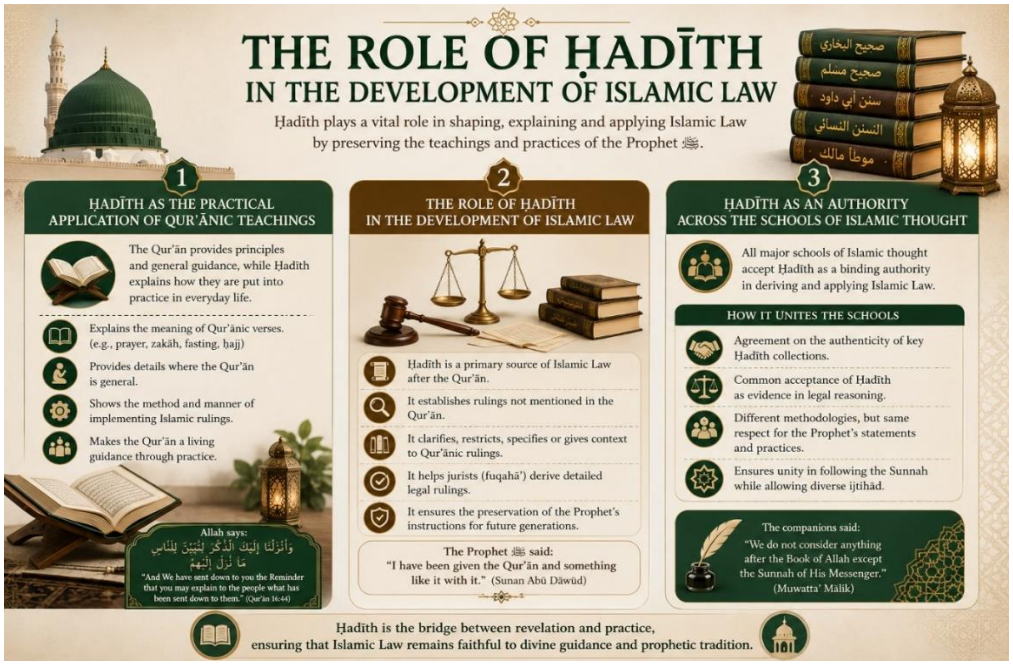


Figure 2.2 The Role of Hadith in the Development of Islamic Law
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Self-Assessment Exercise 1:

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

1. *Ḥadīth* is regarded as the _____ primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān.
2. The authority of *Ḥadīth* is based on Qurʾānic injunctions that command obedience to the _____.
3. The science used to verify the authenticity of *Ḥadīth* is known as _____.
4. The detailed procedures of acts such as prayer and fasting are derived mainly from _____.
5. All Sunni schools of Islamic law unanimously accept _____ *Ḥadīth* as authoritative.

2.4 Implications of Accepting or Rejecting *Ḥadīth* as Guidance in the Modern Context

Accepting Ḥadīth as authoritative guidance ensures continuity with the prophetic model and preserves the coherence of Islamic belief and practice. It enables Muslims to interpret the Qurʾān comprehensively and to maintain a unified framework for law, ethics, and worship. Modern Islamic scholarship continues to engage critically with Ḥadīth to address contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to tradition.

If rejecting the Ḥadīth causes the entire practical framework of worship and law to collapse, how do you think a person trying to follow only the Qurʾān today would successfully navigate everyday religious duties, such as calculating their specific zakāh rate or performing daily prayers?

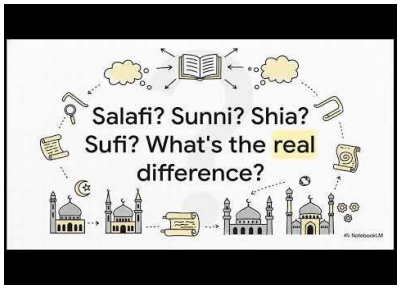
Conversely, rejecting Ḥadīth as a source of guidance has profound implications. It leads to the fragmentation of religious authority, the erosion of practical frameworks for worship, and significant reinterpretations of Islamic law. Without Ḥadīth, many Qurʾānic commands would remain indeterminate in practice. Consequently, mainstream Islamic scholarship regards the rejection of Ḥadīth as incompatible with Islam's historical and intellectual foundations (Azami, 1992).

2.5 Examples of *Ḥadīth* in Respect of Muslim Practices

Numerous aspects of Muslim religious life are grounded directly in the Ḥadīth. For instance, the method of performing the five daily prayers is based on the Prophet's instruction: "Pray as you have seen me pray." Similarly, rules governing fasting in Ramaḍān, such as intention (niyyah) and breaking the fast, are derived from the Prophet's traditions.
In social and ethical matters, Ḥadīth guides Muslims to be honest in trade, kind to parents, caring towards neighbours, and committed to social justice. These examples show that Ḥadīth is not merely theoretical but deeply embedded in Muslims' lived religious experience, shaping both ritual observance and moral conduct.

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/6k7nHagkfzg?si=AHSY2OWcITWNXD32



Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

Answer the following Questions:

1. What role does Ḥadīth play in relation to the Qurʾān?
   A. It replaces the Qurʾān
   B. It contradicts the Qurʾān
   C. It explains and supplements the Qurʾān
   D. It ignores the Qurʾān

2. Which of the following is NOT a function of *Ḥadīth*?
   A. Explaining Qurʾānic rulings
   B. Providing independent legislation
   C. Abrogating all Qurʾānic laws
   D. Guiding practical application

3. What ensures that only reliable *Ḥadīth* are used in Islamic law?
   A. Personal opinion
   B. Cultural practices

C. Rigorous scholarly verification
D. Political authority

4. Which schools accept authentic *Ḥadīth* as authoritative?
   A. Only Ḥanafī
   B. Only Shāfiʿī
   C. Only Mālikī
   D. All Sunni schools

5. Rejecting *Ḥadīth* as guidance leads to:
   A. Stronger legal unity
   B. Clearer religious practice
   C. Fragmentation of religious authority
   D. Elimination of Islamic law

Scenario 2: Following Prophetic Guidance

During an Islamic Studies seminar, Zainab asked why Muslims consult both the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth when making religious decisions. A classmate replied that the Qurʾān contains the basic principles, while the Ḥadīth explains how to practise them in everyday life. Their lecturer added that without the Prophet's guidance, Muslims would struggle to perform many acts of worship correctly or to understand certain legal rulings. Zainab realised that the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth work together to provide complete guidance for Muslim life.

Why is the Ḥadīth regarded as the second primary source of Islamic law, after the Qurʾān?



2.6 Summary

Ḥadīth is the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān. While the Qurʾān provides foundational principles and general rulings, Ḥadīth explains, elaborates on, and applies them in practice. Many obligations, such as prayer, Zakāh, fasting, and pilgrimage, cannot be properly observed without the prophetic guidance preserved in Ḥadīth. It also serves as an independent source of legislation in areas not explicitly mentioned in the Qurʾān. Jurists rely only on authentic reports verified through Ḥadīth criticism. All Sunni schools accept authentic Ḥadīth as authoritative, making it essential to Islamic law and practice.



2.7 References/Further Readings

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2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercise 1:
1. Second
2. Prophet
3. *Ḥadīth* criticism
4. *Ḥadīth*
5. authentic

Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

1. C
2. C
3. C
4. D
5. C

Unit 3 *Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Background to *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī*
  3.3.1 Definition of *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī.*
  3.3.2 Differences between *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī* and *Hadith*
  3.3.3 Difference between *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* and Qur'an
  3.3.4 Characteristics of *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī.*
3.4 Selected Examples of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*
3.5 Role of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* in Islamic spirituality and Ethical Development
3.6 Summary
3.7 References/Further Readings
3.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

You may wonder why all Ḥadīth are not the same and why there are special types of Ḥadīth with a unique status in Islam. This unit introduces you to one of the most fascinating categories of Ḥadīth, called al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī. Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī (Sacred Ḥadīth) refers to sayings in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) narrates words from Allah, but not as part of the Qurʾān. In other words, the meaning comes from Allah, while the Prophet expresses the wording. You may also wonder why it is called "Qudsī". The term Qudsī comes from al-Quddūs (The Most Holy), one of the names of Allah. This shows that these Ḥadīth have a special spiritual and divine connection.

This also reflects that the Qurʾān contains words and meanings that are mainly from Allah; Ḥadīth have to do with words and meanings credited to the Prophet; while Ḥadīth Qudsī involves meanings from Allah, but the wording is from the Prophet. Can you see the difference? In summary, Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī serves as a bridge between divine revelation and prophetic expression.

It deepens our understanding of Allah's message and highlights its importance in Islamic spirituality and ethical development, helping students appreciate its role in faith strengthening.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to;

- define *al-Ḥadīth al-qudsī* and distinguish it from the Qur'an and prophetic *Ḥadīth* (*al-Ḥadīth an-nabawī*);
- identify key characteristics of *Ḥadīth qudsī*, including its wording and attribution;
- differentiate between the divine origin of *Ḥadīth qudsī* and the Qur'an in terms of revelation, language, and usage in worship;
- analyse selected examples of *Ḥadīth qudsī* to explore themes such as divine mercy, forgiveness, justice, and human responsibility; and
- discuss the role of *Ḥadīth qudsī* in Islamic spirituality (*taṣawwuf*) and ethical development.



3.3 Background to *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī*

To better understand al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, it is important to ask: How did this unique category of Ḥadīth emerge in Islamic tradition? Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī developed within the broader framework of Ḥadīth transmission in early Islam. During the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he conveyed guidance from Allah in different forms. While the Qurʾān was revealed as the exact word of Allah for recitation and worship, there were also instances in which the Prophet reported meanings inspired by Allah but expressed them in his own words. These came to be known as Ḥadīth Qudsī. In the early period of Islam, the Companions carefully preserved all forms of the Prophet's teachings and distinguished between Qurʾānic revelation and non-Qurʾānic divine guidance; over time, scholars identified and categorised these special narrations as Ḥadīth Qudsī. This classification became clearer during the formal compilation of Ḥadīth, when scholars organised prophetic traditions into different types based on their sources and wording.

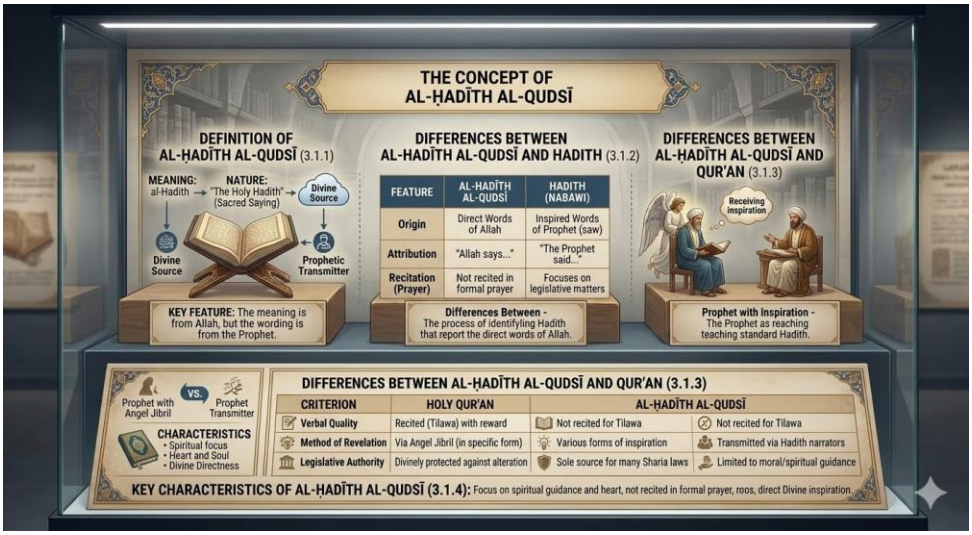


Figure 3.1 The Concept of Al-Hadith Al-Qudsi
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

3.3.1 Definition of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*

Since a Ḥadīth Qudsī conveys divine meaning directly from Allah but uses the Prophet's (SAW) own words, how do you think this special, deeply intimate category of speech changes the way a believer builds a personal, emotional connection with Allah compared with reciting the formal legal text of the Qurʾān?

Let us begin with a simple question: What exactly makes a Ḥadīth "Qudsī"? To answer this, we examine both its literal and technical meanings. Literally, the term al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī derives from the Arabic word "al-Quds", meaning holiness, purity, or sacredness. It is related to al-Quddūs (The Most Holy), one of Allah's names. Thus, Ḥadīth Qudsī means: "Sacred or holy narration." Technically, al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī denotes a narration in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reports words from Allah, with the meaning from Allah and the wording from the Prophet. This means that the source of the message is Allah, the wording is from the Prophet, and it is neither part of the Qurʾān nor recited in prayer. Scholars emphasise that it occupies a unique position between the Qurʾān and ordinary Ḥadīth (Al-Nawawī, 2007; Al-Suyūṭī, 2005). In a nutshell, al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī reflects a special form of divine communication that strengthens the spiritual connection between Allah and believers while maintaining a clear distinction from the Qurʾān.

3.3.2 Differences between *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī* and *Hadith*

Understanding the differences between al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī and Hadith is crucial for grasping divine guidance; focus on how the source of meaning and wording differ for clarity. Recognising the role of Ḥadīth

qudsī in Islamic spirituality and ethical development can inspire you to deepen your faith and moral understanding, making your study more impactful.

Aspect	***Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī***	***Ḥadīth (Nabawī)***
Source of Meaning	From Allah	From the Prophet (SAW)
Wording	From the Prophet (SAW)	From the Prophet (SAW)
Status	Not part of the Qurʾān	Not part of the Qurʾān
Mode of Transmission	Not necessarily through Jibrīl	From the Prophet's sayings/actions
Use in Worship	Not recited in *Salāh*	Not recited in *Salāh*
Number	Limited	Very numerous

While both forms guide Muslims, al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī occupies a unique middle ground between the Qurʾān (fully divine) and Ḥadīth (prophetic). It reflects divine communication, but not in the Qurʾānic form of revelation.

3.3.3 Difference between *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* and Qur'an

Since a Ḥadīth Qudsī sits in that unique middle zone—sharing its divine source of meaning with the Qurʾān, yet sharing its human phrasing with a Ḥadīth Nabawī—how does knowing it isn't legally binding or miraculous in form affect how you approach it for personal spiritual comfort versus for legal rulings?

To understand al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī properly, it is important to distinguish it clearly from the Qurʾān, which is Islam's highest and most authoritative source. The core distinction is that in the Qurʾān, both the wording and the meaning are from Allah, whereas in al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, the meaning is from Allah, but the wording is from the Prophet (SAW). Here are the key differences between the two:

Aspect	**Qurʾān**	***Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī***
Source of Meaning	From Allah	From Allah
Wording	From Allah (verbatim)	From the Prophet (SAW)

Mode of Revelation	Through Angel Jibrīl	May be through inspiration or revelation
Status	Highest divine scripture	Not part of the Qurʾān
Recitation in *Ṣalāh*	Required and valid	Not allowed in *ṣalāh*
Inimitability (*Iʿjāz*)	Linguistically miraculous	Not miraculous in form
Preservation	*Mutawātir* (mass transmission)	Varies in authenticity
Reward for Recitation	Reward for Recitation	General reward, not like Qurʾān

The Qurʾān is divine revelation in both content and form, preserved exactly as revealed and used in worship. By contrast, al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī conveys divine meanings through the Prophet's words, thereby making it highly sacred but not equal in authority or function to the Qurʾān.

3.3.4 Characteristics of *al-Hadīth al-Qudsī*

From what has been discussed in this unit, you might have discovered the characteristics of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī. To fully appreciate it*, it is important to understand the unique features that distinguish it from both the Qurʾān and other *Ḥadīth*. The core characteristics of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* are mentioned as follows:

1. **Divine Meaning (*Min Allāh*)**
   The content or meaning of al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī originates with Allah, making it sacred and spiritually significant.
2. **Prophetic Expression (*Bi Lafṭ an-Nabī*)**
   Although the meaning is divine, the wording is expressed by the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), unlike the Qurʾān, which is a verbatim revelation.
3. **Not Part of the Qurʾān**
   It is not part of the Qurʾān and does not share its status as the primary revealed scripture.
4. **Varied Modes of Revelation**
   It may be conveyed through inspiration, dreams, or indirect revelation—not necessarily via Angel Jibrīl.
5. **Not Used in *Ṣalāh* (Prayer)**
   It cannot be recited as a substitute for the Qurʾān during ritual prayer.
6. **Subject to *Ḥadīth* Classification**
   Like other Ḥadīth, it is assessed for authenticity (ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf, etc.), so not all are equally reliable.

7. **Limited in Number**
   Compared with the vast corpus of Ḥadīth, al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī are relatively few.
8. **Spiritual and Ethical Emphasis**
   Many focus on themes such as Allah's mercy, forgiveness, justice, and the relationship between the Creator and His servants.

Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī originates from Allah but must still be assessed for reliability, just like regular Ḥadīths. How does knowing that a "sacred narration" could be classified as weak (ḍaʿīf) affect how you evaluate its spiritual messages??



Figure 3.2 Museum Exhibit: The Background of Al-Hadith Al-Qudsi
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

In summary, *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* occupies a unique position: it combines divine authority in meaning with prophetic delivery in wording, making it a powerful source of spiritual guidance while remaining distinct from the Qurʾān.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. How did al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī emerge within Islamic tradition?
A. As part of the Qurʾān revealed through Jibrīl
B. From philosophical interpretations by scholars

C. From meanings inspired by Allah but expressed by the Prophet
D. From historical writings by early Muslims

2. What is the literal meaning of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*?
A. Legal narration
B. Sacred or holy narration
C. Historical narration
D. Weak narration

3. What distinguishes *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* from ordinary *Ḥadīth (Nabawī)*?
A. Both meaning and wording are from Allah
B. Meaning is from Allah, wording from the Prophet
C. Both meaning and wording are from the Prophet.
D. It is part of the Qurʾān

4. Which of the following statements about al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī is TRUE?
A. It is recited in Ṣalāh like the Qurʾān
B. It is always transmitted through Angel Jibrīl
C. It is not part of the Qurʾān and cannot be recited in prayer
D. It is linguistically miraculous like the Qurʾān

5. Which of the following is a key characteristic of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*?
A. It is preserved through mass transmission (*mutawātir*) only
B. It is equal in status to the Qurʾān
C. It focuses mainly on political rulings
D. It emphasises spiritual and ethical themes

3.4 Selected Examples of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī*

To deepen your understanding of al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, here are selected al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, presented with Arabic text, translation, and authenticity grading.

Example 1: Allah's Nearness to His Servant
قال الله تعالى: أَنَا عِندَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ إِذَا ذَكَرَنِي...
Translation:
Allah says: "I am as My servant thinks of Me, and I am with him when he remembers Me…" (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, authentic tradition).

Example 2: The Vastness of Allah's Mercy
يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، إِنَّكَ مَا دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا كَانَ مِنكَ...
Translation:
"O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you for what you have done…" (Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī (Good tradition).

Example 3: Prohibition of Injustice (*Ṣaḥīḥ*)
يَا عِبَادِي، إِنِّي حَرَّمْتُ الظُّلْمَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِي وَجَعَلْتُهُ بَيْنَكُمْ مُحَرَّمًا فَلَا تَظَالَمُوا
Translation:
"O My servants, I have forbidden **ظلم** (injustice, oppression) for Myself and made it forbidden among you, so do not **ظلم** one another." (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, authentic tradition).

Example 4: Reward for Good Deeds
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ... فَمَنْ هَمَّ بِحَسَنَةٍ فَلَمْ يَعْمَلْهَا كَتَبَهَا اللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حَسَنَةً كَامِلَةً
Translation:
"Allah has recorded good and bad deeds… whoever intends a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it as a complete good deed." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, authentic tradition).

Example 5: Allah's Independence from Creation
يَا عِبَادِي، لَوْ أَنَّ أَوَّلَكُمْ وَآخِرَكُمْ... كَانُوا عَلَىٰ أَتْقَىٰ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ مِنكُمْ مَا زَادَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي مُلْكِي شَيْئًا
Translation:
"O My servants, if the first and the last of you… were as pious as the most pious among you, that would not increase My kingdom in anything…" (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, authentic tradition).

The point is that these examples show that al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī combines a divine message with prophetic expression, emphasising Allah's mercy, justice, and relationship with humanity, while maintaining high levels of authenticity through rigorous Ḥadīth scholarship.

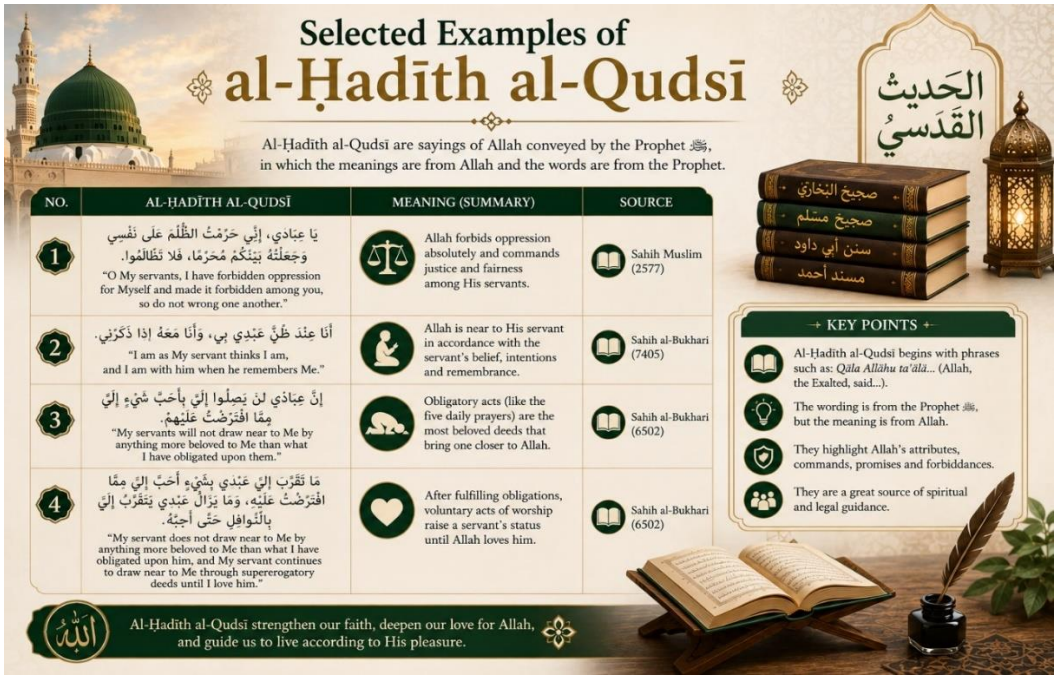


Figure 3.3 Selected Examples of Al-Hadith Al-Qudsi
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

3.5 Role of *al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī* in Islamic spirituality and Ethical Development

When you read these specific examples—where Allah guarantees complete forgiveness simply for hoping in Him or records a full reward simply for intending a good deed—how do you think this hyper-personal focus on inner mercy shapes a believer's emotional relationship with God differently from standard legal texts??

Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī holds a unique place in Islam, nurturing both spiritual consciousness (taqwā) and ethical refinement (akhlāq). Its divine meaning makes it especially powerful in shaping a believer's inner life. Here are some of the roles al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī plays in spiritual and ethical development:

1. Strengthening Spiritual Connection with Allah
These *aḥādīth* emphasise Allah's closeness to His servants, encouraging constant remembrance (*dhikr*), supplication, and reliance on Him. They cultivate sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and deepen faith.

2. Promoting Hope and Optimism (*Rajāʾ*)
Many Ḥadīth Qudsī emphasise Allah's mercy, forgiveness, and compassion, encouraging believers never to despair, despite their shortcomings.

3. Instilling Moral Discipline and Justice
Teachings such as the prohibition of injustice (ẓulm) guide Muslims towards fairness, honesty, and accountability in personal and social interactions.

4. Encouraging Self-Purification (*Tazkiyah al-Nafs*)
These *aḥādīth* call believers to purify their hearts from pride, envy, and hypocrisy, promoting humility and sincerity in all actions.

5. Building Ethical Social Relationships
They emphasise kindness, compassion, and responsibility towards others, values essential to peaceful coexistence and community development.

6. Enhancing Consciousness of Accountability
By reminding believers of Allah's awareness of all actions, the Ḥadīth Qudsī instils a strong sense of responsibility and moral vigilance.

The submissions above show that al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī serves as a spiritual bridge between the Creator and the believer, combining divine guidance

with prophetic expression. It nurtures inner faith, moral excellence, and conscious living, making it essential to holistic Islamic development.



Figure 3.4
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/F7vfmGC-o-A?si=90MEbOdPKV9ujyPt



Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Fill the gaps in the following sentences with the most suitable word:

1. In al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī, Allah says: "I am as My servant thinks of Me, and I am with him when he _____ Me."
2. The Ḥadīth that states "O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself…" emphasises the prohibition of _____ among people.
3. According to one example, whoever intends a good deed but does not perform it will still be recorded as a _____ good deed.

4. Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī plays a key role in strengthening the believer's _____ connection with Allah through remembrance and supplication.
5. One major theme of al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī is Allah's _____, which encourages believers not to despair despite their shortcomings.

Scenario: Appreciating the Role of Ḥadīth in Everyday Muslim Life

After attending a lesson on Islamic law, Amina realised that although the Qurʾān commands Muslims to pray, fast, and give zakāh, it does not specify every detail of how these acts should be performed. Her teacher explained that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated these acts through his sayings and actions, which were preserved in authentic Ḥadīth. Amina also learned that Muslim scholars carefully verified these reports before using them as evidence in Islamic law. She concluded that understanding the Ḥadīth is essential for practising Islam correctly and for applying Qurʾānic teachings in everyday life.

Explain why the Ḥadīth is regarded as the second primary source of Islamic law and discuss its role in guiding Muslims in practising the teachings of the Qurʾān.



3.6 Summary

Al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī is a distinct category of Ḥadīth in which the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) conveys the meanings of Allah in his own words, unlike the Qurʾān, in which both wording and meaning are divine. The term "Qudsī" signifies holiness, reflecting its special spiritual status. It serves as a bridge between divine revelation and prophetic expression. Originating in early Islamic transmission, it was later classified by scholars as distinct from both the Qurʾān and ordinary Ḥadīth. While it shares similarities with prophetic Ḥadīth, its meaning is divine; unlike the Qurʾān, it is not recited in prayer nor considered miraculous. It emphasises themes such as mercy, justice, and accountability, playing a vital role in spiritual growth, ethical development, and understanding Islamic teachings.

Studying al-Ḥadīth al-Qudsī helps Muslims appreciate the depth of Allah's guidance and strengthens their relationship with Him. Its messages inspire sincere worship, moral excellence, and heightened awareness of divine accountability, making it an invaluable source of spiritual reflection and practical guidance in everyday life.



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3.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercise 1:

1. C
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. D

Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

1. Remembers
2. Injustice (*ẓulm*)
3. Complete
4. Spiritual
5. Mercy

Unit 4 Relevance of *Ḥadīth* in Daily Muslim Life

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Significance of *Ḥadīth* in Muslim Daily Life
4.4 *Ḥadīth* Practical Examples on Acts of Worship and Personal Ethics
4.5 Influence of the Application of Hadith on Muslim Lifestyle.
4.6 Role of *Ḥadīth* in Shaping Muslim Attitudes.
4.7 Integrating the teachings of Hadith into Personal Daily Routines and Others.
4.8 Summary
4.9 References/Further Readings
4.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



4.1 Introduction

Have you ever wondered how Muslims know how to pray, fast, conduct business, or even interact with others in a morally upright way? While the Qurʾān provides the fundamental principles of Islam, it is the Ḥadīth, the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), that translate these principles into practical daily life. Ḥadīth occupies a central place in the life of every Muslim because it serves as a practical guide to implementing Islamic teachings.

From acts of worship such as Ṣalāh (prayer), Ṣawm (fasting), Zakāh (charity), and Ḥajj (pilgrimage) to everyday matters such as eating, dressing, speaking, and social interaction, Ḥadīth provides detailed guidance that shapes a Muslim's conduct. Without Ḥadīth, many Qurʾānic injunctions would remain general and difficult to apply in real-life situations. Beyond ritual practice, Ḥadīth also plays a crucial role in moral and ethical development. It teaches values such as honesty, patience, humility, justice, and compassion. Through the Prophet's lived example (Sunnah), Muslims can embody these values in their personal, social, and professional lives.

In this sense, Ḥadīth is not merely a collection of historical reports but a dynamic source of guidance that shapes behaviour and decision-making. Moreover, Ḥadīth contributes to the development of Islamic law (fiqh) and social order. Scholars rely on authentic Ḥadīth to derive rulings that regulate family life, commerce, governance, and community relations.

This ensures that Islamic teachings remain relevant across different times and contexts.



4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the significance of *Ḥadīth* as a source of moral, spiritual, and legal guidance in the daily life of a muslim;
- identify practical examples from authentic *Ḥadīth* that address daily acts of worship, interpersonal conduct, and personal ethics;
- analyse how the application of *Ḥadīth* influences contemporary muslim lifestyle choices, including social, economic, and environmental responsibilities;
- evaluate the role of *Ḥadīth* in shaping muslim attitudes towards time management, health, family relations, and community service; and
- demonstrate the ability to integrate teachings from *Ḥadīth* into personal daily routines and decision-making in accordance with Islamic ethical values.



4.3 Significance of *Ḥadīth* in Muslim Daily Life

Ḥadīth, comprising the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), holds a central place in Islam as a comprehensive source of guidance. It functions alongside the Qurʾān as a foundational authority that shapes the moral conduct, spiritual consciousness, and legal framework of Muslim life. Its significance in daily life can be examined through three major dimensions: moral, spiritual, and legal guidance.

1. Moral Significance of *Ḥadīth*

One of the most profound contributions of Ḥadīth is its role in shaping ethical behaviour (akhlāq). The Prophet's teachings offer practical models of virtues such as honesty, justice, humility, patience, and compassion. These teachings extend beyond ritual observance to everyday interactions, including family relations, business dealings, and community engagement. Ḥadīth emphasises that moral excellence is a defining feature of true faith. For instance, teachings on sincerity (niyyah), kindness, and mercy guide Muslims in building harmonious relationships and a just society. As contemporary scholarship notes,

Ḥadīth functions as "a guide to morals and ethics" and contributes to social harmony among Muslims (ResearchGate). Thus, it provides a moral compass that regulates both individual and collective behaviour.

2. Spiritual Significance of *Ḥadīth*

Beyond outward conduct, Ḥadīth plays a vital role in nurturing a Muslim's inner spiritual life. It strengthens the believer's relationship with Allah by encouraging remembrance (dhikr), supplication (duʿāʾ), sincerity (ikhlāṣ), and reliance on God (tawakkul). By emphasising divine mercy, forgiveness, and accountability, Ḥadīth cultivates spiritual awareness (taqwā). It teaches that faith is not merely theoretical but experiential, requiring the constant purification of the heart (tazkiyah al-nafs). Scholars note that Ḥadīth contributes to "spiritual and moral transformation" by guiding believers towards excellence (iḥsān) in worship and character (Lesson Islam). In daily life, this spiritual guidance shapes how Muslims approach challenges, maintain hope, and build resilience. It ensures that religious practice is not reduced to rituals alone but becomes a holistic system that integrates belief with inner consciousness.

3. Legal Significance of *Ḥadīth*

Ḥadīth is also indispensable as a primary source of Islamic law (Sharīʿah), second only to the Qurʾān. It offers detailed explanations and practical applications of Qurʾānic injunctions, many of which are stated in general terms. Without Ḥadīth, the implementation of key acts of worship—such as prayer, fasting, Zakāh, and pilgrimage—would be incomplete. Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) relies heavily on Ḥadīth to derive legal rulings on personal, social, and economic matters, including marriage, inheritance, trade, governance, and criminal justice. According to scholarly analysis, Ḥadīth provides "detailed and practical legal guidance" and is a major source of the rules of Islamic law. Furthermore, the rigorous science of Ḥadīth criticism ensures that only authentic reports are used in legal reasoning, thereby safeguarding the integrity of Islamic law.

True faith requires checking both inner spiritual intentions and outer legal compliance. How does letting the Ḥadīth shape your personal manners (akhlāq) and daily business choices transform Islam from a theoretical religious book into a fully active, lived reality?

How can this be integrated into daily Muslim life? The significance of Ḥadīth lies not only in its theoretical authority but also in its practical application. This guides Muslims in:

- performing acts of worship correctly;
- developing ethical character and social responsibility;
- making lawful decisions in personal and public life; and
- maintaining spiritual awareness in all circumstances.

In essence, Ḥadīth brings Islamic teachings to life. It bridges the gap between revelation and practice, ensuring that Islam functions as a complete way of life.



Figure 4.1 The Significance Of Hadith in Muslim Daily Life
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

4.4 *Ḥadīth* Practical Examples on Acts of Worship and Personal Ethics

To fully appreciate the relevance of Ḥadīth, it is essential to examine how authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) directly guide everyday life. These examples show how Ḥadīth translates Islamic teachings into practical actions in the areas of worship, interpersonal conduct, and personal ethics.

1. ***Ḥadīth* on Daily Acts of Worship (*ʿIbādāt*):** Ḥadīth provides detailed guidance on how Muslims perform acts of worship prescribed in the Qurʾān.

- **Prayer (*Ṣalāh*):** The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **(صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي)** *"Pray as you have seen me pray." (Reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).* This Ḥadīth establishes that the method and structure of prayer are based on the Prophet's practice.
- **Fasting (*Ṣawm*):** The Prophet said: **(مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ)** *"Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and seeking reward will have his past sins forgiven."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ*). This emphasises sincerity and the spiritual reward in fasting.

- **Intention (*Niyyah*):** (**إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ**) *"Actions are judged by intentions…"* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). This forms the foundation for all acts of worship in Islam.

2. *Ḥadīth* on Interpersonal Conduct (*Muʿāmalāt*): Ḥadīth also governs how Muslims interact with others in society.

- **Kindness and Brotherhood:** The Prophet said: (**لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ**) *"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). This promotes empathy and social harmony.
- **Good Speech: (مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ)** *"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). It encourages responsible communication.
- **Respect and Mercy: (مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ)** *"He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). It highlights compassion as a social value.

3. *Ḥadīth* on Personal Ethics (*Akhlāq*). Prophetic teachings profoundly shape personal character.

- **Honesty: (...إِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ، وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ).** *"Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise…"* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). The Ḥadīth establishes honesty as a fundamental virtue.
- **Avoiding Harm: (الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ)** *"A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). It encourages peaceful coexistence.
- **Modesty (*Ḥayāʾ*): (الْحَيَاءُ مِنَ الإِيمَانِ)** *"Modesty is part of faith."* (Reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*). This connects inner character to faith.

The examples above clearly demonstrate that Ḥadīth is not abstract knowledge but practical guidance for everyday life.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. What is the primary role of Ḥadīth in Muslims' daily life?
A. It replaces the Qurʾān
B. It provides historical information only
C. It serves as a comprehensive source of moral, spiritual, and legal guidance
D. It is used only for storytelling

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the three major dimensions of the significance of *Ḥadīth*?
A. Moral guidance
B. Spiritual guidance

C. Political governance
D. Legal guidance

3. Which concept does the Ḥadīth "Actions" emphasise in relation to intentions?

A. *Tawakkul*
B. *Niyyah*
C. Ṣawm
D. *Zakāh*

4. Which *Ḥadīth* promotes empathy and social harmony among Muslims?

A. "Modesty is part of faith"
B. "Truthfulness leads to righteousness"
C. "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself"
D. "Actions are judged by intentions"

5. According to the Ḥadīth, what is a defining characteristic of a true Muslim?

A. Wealth and status
B. Ability to memorise Qurʾān
C. Others are safe from his tongue and hand
D. Performing pilgrimage every year

4.5 Influence of Application of Hadith on Muslim Lifestyle

Ḥadīth, the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān, plays a crucial role in shaping Muslims' daily lives. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as preserved in Ḥadīth literature, provide practical guidance that extends beyond ritual worship to encompass social behaviour, economic conduct, and environmental responsibility. In the contemporary world, marked by globalisation, technological advancement, and complex socio-economic challenges, the application of Ḥadīth continues to influence Muslim lifestyle choices in meaningful and dynamic ways, such as:

1. Social Responsibilities

Ḥadīth significantly informs social ethics by promoting values such as compassion, justice, honesty, and mutual respect. For instance, the Prophet's teaching that a Muslim should avoid harming others establishes a foundational principle for peaceful coexistence (Al-Bukhārī, 1997; Muslim, 2006). This principle is particularly relevant in contemporary pluralistic societies, where Muslims interact with diverse communities. Moreover, Ḥadīth encourages positive interpersonal relations through kindness, empathy, and social responsibility. Teachings on maintaining family ties (ṣilat al-raḥim), caring for neighbours, and supporting the vulnerable contribute to the development of cohesive, morally

grounded communities (Siddiqi, 1993). In modern contexts, these teachings extend to responsible digital communication, discouraging harmful speech, misinformation, and online harassment. Thus, the application of Ḥadīth in social life fosters ethical conduct and promotes social harmony, aligning individual behaviour with broader communal well-being.

2. Economic Responsibilities

In the economic sphere, Ḥadīth provides a comprehensive ethical framework for financial transactions and professional conduct. The emphasis on honesty and trustworthiness in trade underscores the importance of integrity in economic dealings. The Prophet's teachings condemn fraud, exploitation, and unjust enrichment, thereby establishing principles of fairness and accountability (Kamali, 2003). Contemporary applications of these teachings are evident in the development of Islamic finance, which seeks to align economic practices with Sharīʿah principles, including prohibitions on ribā (interest) and unethical speculation. Furthermore, the concept of intention (niyyah) underscores the moral dimension of economic activities, ensuring that financial pursuits are conducted with sincerity and social responsibility (Al-Bukhārī, 1997). Additionally, Ḥadīth promotes charitable practices such as Zakāh and Ṣadaqah, which contribute to wealth redistribution and poverty alleviation. These principles remain highly relevant for addressing modern economic inequalities and fostering sustainable development.

3. Environmental Responsibilities

Although environmental concerns have gained prominence in recent times, the ethical foundations of environmental stewardship are deeply rooted in Ḥadīth. The Prophet's teachings emphasise moderation, conservation, and respect for natural resources. For example, instructions against wastefulness reflect a broader ecological ethic that discourages excessive consumption (Azami, 1992). The concept of human beings as stewards (khulafāʾ) of the earth is reinforced by prophetic guidance that encourages activities such as planting trees and preserving the environment. These teachings resonate strongly with contemporary environmental movements that advocate sustainability and ecological balance. In modern contexts, Muslims draw on these Ḥadīth to support environmental initiatives, including climate action, conservation efforts, and sustainable living practices. Thus, Ḥadīth contributes to an ethical framework that integrates spiritual responsibility with environmental awareness.

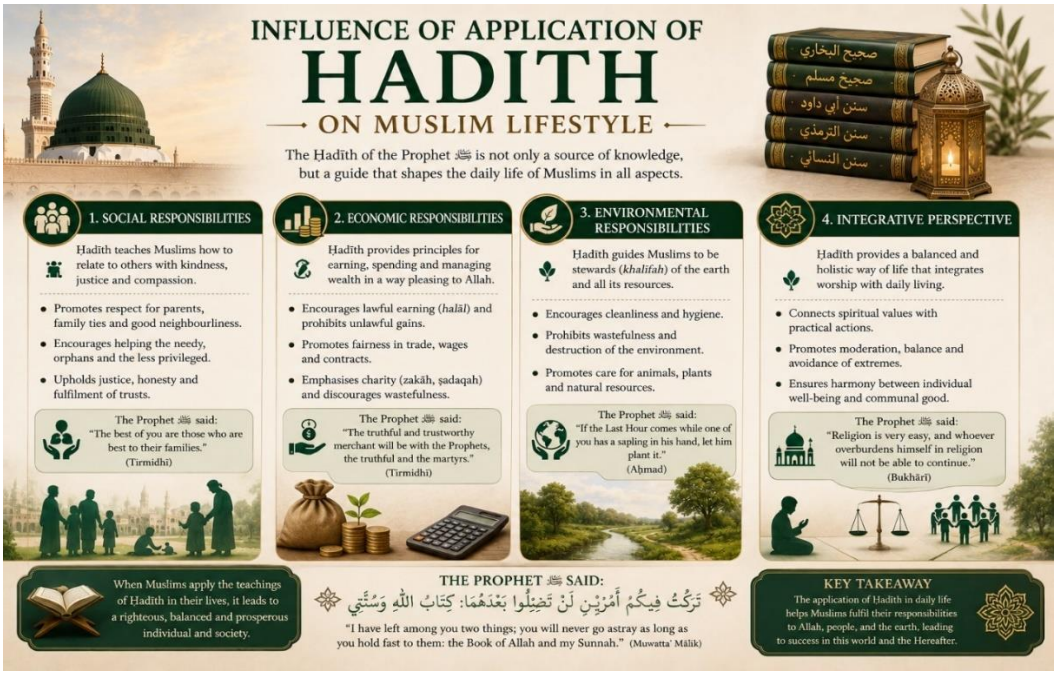


Figure 4.2 Influence of Application of Hadith on Muslim Lifestyle
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

4. Integrative Perspective

The influence of Ḥadīth on contemporary Muslim lifestyle choices can be understood as holistic and multidimensional. It encompasses:

- social ethics, by promoting justice and compassion;
- economic integrity, by ensuring fairness and accountability;
- environmental consciousness, by encouraging stewardship and sustainability; and

This holistic framework reflects the comprehensive nature of Islamic teachings, in which religious guidance encompasses all aspects of life.

4.6 Role of *Ḥadīth* in Shaping Muslim Attitudes

Ḥadīth, comprising the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), holds a central place in Islam as the second primary source of guidance after the Qur'ān. Beyond its legal significance, Ḥadīth plays a profound role in shaping Muslim attitudes, defined as enduring patterns of beliefs, values, and behavioural orientations. Through its ethical, spiritual, social, and legal dimensions, Ḥadīth provides a comprehensive framework that shapes how Muslims perceive and respond to various aspects of life.

When you consider how the Ḥadīth expands your modern lifestyle choices—from practising responsible speech on social media to avoiding interest in finance and planting trees for climate action—how does this holistic framework demonstrate that the Prophet's (SAW) 7th-century

guidance is designed to shape a Muslim's practical attitude towards 21st-century global crises?

Conceptual Framework: *Ḥadīth* as a Source of Attitudinal Formation
Ḥadīth serves as both a normative and practical guide, translating the Qur'ānic principles into lived reality. It performs interpretive, complementary, and legislative functions, thereby guiding Muslims in areas where the Qur'ān offers general directives. Consequently, Muslim attitudes are shaped not only by abstract doctrines but also by the Prophet's practical example (Sunnah), which embodies ideal conduct.

1. Moral and Ethical Attitudes
One of the most significant contributions of Ḥadīth is to the cultivation of moral consciousness. Prophetic traditions emphasise virtues such as honesty, humility, patience, and compassion. These teachings form the ethical backbone of Muslim society and shape interpersonal relationships. Studies indicate that Ḥadīth plays a central role in character formation, particularly within family and educational settings, where it is used to instil moral values from an early age. Thus, Muslim attitudes towards right and wrong are deeply rooted in Prophetic guidance.

2. Spiritual Attitudes and Inner Development
Ḥadīth significantly shapes spiritual attitudes by emphasising the purification of the heart (tazkiyah al-nafs), sincerity (ikhlāṣ), and consciousness of God (taqwā). These teachings encourage Muslims to cultivate inward discipline alongside outward practice. In contemporary contexts, Ḥadīth continues to guide spiritual attitudes, even in digital environments, by promoting self-control, modesty, and mindfulness, including lowering the gaze and guarding the heart. This demonstrates the adaptability of Ḥadīth in addressing modern ethical challenges.

3. Social and Communal Attitudes
Ḥadīth shapes how Muslims interact within society by promoting values such as justice, cooperation, brotherhood, and social responsibility. It discourages harmful behaviours such as gossip, slander, and injustice. For instance, in the context of modern communication, Ḥadīth provides ethical guidelines for responsible speech and interaction, including on social media platforms, emphasising truthfulness and constructive engagement. These teachings foster positive communal attitudes and social harmony.

4. Legal and Behavioural Attitudes
As a major source of Islamic law, Ḥadīth shapes Muslim attitudes towards obedience, discipline, and adherence to divine commandments. It provides detailed rulings on acts of worship, transactions, and daily conduct, thereby shaping behavioural norms. The legal dimension of

Ḥadīth ensures that attitudes are not merely theoretical but are translated into concrete practice, reinforcing a lifestyle aligned with Islamic principles.

5. Educational and Cultural Attitudes

Ḥadīth plays a pivotal role in Islamic education, shaping intellectual and cultural attitudes. It encourages the pursuit of knowledge, critical thinking, and moral responsibility. In Muslim societies, Ḥadīth-based teachings help develop a value-oriented educational system that integrates faith with learning. Moreover, cultural practices and traditions in many Muslim communities are heavily influenced by Ḥadīth, reinforcing shared norms and collective identity.

6. Contemporary Relevance

In modern times, the role of Ḥadīth in shaping attitudes remains highly relevant. Whether addressing bioethical issues, environmental responsibility, or digital conduct, Ḥadīth offers a moral compass that adapts to changing circumstances. Its emphasis on universal values ensures its continued applicability across diverse contexts.

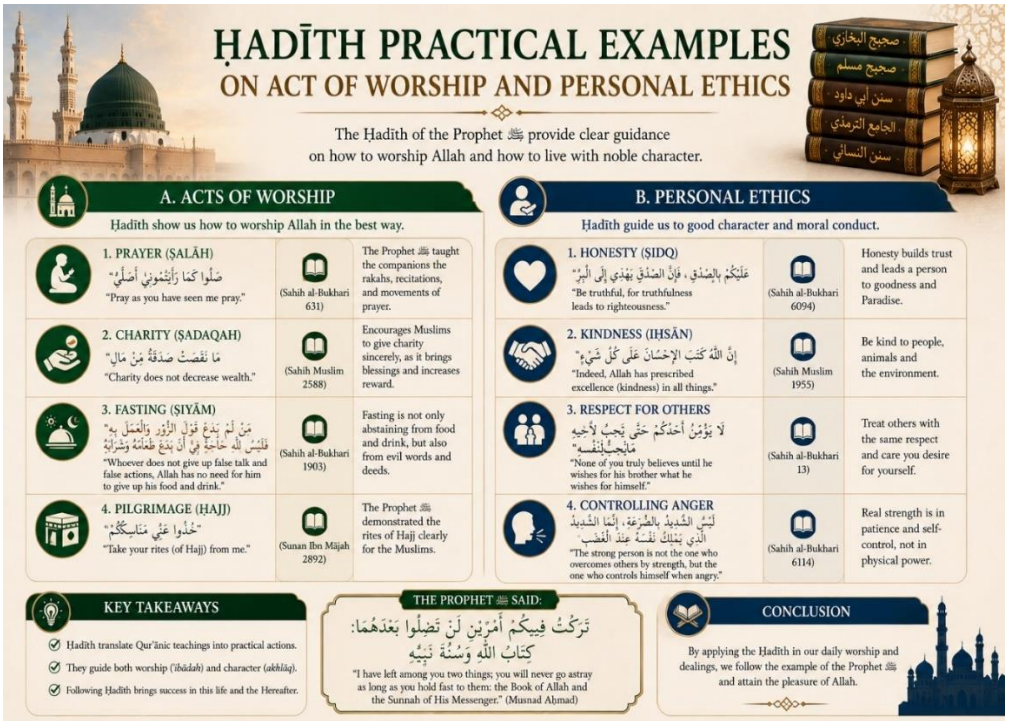


Figure 4.3 Hadith Practical Examples on Acts of Worship and Personal Ethics
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

1. A Muslim business owner refuses to engage in deceptive advertising and ensures transparent pricing. Which principle from the Ḥadīth is most directly applied?
A. Spiritual purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*)
B. Environmental stewardship
C. Economic integrity and accountability
D. Ritual observance

2. A social media user avoids spreading unverified information and refrains from harmful online comments. This behaviour best reflects which application of Ḥadīth?
A. Legal enforcement of *Sharīʿah*
B. Social responsibility and ethical communication
C. Economic justice
D. Political participation

3. A community organises tree-planting campaigns and promotes recycling in line with Islamic teachings. Which dimension of Ḥadīth influence does this illustrate?
A. Legal attitudes
B. Educational development
C. Environmental responsibility
D. Ritual practice

4. A student balances academic work with regular prayer and remembrance of Allah, maintaining discipline and spiritual focus. This reflects which integrated role of Ḥadīth?
A. Separation of religious and worldly life
B. Emphasis on ritual without ethics
C. Holistic development combining spiritual and behavioural attitudes
D. Exclusive focus on legal rulings

5. A Muslim avoids gossip in conversation and promotes respectful dialogue within their community. Which aspect of Ḥadīth shaping attitudes is most evident in this?
A. Political authority
B. Social and moral attitudes
C. Economic behaviour
D. Environmental ethics

4.7 Integrating the Teachings of Ḥadīth into Personal Daily Routines and Others'

The Ḥadīth structures everything from your physical health routines and work ethic to your precise daily schedule around the five prayers. How does treating these micro-habits as acts of worship change your perspective on time management compared with conventional productivity methods?

The teachings of Ḥadīth provide a comprehensive framework for guiding Muslim life. Beyond their legal authority, Ḥadīth serve as practical guides for structuring daily routines and shaping ethical conduct. By integrating these teachings into everyday life, Muslims can follow the Prophetic model (Sunnah), thereby achieving spiritual growth, moral discipline, and social cohesion (Kamali, 2003).

Conceptual Basis: *Ḥadīth* as a Practical Guide

Ḥadīth serve as an interpretive source for the Qur'ān, translating its general principles into concrete actions. The Prophet's lifestyle offers a lived interpretation of divine guidance, making Ḥadīth indispensable for personal and social development (Philips, 1997). This practical dimension enables Muslims to integrate religious teachings into structured daily habits.

1. Integration into Acts of Worship (*ʿIbādāt*)

Daily acts of worship are primarily derived from Ḥadīth. The detailed procedures for Ṣalāh (prayer), fasting, and other acts of devotion are set out in Prophetic traditions. For example, the Prophet instructed: "Pray as you have seen me praying" (Al-Bukhārī, 1997), which underscores the centrality of Ḥadīth in guiding ritual practice. Additionally, daily supplications (adhkār) and voluntary acts of worship help organise the believer's day around remembrance of Allah, reinforcing spiritual consciousness (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001).

2. Personal Hygiene and Health Practices

Ḥadīth emphasises cleanliness as a fundamental aspect of faith. The Prophet (SAW) encouraged practices such as using the siwāk, washing hands, and maintaining general hygiene. A well-known tradition states, "Cleanliness is half of faith" (Muslim, 2000). These teachings show that integrating Ḥadīth into daily routines supports not only spiritual well-being but also physical health (Al-Ghazālī, 2011).

3. Time Management and Daily Discipline

The Sunnah establishes a structured daily schedule centred on the five daily prayers, promoting discipline and time-consciousness. The Prophet (SAW) also emphasised moderation and balance, discouraging excess in both religious and worldly matters. Such guidance fosters productivity and helps individuals harmonise spiritual obligations with daily responsibilities (Kamali, 2003).

4. Ethical Conduct in Daily Interactions

Ḥadīth play a crucial role in shaping interpersonal behaviour. The Prophet (SAW) said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent" (Al-Bukhārī, 1997; Muslim, 2000). This teaching promotes mindful communication and ethical interaction. In

contemporary settings, this principle extends to digital communication, where responsible speech and respect for others are essential (Al-Ghazālī, 2011).

5. Economic and Professional Practices

Integrating Ḥadīth into professional life ensures ethical conduct in business and employment. The Prophet (SAW) emphasised honesty in trade, stating that truthful and trustworthy merchants will be among the righteous (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001). These teachings shape attitudes towards accountability, fairness, and integrity in economic activities, contributing to a just society (Kamali, 2003).

Self-Assessment Exercises 3

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Question 1:

Column A	**Column B**
A. Moral significance	1. Guides legal rulings and *Sharīʿah*
B. Spiritual significance	2. Nurtures inner faith and *taqwā*
C. Legal significance	3. Shapes ethical behaviour

Question 2

Column A	**Column B**
A. *Ṣalāh*	1. "Actions are judged by intentions"
B. *Ṣawm*	2. "Whoever fasts Ramadan…"
C. *Niyyah*	3. "Pray as you have seen me pray"

Question 3

Column A	**Column B**
A. Kindness and brotherhood	1. Speak good or remain silent
B. Good speech	2. Love for your brother what you love for yourself
C. Respect and mercy	3. He who does not show mercy…

Question 4

Column A	**Column B**
A. Economic responsibility	1. Avoiding wastefulness
B. Environmental responsibility	2. Honesty in trade
C. Social responsibility	3. Maintaining family ties

Question 5

Column A	**Column B**
A. Moral attitudes	1. Purification of the heart
B. Spiritual attitudes	2. Honesty and patience
C. Legal attitudes	3. Obedience to divine commandments

6. Social Responsibility and Community Engagement

Ḥadīth encourage acts of charity, kindness, and service to others as part of daily life. The Prophet (SAW) taught that even a smile is an act of charity (Muslim, 2000). Integrating these teachings into daily routines fosters compassion and strengthens communal bonds, thereby reinforcing the social dimension of Islam (Al-Ghazālī, 2011).

7. Family Life and Domestic Practices

The Prophet's social relations with his family offer a model for household conduct. He emphasised kindness, stating: "The best of you are those who are best to their families" (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001). Integrating these teachings into daily family routines fosters harmony, mutual respect, and emotional well-being within the household (Philips, 1997).

8. Integration in Contemporary Contexts

In modern society, the application of Ḥadīth extends into new areas, including digital ethics, environmental responsibility, and lifestyle choices. Principles such as moderation, avoidance of harm, and accountability remain relevant across changing contexts. This adaptability underscores the enduring relevance of Ḥadīth as a guide to contemporary Muslim life (Kamali, 2003).



Figure 4.4 Integrating The Teachings of Hadith Into Personal Daily Routines and Others

Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Challenges to Integration

Despite the comprehensive nature of Ḥadīth, challenges such as limited knowledge, misinterpretation, and pressures from modern lifestyles can hinder its integration. Addressing these challenges requires sound education, a proper understanding of context, and consistent practice (Philips, 1997).

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/SguORlYGvjc?si=qkagAsNMEQjSI4K1



Self-Assessment Exercises 4

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. *Ḥadīth* serve as an _____ source for the Qur'ān, translating its general principles into practical actions.

2. The Prophet's instruction "Pray as you have seen me praying" underscores the importance of the Ḥadīth in guiding _____.

3. The statement "Cleanliness is half of faith" highlights the role of Ḥadīth in promoting personal _____ and health practices.

4. The Sunnah promotes a structured daily schedule centred on the five daily _____, encouraging discipline and time management.

5. According to Ḥadīth, even a _____ is regarded as an act of charity, underscoring the importance of social responsibility.

Scenario: Living the Teachings of Ḥadīth Every Day

After learning about the importance of Ḥadīth, Umar decided to apply the Prophet's teachings to his daily life. He became more mindful of his prayers, spoke kindly to others, conducted business honestly, and avoided

wasting resources. He also began using social media responsibly, verifying information before sharing it. As he practised these teachings, Umar noticed positive changes in his character, relationships, and spiritual life. He realised that Ḥadīth is not merely a collection of historical narrations but a practical guide that helps Muslims live according to the teachings of Islam in every aspect of life.

How does integrating the teachings of Ḥadīth into daily life help Muslims develop sound character, strengthen their faith, and fulfil their social responsibilities?

4.7 Summary

Ḥadīth is a fundamental source of guidance in Islam, providing a comprehensive framework that shapes the moral, spiritual, legal, and social dimensions of Muslim life. It translates divine principles into practical guidance, enabling Muslims to embody Islamic teachings in their daily routines, relationships, and conduct. Through its emphasis on character formation, acts of worship, and ethical behaviour, Ḥadīth nurtures both individual piety and social harmony. Its relevance endures, as it continues to address contemporary challenges while preserving core Islamic values.

By influencing social interactions, economic practices, and environmental responsibility, Ḥadīth serves as a dynamic and adaptable guide for modern Muslim lifestyles. Furthermore, its integration into everyday practices, from personal hygiene to professional ethics, ensures that Islamic principles are not merely theoretical but actively lived. Overall, Ḥadīth plays a multifaceted and indispensable role in shaping Muslim attitudes and behaviour. It fosters a balanced and purposeful life by aligning spiritual devotion with worldly responsibilities, thereby guiding Muslims towards a holistic and ethically grounded way of life.

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4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:
1. C
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:
1. C
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:
Question 1: Answer: A–3, B–2, C–1
Question 2: Answer: A–3, B–2, C–1
Question 3: Answer: A–2, B–1, C–3
Question 4: Answer: A–2, B–1, C–3
Question 5: Answer: A–2, B–1, C–3

Self-Assessment Exercises 4:
1. explanatory
2. acts of worship / *Ṣalāh*
3. hygiene
4. prayers
5. smile

Unit 5 Attitude of Muslim Sects (*Firaq*) Towards *Ḥadīth*

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Outcomes
5.3 Interpretation of *Ḥadīth* and Emergence of Muslim Sects
5.4 Stance of Some Islamic Sects towards the Authority and Authenticity of Hadith
5.5 Factors influencing the differing attitudes of Sects towards Hadith
5.6 Methodological Approaches of Muslim Sects to the Collection, Authentication and Application of *Ḥadīth*
5.7 The Impact of the Differing Sects on the Development of Islamic Law
5.8 Summary
5.9 References/Further Readings
5.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



5.1 Introduction

Let us get started. The study of Ḥadīth occupies a central position in Islamic scholarship, serving as a primary source of guidance alongside the Qur'ān. However, throughout Islamic intellectual history, different Muslim sects (firaq) have developed varying attitudes towards the authority, interpretation, and application of Ḥadīth. These differences are rooted in theological orientations, methodological approaches, and historical circumstances that have shaped the development of Islamic thought. This unit explores the diverse perspectives of major Muslim sects, such as Ahl al-Sunnah, Shīʿah, Khārijites, and other theological schools, regarding the authenticity, authority, and role of Ḥadīth in religious life. While some groups uphold Ḥadīth as an essential and binding source of law and guidance, others adopt more critical or selective approaches, especially concerning the transmission chains (isnād) and the reliability of narrators.

These differing positions have significantly shaped Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (ʿaqīdah), and legal methodology (uṣūl al-fiqh). The unit further examines how these sectarian attitudes affect the acceptance or rejection of certain Ḥadīth collections, as well as their interpretation in matters of belief and practice. It highlights the role of Ḥadīth criticism, the development of canonical collections, and the criteria various sects use to validate prophetic traditions. By studying these perspectives, learners gain a deeper understanding of the diversity within the Muslim intellectual tradition and the factors that contribute to اختلاف (differences)

in religious interpretation. Ultimately, this unit aims to promote critical engagement, scholarly awareness, and a balanced appreciation of the role of Ḥadīth across different Muslim communities.



5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to

- identify the major Muslim sects (firaq) and their historical emergence in relation to the acceptance and interpretation of Ḥadīth;
- describe the general stance of some Islamic sects on the authority and authenticity of Ḥadīth;
- analyse how theological, political, and social factors shaped the differing attitudes of various sects towards Ḥadīth;
- compare the methodological approaches of different sects to the collection, authentication, and use of Ḥadīth; and
- evaluate the impact of these differing attitudes on the development of Islamic law (*sharīʿah*), theology (*ʿaqīdah*), and religious practice



5.3 Interpretation of *Ḥadīth* and Emergence of Muslim Sects

Since early political conflicts over leadership (khilāfah) directly shaped how different groups accepted or rejected certain chains of transmission, how does recognising that theological splits were heavily influenced by historical context change the way you approach ikhtilāf (scholarly disagreement) today?

The interpretation of Ḥadīth has played a significant role in the intellectual and theological development of Islam. While the Qur'ān remains the primary source of Islamic guidance, Ḥadīth offers detailed explanations of its teachings. However, differences in interpreting Ḥadīth—particularly regarding authenticity, authority, and application—contributed to the emergence of various Muslim sects (firaq). These differences were not merely textual but were also shaped by political, social, and theological contexts in early Islamic history, as follows:

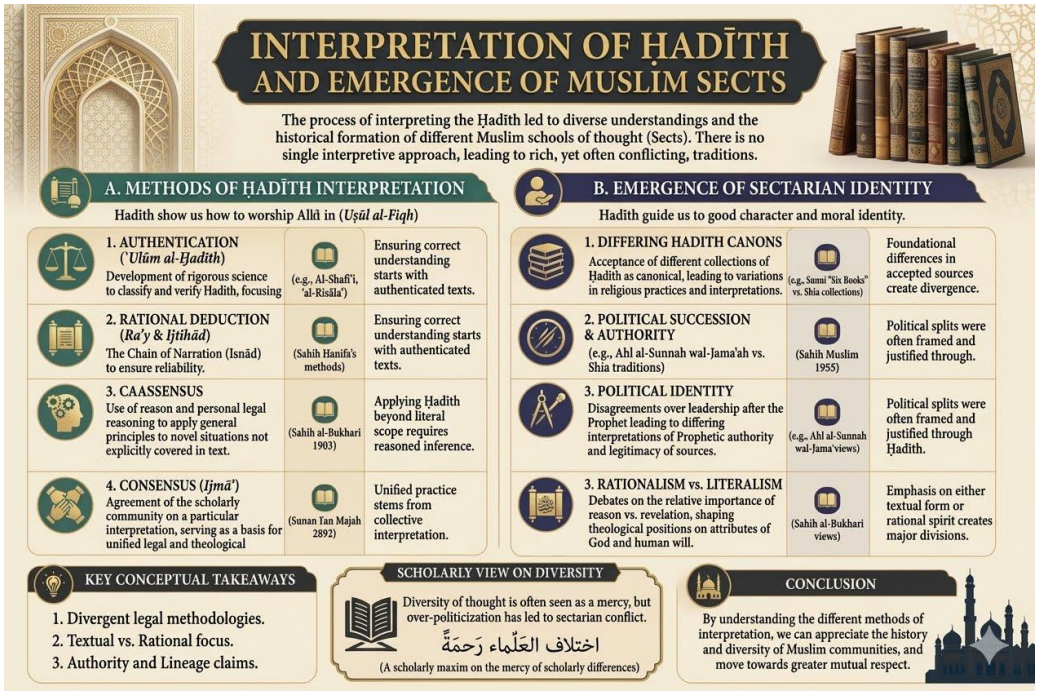


Figure 5.1 Interpretation of Hadith and Emergence of Muslim Sects
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

1. **Historical Context of Sectarian Emergence**
   The emergence of Muslim sects dates to the period after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW), particularly during the political conflicts surrounding leadership (imāmah/khilāfah). Events such as the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan and the ensuing conflicts during the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib created divisions that later hardened into theological differences. As these sects evolved, their approaches to Ḥadīth interpretation became increasingly distinct. Political allegiances often shaped the acceptance or rejection of certain narrations, especially those concerning leadership and legitimacy.

2. **Methodological Differences in *Ḥadīth* Interpretation**

   One of the primary factors in sectarian diversity is **اختلاف** (ikhtilāf) in methodology. Muslim scholars developed various principles for interpreting Ḥadīth, including:
   - evaluation of chains of transmission (*isnād*);
   - analysis of textual content (*matn*);
   - reconciliation of conflicting narrations; and
   - consideration of context and circumstances.

Different sects emphasised these principles in different ways. For instance, some groups prioritised strict authentication criteria, while others incorporated rational analysis (ʿaql) alongside transmitted knowledge (naql).

3. The Role of Theology in Interpretation

Theological orientations significantly shaped how Ḥadīth was interpreted. For example, rationalist schools such as the Muʿtazilah often subjected Ḥadīth to logical scrutiny, accepting only those traditions consistent with reason and established doctrine. By contrast, traditionalist scholars emphasised the authority of authentic Ḥadīth, even when its meaning required careful interpretation.

Differences in *Ḥadīth* interpretation contributed to the crystallisation of sectarian identities. These differences affected:

- legal rulings (*fiqh*);
- doctrinal beliefs (ʿ*aqīdah*); and
- ritual practices.

Thus, Ḥadīth interpretation became a defining feature of sectarian thought, shaping each group's understanding and practice of Islam.

5.4 Stance of Some Islamic Sects towards the Authority and Authenticity of *Ḥadīth*

Given how heavily a sect's core theology dictates its filter for truth—whether Sunnis using strict chain-and-text sciences, Shiites prioritising the Ahl al-Bayt, or Qurʾānists completely rejecting the corpus—how does this cross-examination of Ḥadīth filter reveal that the way a group defines "authentic authority" is what truly shapes its distinct sectarian identity?

Some Islamic sects are discussed with respect to their attitudes towards the authority and authenticity of Ḥadīth, as shown below:

1. **Ahl al-Sunnah (Sunni Islam)**
   Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah regard Ḥadīth as a fundamental source of Islamic law and guidance, second only to the Qur'ān. Sunni scholars developed rigorous sciences of Ḥadīth (علوم الحديث), including classification systems such as ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), ḥasan (good), and ḍaʿīf (weak). Canonical collections, such as those of Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, are widely accepted. Sunni methodology emphasises criticism of both isnād and matn, ensuring that only reliable narrations are used in legal and theological matters.

2. **Shīʿah (Shiite Islam)**
   Shīʿah Muslims also regard Ḥadīth as an essential source, but differ in their criteria for authenticity. They prioritise narrations transmitted through the أهل البيت (Ahl al-Bayt), particularly those from the Imams descended from the Prophet. As a result, some Ḥadīth accepted in Sunni collections are not recognised in Shīʿah

scholarship. Shīʿah Ḥadīth collections, such as Al-Kāfī, reflect their theological emphasis on the Imams' authority to interpret religious teachings.

3. Khārijites

The Khārijites adopted a more selective approach to Ḥadīth. Although they did not reject Ḥadīth outright, they were cautious about accepting narrations, particularly those linked to political figures they opposed. Their strict theological stance often led them to interpret Ḥadīth in ways that supported their views on piety and governance.

4. Muʿtazilah

The Muʿtazilah are known for their rationalist approach. They accepted *Ḥadīth* but subjected them to rigorous rational evaluation. Any narration that contradicted reason or fundamental theological principles was rejected or reinterpreted. This approach led to a more limited acceptance of *Ḥadīth* compared to traditionalist schools.

5. Qurʾānists (*Ahl al-Qurʾān*)

Qurʾānists hold a minority position that rejects the authority of Ḥadīth as a binding source of Islamic law. They argue that the Qur'ān alone is sufficient for guidance. This stance is highly controversial and widely rejected by mainstream Muslim scholarship.

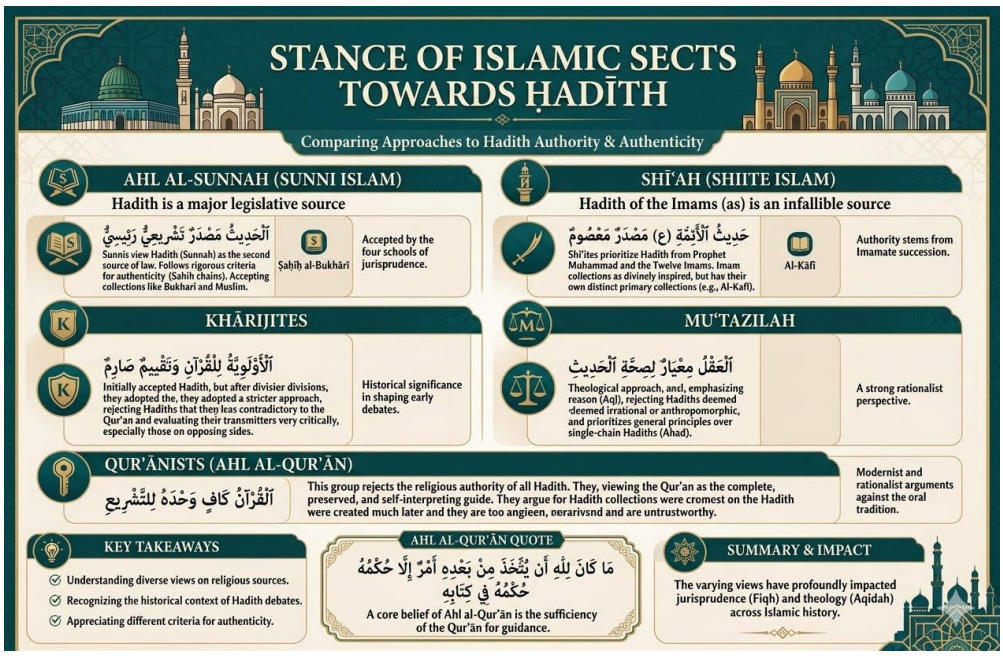


Figure 5.2 Stance of Islamic Sects Towards Hadith
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

The differing stances of these sects highlight the diversity within Islamic thought. While all groups acknowledge the importance of understanding the Prophet's teachings, they differ in their approaches to:

- criteria for authenticity;
- sources of transmission; and
- the role of reason in interpretation.

These differences have had lasting effects on Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and communal identity.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1

1. Differences in the interpretation of Ḥadīth contributed to the emergence of Muslim _____.
Answer: sects
2. Ahl al-Sunnah classify Ḥadīth as ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, and _____.
Answer: ḍaʿīf
3. Shīʿah Muslims give priority to narrations transmitted via the _____.
Answer: *Ahl al-Bayt*
4. The Muʿtazilah emphasised the use of _____ in evaluating Ḥadīth.
Answer: reason
5. *Qurʾānists* believe that the _____ alone provides sufficient Islamic *guidance.*
Answer: Qur'ān

The interpretation of Ḥadīth has been central to the emergence and development of Muslim sects. Differences in methodology, theology, and historical experience have produced diverse views on the authority and authenticity of Ḥadīth. Despite these differences, Ḥadīth remains a crucial element of Islamic scholarship, reflecting the enduring significance of the Prophet's teachings in shaping Muslim thought and practice.

5.5 Factors Influencing the Differing Attitudes of Muslim Sects towards *Ḥadīth*

Since a group's entire belief system depends on its source of truth, how does seeing that political disputes over the caliphate directly shaped whether a sect trusted a narrator or relied on raw human logic change your understanding of how Islamic law was formulated?

The divergence in Muslim sectarian attitudes towards Ḥadīth (Prophetic traditions) stems from a complex interplay of theological, political, epistemological, and historical factors. These differences have

significantly shaped Islamic intellectual history and legal development, as outlined below:

1. **Theological Foundations**
   One of the primary factors shaping sectarian attitudes is theological orientation. Sunni Islam generally upholds the authority of the Prophet's traditions as preserved by the Companions (ṣaḥābah), whereas Shiʿi Islam emphasises transmission through the Prophet's household (Ahl al-Bayt). Consequently, Shiʿi scholars tend to question the reliability of certain Companions, thereby affecting their acceptance of particular narrations (Momen, 1985). This theological divergence shapes the criteria for accepting Ḥadīth and the hierarchy of transmitters.

2. **Political and Historical Context**
   Political conflicts following the death of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), particularly the dispute over leadership (caliphate), were crucial in shaping sectarian identities. The emergence of sects such as the Khārijites and the Shiʿa was closely tied to these disputes. These political tensions shaped the acceptance or rejection of certain narrators, especially those associated with opposing factions (Brown, 2009). As a result, Ḥadīth became intertwined with political legitimacy and authority.
3. **Epistemological Differences**
   Muslim sects also differ in their epistemological approaches to knowledge. Sunni scholars developed a rigorous science of Ḥadīth criticism (ʿilm al-Ḥadīth), emphasising analysis of isnād (chain of transmission) and matn (textual content) (Kamali, 2014). In contrast, some sects, such as the Muʿtazilites, prioritised rationalism and were more critical of Ḥadīth reports that conflicted with reason or Qurʾānic principles (Abrahamov, 1996). These epistemological differences contribute to varying degrees of reliance on Ḥadīth.
4. **Role of the Qurʾān**
   Another factor concerns the relationship between the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. Some groups, often called Qurʾānists, argue that the Qurʾān alone is sufficient as a source of guidance and reject the authority of Ḥadīth altogether. Although this view is marginal within mainstream Islam, it highlights the spectrum of attitudes towards Ḥadīth authority (Brown, 2009).
5. **Development of Legal Schools**
   The formation of Islamic jurisprudential schools (madhāhib) also shaped attitudes towards Ḥadīth. Schools such as the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī differed in how they used Ḥadīth, particularly in balancing it with other sources such as analogy (qiyās) and consensus (ijmāʿ). For instance, Imām Mālik gave weight to the practice of the people of Madinah, whereas Imām Abū Ḥanīfah emphasised reasoning in cases of weak Ḥadīth (Kamali, 2014).

5.6 Methodological Approaches of Muslim Sects to the Collection, Authentication, and Application of *Ḥadīth*

When you look at how uniquely each school applies a verified Ḥadīth—whether the Mālikīs compare it to the living practice of Madinah or the Ḥanafīs favour analogy over weak reports—how does this show that authenticating a text is only half the battle, and that the real challenge lies in how a scholar's legal priorities dictate its final application?

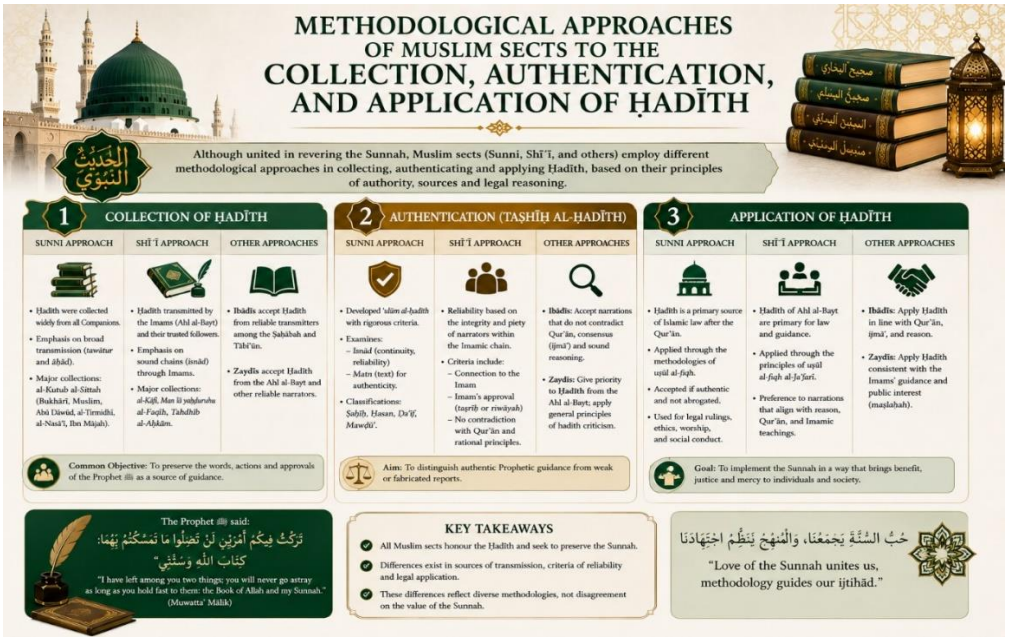


Figure 5.3 Methodological Approaches of Muslim Sects to the Collection, Authentication, and Application of Ḥadīth

Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

Muslim sects have developed distinct methodologies for collecting, verifying, and applying Ḥadīth, which reflect their theological commitments and legal priorities.

1. Collection of *Ḥadīth*

Sunni scholars made extensive efforts to collect Ḥadīth, producing canonical collections such as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. These collections were based on strict criteria for transmission and authenticity (Brown, 2009). By contrast, Shiʿi scholars compiled their own collections, such as Al-Kāfī by al-Kulaynī, focusing on narrations transmitted through the Imams (Momen, 1985).

2. Authentication (*Taṣḥīḥ al-Ḥadīth*)

The science of Ḥadīth authentication involves assessing the reliability of narrators and the continuity of transmission. Sunni scholars developed categories such as ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), ḥasan (good), and ḍaʿīf (weak). They relied heavily on biographical evaluation (ʿilm al-rijāl) (Kamali, 2014). Shiʿi scholars also developed their own classification system but differed in their assessments of narrators, especially Companions who were not aligned with the Ahl al-Bayt. Their criteria place greater emphasis on the integrity of the Imams as infallible transmitters (Momen, 1985).

3. Application of *Ḥadīth*

In legal and ethical matters, Sunni schools differ in how they apply Ḥadīth. For example:

- The Shāfiʿī school gives precedence to authentic Ḥadīth over other sources.
- The Ḥanafī school may prioritise analogy when a Ḥadīth is weak.
- The Mālikī school regards the practice of Madinah as a living tradition.

Shiʿi jurisprudence relies heavily on the Imams' teachings, interpreting Ḥadīth within the framework of Imamate doctrine. By contrast, rationalist sects such as the Muʿtazilites tend to interpret Ḥadīth in light of reason and ethical principles (Abrahamov, 1996).

Modern scholars have introduced new methods, including historical criticism and contextual analysis, to reassess the authenticity and application of Ḥadīth, prompting renewed debates about the role of Ḥadīth in contemporary Muslim societies (Brown, 2009).

Self-Assessment Exercises 2

Answer the following questions by selecting the most suitable option:

1. Which factor primarily explains Shiʿi preference for certain *Ḥadīth* transmitters?
   A. Linguistic analysis
   B. Political neutrality
   C. Emphasis on Ahl al-Bayt
   D. Economic considerations

2. **What is the primary focus of ʿilm al-Ḥadīth in Sunni Islam??**
   A. Qurʾānic exegesis
   B. Chain and text verification
   C. Political history
   D. Linguistic translation

3. Which sect is known for prioritising rationalism over *Ḥadīth*?
   A. Khārijites
   B. Muʿtazilites
   C. Sunnis
   D. Sufis

4. Which Sunni school gives priority to the practice of Madinah?
   A. Ḥanafī
   B. Mālikī
   C. Shāfiʿī
   D. Ḥanbalī

5. What is a key feature of Shiʿi *Ḥadīth* methodology?
   A. Rejection of all narrators
   B. Exclusive reliance on the Qurʾān
   C. Emphasis on Imams as transmitters
   D. Absence of a classification system

5.7 The Impact of the Differing Sects on the Development of Islamic Law

The emergence of various Muslim sects (firaq) has had a profound and lasting impact on the development of Islamic law (Sharīʿah). Rooted in theological, political, and methodological divergences, these sectarian differences contributed to the richness, diversity, and complexity of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). While they sometimes led to legal fragmentation, they also fostered intellectual dynamism and adaptability

within the Islamic legal tradition. These impacts can be discussed as follows:

1. **Diversification of Legal Thought**

   One of the most significant effects of sectarian differences is the diversification of legal thought. Sunni Islam developed four major schools of law—the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools, each with distinct methodologies for deriving legal rulings. These differences arose partly from varying attitudes towards sources of law, especially Ḥadīth, analogy (qiyās), and consensus (ijmāʿ) (Kamali, 2014). Similarly, Shiʿi Islam developed its own legal system, particularly within the Jaʿfarī school, which is based on the teachings of the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt. This school differs significantly from Sunni jurisprudence in its sources and interpretive principles, especially in its reliance on the authority of the Imams (Momen, 1985). These parallel developments enriched Islamic law by offering multiple interpretive frameworks.

2. **Development of Legal Methodologies (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*)**

   Sectarian differences were central to the development of legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh). For example, Imām al-Shāfiʿī systematised the principles of legal reasoning and emphasised the primacy of authentic Ḥadīth over other sources. By contrast, the Ḥanafī school allowed greater flexibility through juristic preference (istiḥsān) (Hallaq, 2009). Shiʿi legal theory also developed distinct principles, including the use of reason (ʿaql) as an independent source of law. This reflects a broader epistemological divide between Sunni and Shiʿi approaches (Momen, 1985). These methodological innovations shaped the structure and evolution of Islamic legal systems.

3. **Influence on Legal Rulings and Practices**

   Differences among sects have led to variations in legal rulings on issues such as prayer, marriage, inheritance, and criminal law. For instance, differing acceptance and interpretation of Ḥadīth can result in divergent rulings on ritual practices. While these differences may appear contradictory, they are generally recognised as valid within their respective legal frameworks (Kamali, 2014).

Sectarian differences birthed completely parallel systems—like the Sunni Uṣūl al-Fiqh and the Shiʿi Jaʿfarī school—how does this vast legal plurality prove that Islamic law was designed to be a flexible, living tradition capable of adapting to different cultures rather than a rigid, singular code?

This plurality has enabled Islamic law to adapt to diverse cultural and social contexts across the Muslim world. It has also contributed to the principle of legal tolerance (ikhtilāf), which recognises legitimate differences of opinion among scholars.

4. Role in Legal Flexibility and Adaptability

Sectarian diversity has enhanced the flexibility of Islamic law. The existence of multiple legal schools enables jurists to select opinions that best suit changing circumstances, a practice sometimes referred to as takhayyur (selection) and talfiq (combination of opinions). This adaptability is particularly relevant in contemporary contexts, where new legal challenges arise (Hallaq, 2009).

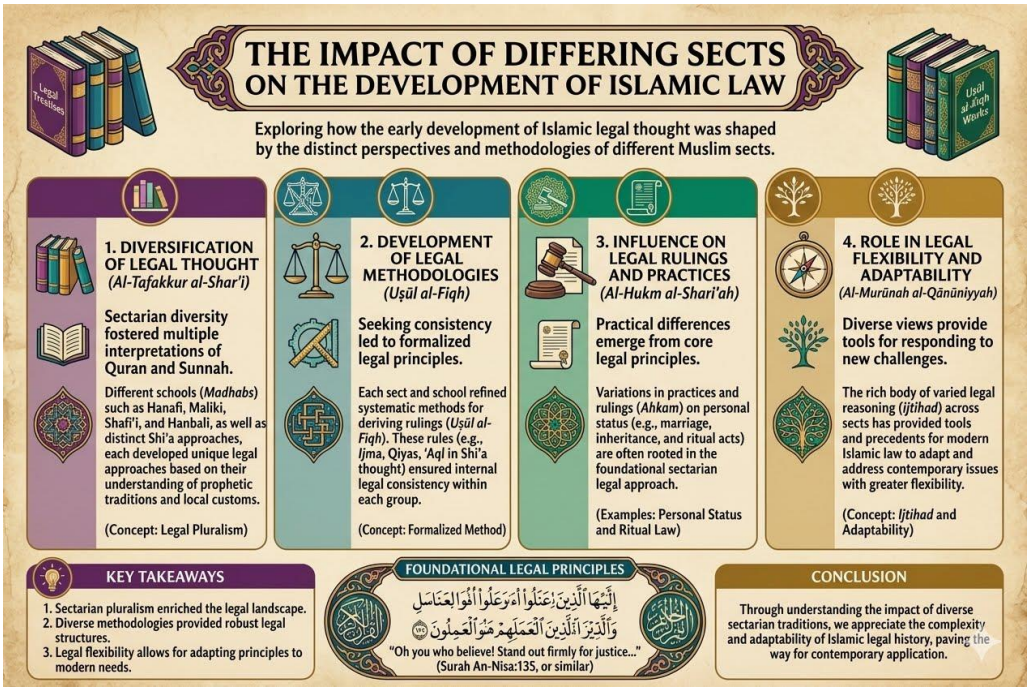


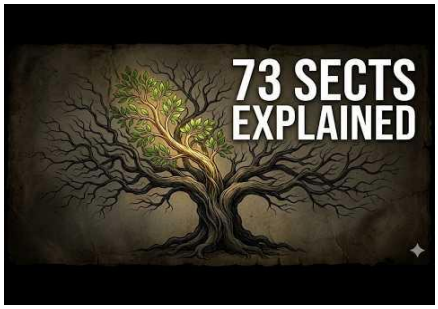
Figure 5.4 The Impact of Differing Sects on the Development of Islamic Law
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Despite its benefits, sectarian diversity has posed challenges. In some cases, rigid adherence to a particular school or sect has led to legal stagnation (taqlīd) and resistance to reform. Additionally, political manipulation of sectarian differences has sometimes resulted in conflict

and division within Muslim societies (Brown, 2009). Sectarian diversity also has contemporary relevance; in the modern era, there is an increasing emphasis on harmonising different legal traditions to address global challenges in areas such as human rights, finance, and governance. Contemporary scholars advocate a more integrative approach that draws on multiple sectarian perspectives while remaining faithful to the core principles of Islamic law (Kamali, 2014).

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/WKihLNAWNsI?si=CjuKd-pVRxxYl04t



Self-Assessment Exercises 3

Match items in Column A with the correct options in Column B.

Column A (Concepts/Terms)	**Column B (Descriptions)**
A. Ḥanafī School	1. Emphasises the authority of the Imams and Ahl al-Bayt
B. Jaʿfarī School	2. Refers to strict adherence to established legal opinions
C. *Taqlīd*	3. Known for using juristic preference (*istiḥsān*)
D. *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*	4. The principles and methodology of Islamic jurisprudence
E. *Ikhtilāf*	5. Recognition of legitimate differences in legal opinions

Scenario: Respecting Different Approaches to Ḥadīth

During an Islamic seminar, students from diverse Muslim backgrounds discussed a Ḥadīth on a religious practice. Although they all respected the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), they realised that their scholars differed in assessing the narration's authenticity and in applying it. Their lecturer explained that these differences stemmed from distinct historical experiences, theological perspectives, and methods of interpreting Ḥadīth. The discussion helped the students appreciate that, despite differing approaches, all schools sought to preserve and understand the Prophet's guidance with sincerity and scholarly rigour.

How have differences in the interpretation and authentication of Ḥadīth contributed to the emergence of various Muslim sects and to their approaches to Islamic law?



5.8 Summary

We have examined how different Muslim sects (firaq) have understood, evaluated, and utilised Ḥadīth (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ), and how these differences have shaped Islamic thought and law. A central theme of the unit is that Ḥadīth is a key source of Islamic guidance, second only to the Qurʾān, yet its authority has not been interpreted uniformly across sects. While Sunni Muslims generally accept a broad corpus of Ḥadīth transmitted through the Companions, Shiʿi Muslims prioritise narrations transmitted through the Prophet's family (Ahl al-Bayt). Other groups, such as the Muʿtazilites, apply rational scrutiny, and some Qurʾānists reject Ḥadīth authority altogether. The unit further explains that attitudes toward Ḥadīth are shaped by several factors, including theological beliefs, political conflicts (especially after the Prophet's death), methodological approaches to knowledge, and varying interpretations of the relationship between the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth.

These factors led to distinct standards for accepting or rejecting Ḥadīth narrations. Another major focus is the methodological approaches to collecting, authenticating, and applying Ḥadīth. Sunni scholars developed sophisticated sciences such as ʿilm al-Ḥadīth and ʿilm al-rijāl to verify authenticity, while Shiʿi scholars established parallel systems centred on the authority of the Imams. Differences also exist in how Ḥadīth is applied in legal reasoning, with various schools prioritising sources differently. Finally, the unit highlights the impact of these sectarian differences on the development of Islamic law (Sharīʿah). The emergence of multiple legal schools enriched Islamic jurisprudence by introducing diverse

methodologies and interpretations. While this diversity sometimes led to disagreement, it also fostered flexibility, adaptability, and intellectual growth within the Islamic legal tradition. Consequently, this unit demonstrates that sectarian diversity in Islam, particularly regarding Ḥadīth, has been both a source of complexity and a driver of rich scholarly development, ultimately shaping the evolution of Islamic law and practice.



5.9 References/Further Readings

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5.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:
1. sects
2. *ḍaʿīf*
3. *Ahl al-Bayt*
4. reason
5. Qur'ān

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:
1. C
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:
A → 3
B → 1
C → 2
D → 4
E → 5

MODULE 2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMPILATION OF *ḤADĪTH*

Unit 1 Preservation of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 2 Writing and Compilation of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 3 The Six Authentic Collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*)
Unit 4 Classification of *Ḥadīth*
Unit 5 Contributions of Key *Ḥadīth* Scholars

Unit 1 Preservation of *Ḥadīth*

Unit Structure

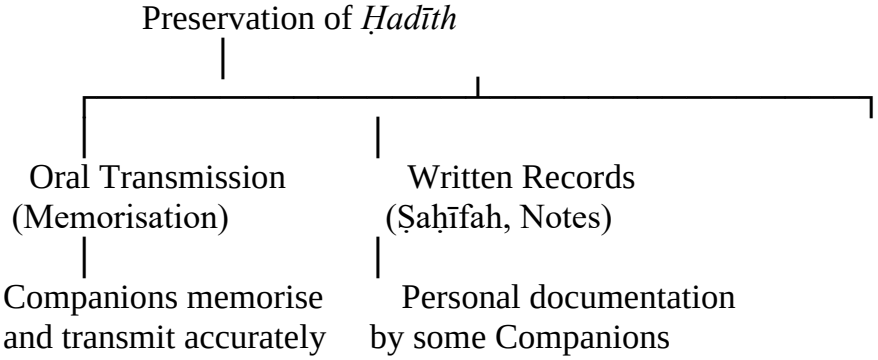
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Learning Outcomes
1.3 Historical efforts to preserve the *Ḥadīth* during the first three generations of Islam.
1.4 Oral and written methods employed by the Companions and Successors in safeguarding the authenticity of *Ḥadīth*.
1.5 The role of *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text) in ensuring the reliability of *Ḥadīth*
1.6 Contribution of early scholars, compilations, and *Ḥadīth* sciences in protecting the integrity of the Sunnah.
1.7 The significance of preservation of *Ḥadīth* for the continuity of Islamic law, theology, and daily Muslim practice.
1.8 Summary
1.9 References/Further Readings
1.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



1.1 Introduction

The preservation of Ḥadīth is a foundational aspect of Islamic scholarship. Recognising these efforts helps the audience appreciate their vital role in safeguarding Islamic guidance for future generations, fostering a sense of responsibility and connection.

Diagram 1: Early Preservation Methods



The preservation of Ḥadīth was a carefully structured and evolving process that combined memorisation, documentation, and critical analysis. Through the dedication of early Muslims and scholars, the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) were preserved with a level of scrutiny unmatched in many historical traditions.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the historical efforts made during the Prophet's lifetime and the early generations to preserve *Ḥadīth*;
- describe the oral and written methods employed by the companions and successors in safeguarding the authenticity of Ḥadīth;
- analyse the role of *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text) in ensuring the reliability of *Ḥadīth*;
- evaluate the contributions of early scholars, compilations, and *Ḥadīth* sciences in protecting the integrity of the sunnah; and
- assess the significance of preservation of *Ḥadīth* for the continuity of Islamic law, theology, and daily muslim practice

1.3 Highlight the importance of the first three generations' efforts to preserve Ḥadīth, as they laid the foundation for the authentic transmission and understanding of Prophetic teachings.

The preservation of *Ḥadīth* during the first three generations, namely the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*), Successors (*tābiʿūn*), and Successors of the Successors (*tābiʿ al-tābiʿīn*), represents a foundational phase in Islamic intellectual history. These generations collectively established the

principles and practices that ensured the authenticity and continuity of Prophetic traditions as discussed below:



Figure 1.1 Historical Efforts to Preserve the Hadith
Source – AI-generated image, July 2026, adopted by Fatimah

Preservation shifted across three generations—from the raw memories of the Companions to the dense critical sciences—demonstrating the early Muslim community's dedication to developing a reliable scientific methodology and inspiring confidence in the integrity of Ḥadīth.

1. **Preservation during the Era of the Companions**
   Describe how the Companions' close relationship with the Prophet enabled them to accurately memorise and transmit Ḥadīth, with some maintaining written records, such as the Ṣaḥīfah of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿāṣ, which illustrate early preservation techniques.
2. **Preservation during the Era of the Successors (Tābiʿūn)**
   The Successors inherited Ḥadīth knowledge from the Companions and expanded its transmission across newly established Islamic regions. As the Muslim community grew, so did the need for systematic documentation and verification. Scholars such as al-Zuhrī played a crucial role in early compilation efforts, particularly under the directive of Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who initiated the formal collection of Ḥadīth to prevent its loss (Kamali, 2014).
3. **Preservation during the Era of the Successors of the Successors**
   Explain how, by the third generation, Ḥadīth scholarship had become a formal discipline with sciences such as Isnād and Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl, demonstrating the systematic evolution of preservation efforts into a scientific methodology.

Table 1: Summary of Preservation across the Three Generations

Generation	Key Features of Preservation	Major Contributions
Companions	Oral memorisation, limited writing	Direct transmission from the Prophet
Successors	Expansion and early documentation	Regional dissemination of *Ḥadīth*
Successors of Successors	Systematic verification and compilation	Development of *Ḥadīth* sciences

1.4 Oral and Written Methods Employed by the Companions and Successors

The preservation of Ḥadīth relied on a dual methodology: oral transmission and written documentation, which complemented each other in safeguarding authenticity.

1. Oral Methods of Preservation

Oral transmission was the primary method in early Islam, owing to the strong memory culture of Arabian society. Key features include:

- Memorisation (*ḥifẓ*): Companions memorised *Ḥadīth* with precision
- Repetition and teaching: Regular recitation reinforced accuracy
- Verification: Narrations were cross-checked with other Companions

This method ensured wide dissemination while maintaining accuracy (Brown, 2009).

2. Written Methods of Preservation

Although initially limited, writing played a significant role in preserving *Ḥadīth*. Examples include:

- Personal notebooks (*ṣuḥuf*)
- Official documentation encouraged during later periods
- Early compilations by scholars

Written preservation became increasingly important as the Muslim world expanded and the risk of fabrication increased (Kamali, 2014).

Diagram: Oral vs Written Preservation

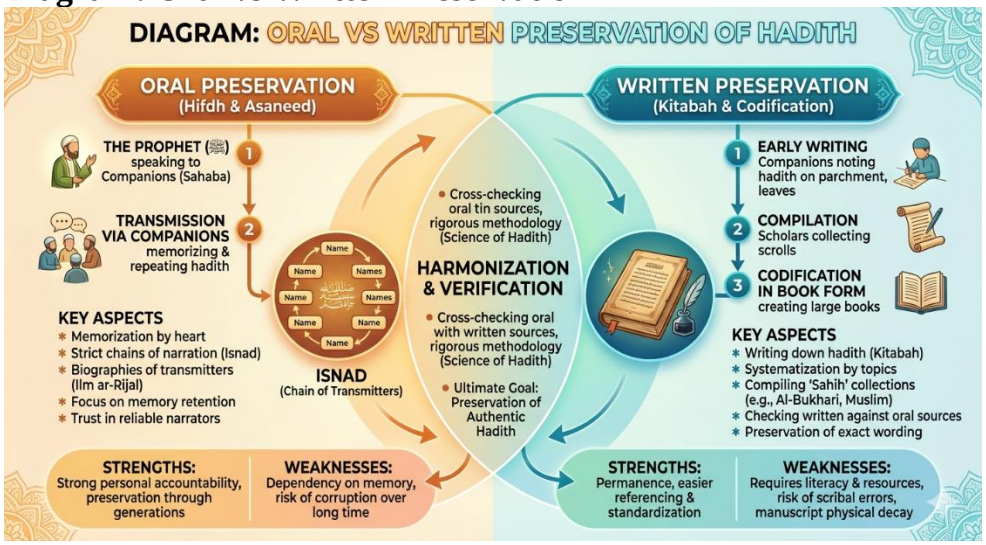


Figure 1.2 Oral vs Written Preservation of Hadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Preservation of *Ḥadīth*

Oral Method | **Written Method**

Memorisation (*Ḥifẓ*) | ***Ṣaḥīfah* (Documents)**
Repetition | **Personal Notes**
Teaching Circles | **Early Compilation**
Verification | **Official Recording**

3. Integration of Both Methods

The combination of oral and written methods created a robust preservation system. Oral transmission ensured flexibility and widespread learning, while written records provided stability and reference points. Together, they reduced errors and enhanced reliability.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Which generation had direct contact with the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW)?
   A. Successors
   B. Companions
   C. Scholars
   D. Tābiʿ al-Tābiʿīn

2. What was the primary method of Ḥadīth preservation among the Companions?
   A. Printing
   B. Digital storage
   C. Oral memorisation
   D. Translation
3. Who initiated formal efforts to compile Ḥadīth?
   A. Abū Bakr
   B. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb
   C. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz
   D. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib

4. What is *ʿIlm al-Rijāl* concerned with?
   A. Writing manuscripts
   B. Evaluating narrators
   C. Translating texts
   D. Memorising Qurʾān

5. What is the main advantage of combining oral and written methods?
   A. Reduces memorisation
   B. Eliminates scholars
   C. Ensures accuracy and preservation
   D. Simplifies translation

1.5 The Role of *Isnād* and *Matn* in Ensuring the Reliability of *Ḥadīth*

The reliability of Ḥadīth rests on two core components: the isnād (chain of transmission) and the matn (text/content). Together, they form a dual verification system that safeguards the authenticity and integrity of prophetic traditions. The isnād is the sequence of narrators transmitting a Ḥadīth from the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) to later generations. Early Muslim scholars developed rigorous criteria for evaluating narrators, focusing on their moral integrity (ʿadālah) and accuracy (ḍabṭ). A continuous and reliable isnād was deemed essential for a Ḥadīth to be accepted as authentic (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

A Ḥadīth can only be accepted if both its human transmission line (isnād) and its content (matn) pass separate forensic tests. How does this dual-scrutiny model show that early scholars were as concerned with preserving the message's logical, internal consistency as with tracking the reputations of those who transmitted it?

The matn, by contrast, denotes the content of the Ḥadīth. Scholars examined the matn for consistency with the Qurʾān, the established

Sunnah, reason, and historical facts. Any contradiction, anomaly (shudhūdh), or hidden defect (ʿillah) could undermine the credibility of a report (Al-Nawawī, 2007). Thus, the interplay between isnād and matn ensures that both the source and the content of the Ḥadīth are subjected to rigorous scrutiny. This dual methodology represents one of the most sophisticated systems of textual authentication in human intellectual history (Azami, 1992).

Table 1: Role of *Isnād* and *Matn* in *Ḥadīth* Authentication

Component	Function	Criteria	Outcome
Isnād	Verifies transmission chain	Continuity, narrator integrity, accuracy	Determines reliability of transmission
Matn	Verifies content	Consistency, coherence, absence of defects	Determines the validity of meaning

Diagram: *Ḥadīth* Authentication Process

Prophet (SAW)
↓
Companions
↓
Successors
↓
Chain Evaluation (*Isnād*)
↓
Text Analysis (*Matn*)
↓
Classification (*Ṣaḥīḥ* / *Ḥasan* / *Ḍaʿīf*)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The term *isnād* refers to:
   A. The content of a *Ḥadīth*
   B. The chain of narrators
   C. The legal ruling
   D. The classification system
2. Which criterion is used to evaluate narrators?
   A. Wealth
   B. Popularity
   C. Integrity and accuracy
   D. Nationality

3. The *matn* of a *Ḥadīth* refers to:
   A. The narrator
   B. The chain
   C. The text/content
   D. The compiler
4. A contradiction between a *Ḥadīth* and the Qurʾān affects:
   A. Only *isnād*
   B. Only *matn*
   C. Both authenticity and acceptance
   D. Nothing
5. The combination of *isnād* and *matn* ensures:
   A. Speed of transmission
   B. Authenticity of *Ḥadīth*
   C. Popularity of narrators
   D. Simplicity of religion

1.6 Evaluate the Contributions of Early Scholars, Compilations, and *Ḥadīth* Sciences

Early Muslim scholars played a crucial role in preserving the Sunnah through systematic scholarship. Their contributions can be categorised into scholarly efforts, compilation, and the development of Ḥadīth sciences.

Scholars such as Imām al-Bukhārī, Imām Muslim, and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ established rigorous methodologies for collecting and verifying *Ḥadīth*. They travelled extensively to gather authentic reports and critically assessed narrators and texts (Brown, 2009).

The compilation of major Ḥadīth collections, such as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, marked a turning point in Islamic scholarship. These works filtered out thousands of narrations, retaining only those that met strict authenticity criteria.

Additionally, the development of ʿulūm al-Ḥadīth (Ḥadīth sciences), including narrator criticism (ʿilm al-rijāl), classification systems, and defect analysis, provided a scientific framework for preserving the Sunnah. These contributions ensured that fabricated or weak reports were identified and excluded (Azami, 1992).

Table 2: Contributions to *Ḥadīth* Preservation

Area	Contribution	Impact
Scholars	Authentication methods	Reliability of *Ḥadīth*
Compilations	Organised collections	Accessibility
Ḥadīth Sciences	**An**alytical tools	Protection from fabrication

Self-Assessment Exercises 3

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. Imām _____ compiled one of the most authentic collections of *Ḥadīth*.
2. The science that studies narrators is called _____.
3. The book *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* was compiled by Imām _____.
4. The classification of *Ḥadīth* includes categories such as _____, *ḥasan*, and *ḍa ʿīf.*
5. The discipline dealing with hidden defects in *Ḥadīth* is called _____.

When you consider how these three puzzle pieces—the scholars' personal travel diaries, their organised encyclopedias, and their forensic text-grading tools—lock into place together, how does that prove that protecting the Sunnah required an active combination of field research, publishing, and legal theory rather than simple library storage?

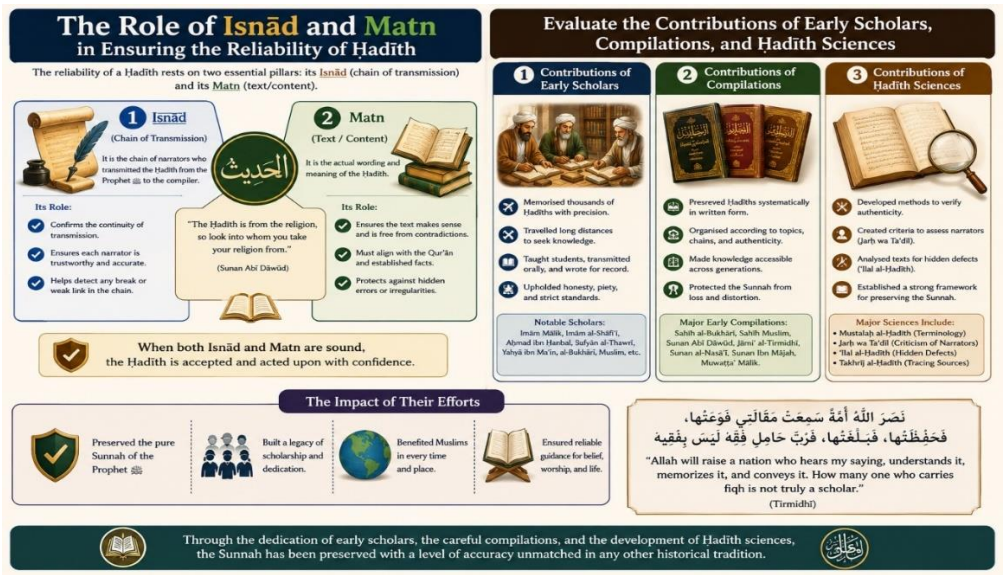


Figure 1.3 The Role of Isnad and Matn
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

1.7 The Significance of Preservation of *Ḥadīth*

The preservation of Ḥadīth is essential to the continuity of Islamic law, theology, and daily practice. Without reliable Ḥadīth, the practical implementation of Islam would be incomplete. In Islamic law (fiqh), Ḥadīth provides detailed rulings that complement the Qurʾān. Many legal principles, particularly in worship and transactions, are derived directly from authenticated Ḥadīth (Kamali, 2003). In theology (ʿaqīdah), Ḥadīth explains doctrinal matters such as belief in the unseen, the Hereafter, and divine attributes. It reinforces Qurʾānic teachings and offers interpretive clarity.

In daily Muslim practice, *Ḥadīth* guides acts of worship, ethical conduct, and social interactions. The Sunnah largely shapes practices such as prayer, fasting, and moral behaviour. Thus, preserving *Ḥadīth* ensures the continuity, authenticity, and unity of Islamic teachings across generations (Hallaq, 2009).

Diagram: Significance of *Ḥadīth* Preservation

Preservation of Ḥadīth
↓
Islamic Law (Fiqh)
↓
Theology (ʿAqīdah)
↓
Daily Practice (ʿIbādah & Ethics)

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/QNbo4xTUQhk?si=QBlqzGQpnkNeK0W2



Self-Assessment Exercises 4:

1. Preservation of *Ḥadīth* is essential for:
   A. Cultural identity only
   B. Islamic law and practice
   C. Language development
   D. Political systems
2. *Ḥadīth* contributes to theology by:
   A. Replacing the Qurʾān
   B. Explaining doctrinal matters
   C. Ignoring beliefs
   D. Limiting knowledge
3. Without *Ḥadīth*, Muslims would struggle with:
   A. Language learning
   B. Understanding prayer details
   C. Economic theory
   D. Geography
4. In *fiqh*, *Ḥadīth* serves to:
   A. Contradict Qurʾān
   B. Clarify legal rulings
   C. Replace scholars
   D. Ignore reasoning
5. Preservation of *Ḥadīth* ensures:
   A. Division
   B. Confusion
   C. Continuity of Islam
   D. Cultural decline

Scenario: Preserving the Teachings of the Prophet

During an Islamic Studies class, Ibrahim wondered how Muslims could be certain that the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) had been accurately preserved over many centuries. His lecturer explained that the Companions carefully memorised and recorded the Prophet's teachings. At the same time, later generations developed systematic methods to verify both the chain of narrators (*isnād*) and the content (*matn*) of each Ḥadīth. Ibrahim realised that the combined efforts of early scholars ensured that authentic Prophetic traditions were preserved and transmitted faithfully for future generations.

Discuss the methods used by the early Muslim generations to preserve and authenticate Ḥadīth, and explain why these efforts remain significant for Muslims today.



1.8 Summary

This unit examines the preservation of Ḥadīth as a foundational effort to safeguard the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It traces the historical development of Ḥadīth preservation across the first three generations of Islam, namely the Companions (Ṣaḥābah), the Successors (Tābiʿūn), and their successors (Atbāʿ al-Tābiʿīn). During this period, preservation relied heavily on strong oral traditions, later complemented by systematic written documentation. The unit highlights the oral and written methods employed by early Muslims, including memorisation, teaching circles, personal manuscripts, and verification through cross-checking among scholars. These methods ensured accuracy and minimised errors in transmission.

A central focus is the role of *isnād* (chain of transmission) and *matn* (text) in the authentication of *Ḥadīth*. Scholars developed rigorous criteria to evaluate narrators and scrutinise textual content, establishing a reliable system for distinguishing authentic reports from weak or fabricated ones. The unit further explores the contributions of early scholars, the compilation of major *Ḥadīth* collections, and the development of *ʿulūm al- Ḥadīth*, which provided scientific tools for preservation and verification. Finally, the unit emphasises the importance of preserving Ḥadīth to maintain the continuity of Islamic law, theology, and daily Muslim practice. It concludes that the meticulous preservation of *Ḥadīth* ensured the integrity and transmission of the Sunnah across generations.



1.9 References/Further Readings

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Kamali, M. H. (2014). *A textbook of Hadith studies: Authenticity, compilation, classification and criticism of hadith*. Islamic Texts Society.



1.10 Possible Answers to the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. C

S**elf-Assessment Exercises 2:**

1. **B** – The chain of narrators
2. **C** – Integrity and accuracy
3. **C** – The text/content
4. **C** – Both authenticity and acceptance
5. **B** – Authenticity of *Ḥadīth*

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. Imām al-Bukhārī
2. *ʿIlm al-rijāl*
3. Imām Muslim
4. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
5. *ʿIlal al- Ḥadīth (or simply: ʿIlal)*

Self-Assessment Exercises 4:

1. **B** – Islamic law and practice
2. **B** – Explaining doctrinal matters
3. **B** – Understanding prayer details
4. **B** – Clarify legal rulings
5. **C** – Continuity of Islam

Unit 2 Writing and Compilation of *Ḥadīth*

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Historical background: Reasons for the initial restrictions and later permission to record *Ḥadīth*
2.4 The major stages in the writing and compilation of *Ḥadīth* from the Prophet's era.
2.5 Early compilations and their authors.
2.6 Methodologies used by early scholars in compiling, authenticating, and organising *Ḥadīth*.
2.7 Impact of the compilation of *Ḥadīth* on the preservation and transmission of the Sunnah.
2.8 Summary
2.9 References/Further Readings
2.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

We are glad you are here. This unit examines the historical development of writing and the compilation of Ḥadīth, a critical stage in the preservation and transmission of the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Building on earlier discussions of oral preservation, it traces how Ḥadīth evolved from primarily memorised, orally transmitted reports into systematically documented, organised scholarly works. The unit begins by exploring the historical background, particularly the initial caution about recording Ḥadīth to prevent confusion with the Qurʾān, and the later permission and encouragement to document it as the need for preservation grew. It then outlines the major stages in the writing and compilation process, from the Prophet's era through the periods of the Companions, Successors, and classical scholars.

Attention is also given to early collections and their authors, whose pioneering efforts laid the foundations of the vast Ḥadīth literature available today. The unit further introduces learners to the methodologies developed by early scholars for collecting, authenticating, and organising Ḥadīth, including isnād criticism and classification systems. Finally, the unit assesses the impact of Ḥadīth compilation on safeguarding the Sunnah, ensuring its accuracy, accessibility, and continuity across

generations. Overall, this unit highlights the intellectual rigour and historical processes underpinning the preservation of prophetic traditions.



2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the historical background and reasons for the initial restrictions and the later permission to write Ḥadīth;
- describe the major stages in the writing and compilation of Ḥadīth from the Prophet's era to the era of the major Ḥadīth collections;
- identify key early compilations and their authors, including works such as the ṣaḥīfah hammām ibn munabbih, the muwaṭṭaʾ mālik, and the ṣiḥāḥ collections;
- analyse the methodologies early scholars used to compile, authenticate, and organise Ḥadīth; and
- evaluate the impact of compiling Ḥadīth on the preservation and transmission of the sunnah in Islamic scholarship and daily practice.



2.3 Historical background: Reasons for the initial restrictions and later permission to record *Ḥadīth*

The initial ban on writing was intended to protect the Qurʾān. How does the Prophet's (SAW) later decision to grant individual permissions to write demonstrate that early scriptural documentation was always guided by a flexible historical context rather than a rigid, permanent prohibition?

The documentation of Ḥadīth developed gradually, shaped by both religious caution and practical necessity. During the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), there were initial restrictions on writing Ḥadīth. These restrictions were intended primarily to prevent confusion between the Qurʾān and non-Qurʾānic material, as the Qurʾān was being revealed and recorded concurrently. The early Muslim community prioritised the accurate preservation of the Qurʾān, the primary revelation (Azami, 1992).

Another reason for caution was the reliance on the Arabs' strong oral culture, which was characterised by exceptional memorisation skills. This

made oral transmission a reliable method in the early stages. Additionally, limiting written records helped ensure that learners remained actively engaged in memorisation and direct transmission (Brown, 2009).

As Islam spread beyond Arabia and the number of Companions declined, the need for written preservation grew more urgent. The Prophet himself permitted certain Companions to record Ḥadīth, including ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who kept a written record (Ṣaḥīfah). This indicates that the restriction was contextual rather than absolute.

By the time of the Successors (Tābiʿūn), the risks of loss, fabrication, and distortion prompted scholars and rulers, particularly Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, to encourage the systematic documentation of Ḥadīth. This marked a turning point from caution to active compilation, ensuring the preservation of the Sunnah for future generations (Kamali, 2003).

The writing and compilation of Ḥadīth developed through distinct historical stages-Prophetic Era, Companions, Successors, and Classical Compilation-each reflecting evolving preservation needs.

The writing and compilation of Ḥadīth developed through distinct historical stages, reflecting the growing need for preservation and organisation. This is discussed below:

1. Prophetic Era (1–11 AH)
During the Prophet's lifetime, Ḥadīth were primarily transmitted orally, though some Companions recorded them privately. Documentation existed but was not yet systematic.

2. Period of the Companions (11–100 AH)
After the Prophet's death, Companions spread across regions, teaching and transmitting Ḥadīth. Written records increased, yet transmission remained largely oral. Verification through cross-checking became more prominent.

3. Period of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*)
This period marked the formal start of compilation, particularly under the direction of Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Scholars such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī were commissioned to collect Ḥadīth systematically (Azami, 1992).

4. Classical Compilation Period (3rd Century AH)
This stage marks the golden age of Ḥadīth literature, when scholars such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim compiled highly authentic collections.
Rigorous methodologies for classification and authentication were fully developed (Brown, 2009).

Tracing the evolution of compilation from individual memories to state-ordered projects and highly categorised encyclopaedias, this layout shows that the Ḥadīth collection was a deliberate, carefully planned process designed to preserve and verify the historical record, not merely a spontaneous reaction to loss.

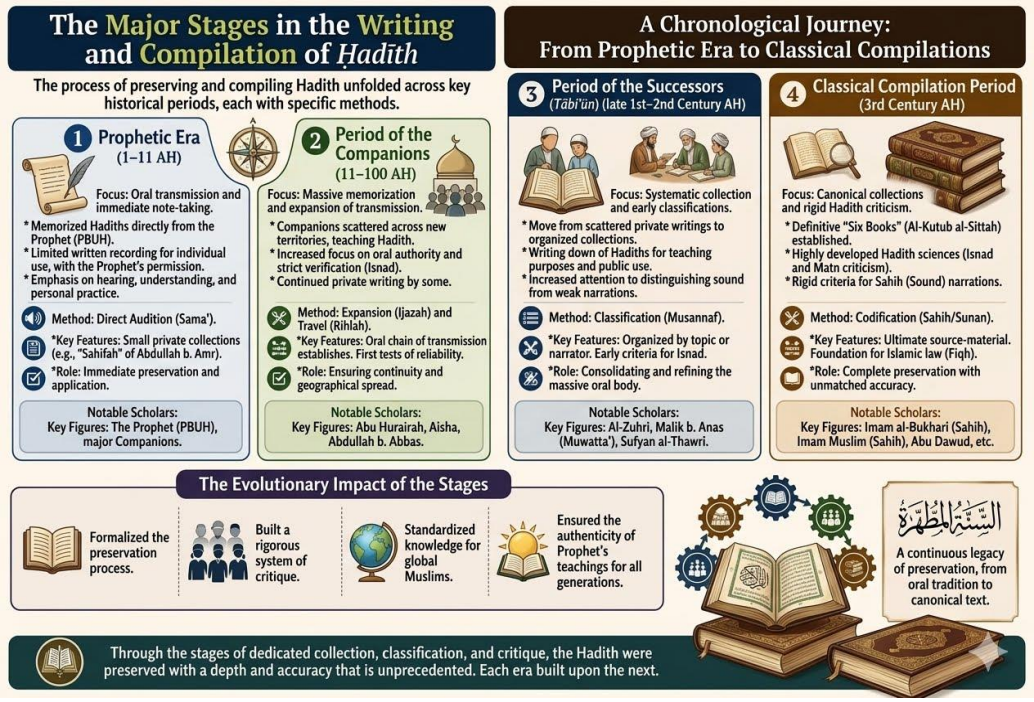
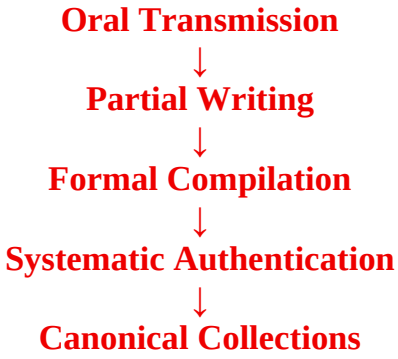


Figure 2.1 The Major Stages in the Writing and Compilation of Hadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Table 1: Stages of *Ḥadīth* Compilation

Stage	Period	Key Features
Prophetic Era	1–11 AH	Oral transmission, limited writing
Companions	11–100 AH	Expansion, teaching, partial documentation
Successors	1st–2nd Century AH	Beginning of formal compilation
Classical Period	3rd Century AH	Systematic collections and authentication

Diagram: Evolution of *Ḥadīth* Compilation



Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The initial restriction on writing *Ḥadīth* was mainly to:
   A. Prevent loss of knowledge
   B. Avoid confusion with the Qurʾān
   C. Encourage trade
   D. Limit education
2. Which factor contributed to the later permission to record *Ḥadīth*?
   A. Decline in the Arabic language
   B. Expansion of Islam
   C. Increase in wealth
   D. Political conflicts
3. The formal compilation of *Ḥadīth* began during the period of:
   A. The Prophet
   B. The Companions
   C. The Successors
   D. Modern scholars
4. Who played a key role in encouraging *Ḥadīth* documentation?
   A. Abū Bakr
   B. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz
   C. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib
   D. Khālid ibn Walīd
5. The “golden age” of *Ḥadīth* compilation occurred in:
   A. 1st century AH
   B. 2nd century AH
   C. 3rd century AH
   D. 4th century AH

2.5 Early Compilations and Their Authors

The early compilation of Ḥadīth marks a decisive transition from dispersed notes and oral transmission to organised, written collections. These early works laid the foundations for later canonical compilations by preserving Prophetic traditions with greater methodological rigour. They also reflect scholars' evolving priorities, from recording available material to critical selection and authentication (Azami, 1992).

The compilation timeline evolved from Hammām's raw first-century notes to Imām Mālik's legal manual, and finally to the ultra-strict filtering of the Ṣiḥāḥ. How does this clear shift in methodology show that scholars were not merely hoarding information but were actively refining their critical standards to distinguish pure prophetic texts from surrounding human opinion?

1. *Ṣaḥīfah* of Hammām ibn Munabbih

One of the earliest surviving written Ḥadīth documents is the Ṣaḥīfah of Hammām ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 101 AH), a student of Abū Hurayrah. It contains a collection of aḥādīth transmitted directly from his teacher and is preserved in later compilations, such as the Musnad of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Its significance lies in demonstrating that systematic writing of Ḥadīth existed as early as the first century AH, thereby challenging the notion that Ḥadīth were recorded only in later periods (Azami, 1992).

2. Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ of Mālik ibn Anas

The Muwaṭṭaʾ of Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH) is one of the earliest comprehensive and systematically organised Ḥadīth collections. It combines Ḥadīth with the legal opinions and practices of the people of Madinah, illustrating the close relationship between Sunnah and jurisprudence. Mālik exercised careful selection, including only narrations he deemed authentic and relevant. Thus, the Muwaṭṭaʾ serves as both a Ḥadīth collection and a legal manual (Kamali, 2003).



Figure 2.2 Early Compilations and Their Authors
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

3. The *Ṣiḥāḥ* Collections (Canonical Works)

The third Islamic century saw the emergence of the Ṣiḥāḥ (authentic collections), marking the peak of Ḥadīth scholarship. The most prominent among them are:

- *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH)
- *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261 AH)

These scholars applied rigorous criteria when evaluating isnād and matn, ensuring that only authentic reports were included. Their works are widely regarded as the most reliable Ḥadīth collections after the Qurʾān (Brown, 2009). In addition, other collections, such as the Sunan works, expanded the scope of Ḥadīth literature, particularly in legal contexts.

Table 2: Key Early *Ḥadīth* Compilations and Their Features

Work	Author	Period	Key Feature	Significance
Ṣaḥīfah Hammām	Hammām ibn Munabbih	1st century AH	Early written record	Evidence of early documentation
Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ	Mālik ibn Anas	2nd century AH	*Ḥadīth* + legal opinions	Bridge between *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh*

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī	al-Bukhārī	3rd century AH	Strict authentication	Most authentic collection
Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj	3rd century AH	Systematic arrangement	High scholarly precision

Diagram: Development of *Ḥadīth* Compilation

Early Notes (*Ṣaḥīfah*)
↓
Structured Works (Muwaṭṭaʾ)
↓
Authentic Collections (*Ṣiḥāḥ*)
↓
Expanded Literature (*Sunan* collections)

In conclusion, early Ḥadīth compilations and their authors played a foundational role in preserving the Sunnah and shaping Islamic scholarship. From the simple ṣaḥīfah of Hammām ibn Munabbih to the highly refined Ṣaḥīḥ collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, these works reflect a gradual progression towards methodological sophistication and textual reliability. Their contributions ensured that the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) were transmitted accurately and made accessible for legal, theological, and ethical guidance across generations. Their efforts transformed Ḥadīth from simple records into highly authenticated and organised bodies of knowledge, forming the backbone of Islamic law and practice (Brown, 2009).

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. The *Ṣaḥīfah* of Hammām ibn Munabbih dates back to the _____ century AH.
2. Imām Mālik's major compilation is known as _____.
3. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is considered one of the most _____ *Ḥadīth* collections.
4. The early *Ḥadīth* collections evolved from simple _____ to structured compilations.
5. The integration of *Ḥadīth* and legal opinions is a key feature of _____.

2.6 Methodologies Used by Early Scholars in Compiling, Authenticating, and Organising *Ḥadīth*

When you look at the complete pipeline—where a scholar first endures gruelling desert travel (riḥlah), then applies rigorous character and logical filters to the text, and finally organises it into easy-to-read legal chapters—how does this demonstrate that early Ḥadīth scholars had to act as a unique combination of field investigative journalists, forensic scientists, and library archivists?

Early Ḥadīth scholars developed sophisticated methodologies to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and systematic organisation of Prophetic traditions. Their approach combined critical analysis, field research, and rigorous verification, forming one of the most advanced historical systems for textual authentication (Brown, 2009).

1. Compilation Methodology

Scholars collected *Ḥadīth* through:

- extensive travel (*riḥlah fī ṭalab al-Ḥadīth*);
- Direct hearing from teachers (*samāʿ*);
- cross-verification of multiple narrations; and
- written notes and personal manuscripts.

Imām al-Bukhārī, for example, travelled widely and recorded only narrations after ensuring strong evidence of the continuity of transmission (Azami, 1992).

2. Authentication Methodology

Authentication was based on two core systems:

- ***Isnād* Criticism**: Evaluation of narrators for integrity (*ʿadālah*) and precision (*ḍabṭ*)
- ***Matn* Criticism**: Examination of content for consistency with Qurʾān, established Sunnah, and **عقل** (reason)

Hidden defects (*ʿilal*) and irregularities **(*shudhūdh*)** were carefully investigated (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

3. Organisational Methodology

Ḥadīth were organised using different approaches:

- Legal chapters (as in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*)
- Alphabetical or topical arrangement
- Classification by authenticity (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf*)

Diagram: *Ḥadīth* Methodological Process

Collection (Riḥlah)
↓
Verification (Isnād & Matn)
↓
Classification (Ṣaḥīḥ / Ḥasan / Ḍaʿīf)
↓
Compilation (Books)
↓
Preservation of Sunnah

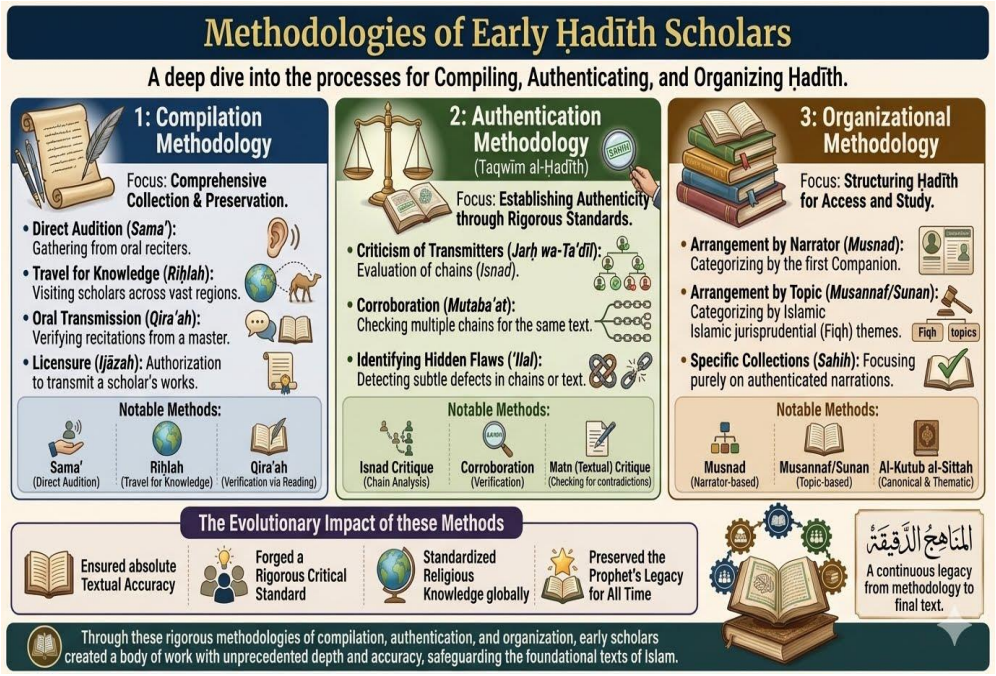


Figure 2.3 Methodologies of Early Hadith Scholars
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

2.7 Impact of the Compilation of *Ḥadīth* on the Preservation and Transmission of the Sunnah

By converting fluid oral transmission into a standardised, written system of graded authenticity (ṣaḥīḥ and ḍaʿīf), how did the early compilation process prevent the entire legal and spiritual framework of Islam from fracturing into local, contradictory regional practices over the centuries?

The systematic compilation of Ḥadīth profoundly shaped the preservation, authenticity, and transmission of the Sunnah. It ensured that the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) were safeguarded against loss, distortion, and fabrication (Brown, 2009).

1. **Preservation of Authentic Teachings**
   Compilation preserved the Sunnah in verified written form, reducing reliance on memory alone. This helped protect Islamic teachings from alteration across generations (Azami, 1992).
2. **Standardisation of Knowledge**
   The classification of *Ḥadīth* into categories such as *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf* standardised Islamic knowledge, allowing scholars to distinguish between authentic and weak reports.
3. **Continuity of Islamic Law and Practice**
   Because legal rulings depend heavily on *Ḥadīth*, compilation ensured the continuity of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and daily religious practices such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage (Kamali, 2003).
4. **Protection from Fabrication**
   The development of rigorous authentication sciences significantly reduced the spread of fabricated narrations by exposing unreliable transmitters (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

Table 3: Impact of *Ḥadīth* Compilation

Impact Area	**Effect**
Preservation	Safeguarded Sunnah in written form
Standardisation	Classification of authenticity
Legal continuity	Strengthened Islamic law
Protection	Reduced fabricated *Ḥadīth*

Diagram: Impact Flow of *Ḥadīth* Compilation

Compilation of *Ḥadīth*
↓
Authentication Systems
↓
Reliable Sunnah Preservation
↓
Islamic Law & Practice Continuity

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/wVyLclckDUE?si=AO0U43AbNbQhIzKt



Self-Assessment Exercise 3:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The term *riḥlah fī ṭalab al- Ḥadīth* refers to:
A. Writing books
B. Travelling to collect *Ḥadīth*
C. Memorising Qurʾān
D. Teaching jurisprudence

2. *Isnād* criticism focuses on:
A. Meaning of text
B. Chain of narrators
C. Arabic grammar
D. Legal rulings

3. *Matn* criticism examines:
A. Names of narrators
B. Chain continuity
C. Content of *Ḥadīth*
D. Book titles

4. One major impact of *Ḥadīth* compilation is:
A. Reduction of Qurʾān importance
B. Preservation of Sunnah
C. Elimination of Islamic law
D. Decline of scholarship

5. *Ḥadīth* classification helps to:
A. Translate Arabic texts
B. Organise authenticity levels
C. Replace Qurʾān
D. Increase narration speed

Scenario: Understanding the Preservation of Ḥadīth

During a lecture on the history of Ḥadīth, Fatimah was surprised to learn that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) initially discouraged writing Ḥadīth but later permitted some Companions to record his teachings. As the lecture continued, her lecturer explained how early Muslim scholars gradually developed systematic methods for collecting, authenticating, and compiling Ḥadīth. Fatimah realised that these efforts protected the Sunnah from loss and fabrication, ensuring that future generations could rely on authentic Prophetic guidance in matters of faith, worship, and law.

Explain the reasons for the initial restriction on recording Ḥadīth and the later permission to do so, and discuss how the compilation efforts of early Muslim scholars contributed to the preservation and transmission of the Sunnah.



2.8 Summary

The unit examines the historical development, methodology, and significance of writing and compiling Ḥadīth, highlighting how the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was systematically preserved in writing. It begins by exploring the historical background of Ḥadīth recording, explaining the initial restrictions on writing that were imposed to protect the Qurʾān from confusion and to encourage memorisation. It also highlights the later permission and encouragement to document Ḥadīth as Islam expanded and the need for preservation grew.

It further outlines the major stages in the development of Ḥadīth writing and compilation, from the Prophet's era through the periods of the Companions and Successors, culminating in the classical era, when structured, systematic collections were produced. The unit also discusses early Ḥadīth compilations and their authors, including the Ṣaḥīfah of Hammām ibn Munabbih, Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ of Mālik, and the major Ṣiḥāḥ collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which mark milestones in Ḥadīth literature.

In addition, it explains the methodologies early scholars used to collect, authenticate, and organise Ḥadīth, including rigorous isnād and matn analysis, classification systems, and critical evaluation of narrators. Finally, the unit emphasises the impact of Ḥadīth compilation, showing how it ensured the preservation, authenticity, and continuity of the Sunnah, thereby safeguarding Islamic law, theology, and daily practice for future generations. Overall, Unit 2 demonstrates that the compilation of Ḥadīth was a carefully structured scholarly process that played a vital role in preserving Islamic teachings in a reliable and accessible form.



2.9 References/Further Readings

Azami, M. M. (1992). *Studies in Ḥadīth methodology and literature*. Islamic Book Trust.

Brown, J. A. C. (2009). *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world*. Oneworld Publications.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ʿU. ibn ʿA. (2002). *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-Ḥadīth*. Dār al-Fikr..

Kamali, M. H. (2003). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence* (3rd ed.). Islamic Texts Society.

2.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercise 1:

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercise 2:

1. 1st century AH.
2. Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ.
3. authentic
4. notes (or ṣaḥīfah)
5. Al-Muwaṭṭa

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. B

Unit 3 The Six Authentic Collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*)

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Six canonical *Ḥadīth* collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*).
3.4 Historical context, purpose, and methodology of the compiler of *Ḥadīth*.
3.5 Comparison of the criteria used by the compilers for *Ḥadīth* authentication and selection.
3.6 Thematic organisation and distinctive features of each collection.
3.7 Significance of the *Kutub al-Sittah* in shaping Islamic teachings.
3.8 Summary
3.9 References/Further Readings
3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

Welcome aboard! You will embark on an exciting journey through the Six Authentic Collections (Kutub al-Sittah), exploring their unique features, significance, and enduring contribution to preserving the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These collections represent the most authoritative and widely accepted compilations of Ḥadīth in Sunni Islam. They form the foundation of Ḥadīth literature after the Qurʾān and play a central role in shaping Islamic law, theology, and ethical practice.

The *Kutub as-Sittah* consist of:
1. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*
2. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
3. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*
4. *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*
5. *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*
6. *Sunan Ibn Mājah*

This unit explores the historical development, scholarly contributions, and methodological principles underpinning these collections. It highlights how Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim applied stringent authentication criteria, while the authors of the Sunan and Jāmiʿ works focused on the legal, ethical, and practical dimensions of Ḥadīth. Furthermore, the unit examines the classification systems used in these works, the criteria for selecting narrations, and the role of these works in preserving the Sunnah in a structured and accessible form. It also

considers their influence on the development of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and their acceptance across different schools of thought. Overall, this unit provides learners with an understanding of how the Kutub al-Sittah serve as a cornerstone of Ḥadīth scholarship, ensuring the preservation, authenticity, and continuity of Prophetic teachings across generations.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the six canonical Ḥadīth collections (kutub al-sittah) and their respective compilers;
- describe the historical context, purpose, and methodology of each compiler in assembling their collection;
- compare the criteria used by the compilers for *Ḥadīth* authentication and selection;
- analyse the thematic organisation and distinctive features of each collection; and
- evaluate the significance of the *Kutub al-Sittah in shaping Islamic* jurisprudence, theology, and scholarly tradition.

3.3 Six Canonical *Ḥadīth* Collections (*Kutub al-Sittah*)

The Kutub al-Sittah (Six Canonical Ḥadīth Collections) are the most authoritative Ḥadīth works in Sunni Islam after the Qurʾān. Compiled between the 3rd and 4th centuries AH, they are widely accepted as the foundation of Sunnī Ḥadīth scholarship (Brown, 2009).

The Kutub al-Sittah are strategically divided into the ultra-strict Ṣaḥīḥ works and the more flexible, legally focused Sunan and Jāmiʿ collections. How does this internal division demonstrate that the final canon was designed to serve two distinct needs—both as an absolute defence line for authentic history and as a highly practical manual for everyday courtroom lawyers?

The six books are:

1. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* – Imām Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH)
2. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* – Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261 AH)
3. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* – Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275 AH)
4. *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* – al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH)
5. *Sunan al-Nasāʾī* – al-Nasāʾī (d. 303 AH)
6. *Sunan Ibn Mājah* – Ibn Mājah (d. 273 AH)

These works differ in methodology: while Bukhārī and Muslim focused strictly on authentic Ḥadīth, the other collections included legal, ethical, and graded narrations to support the development of jurisprudence (Azami, 1992).

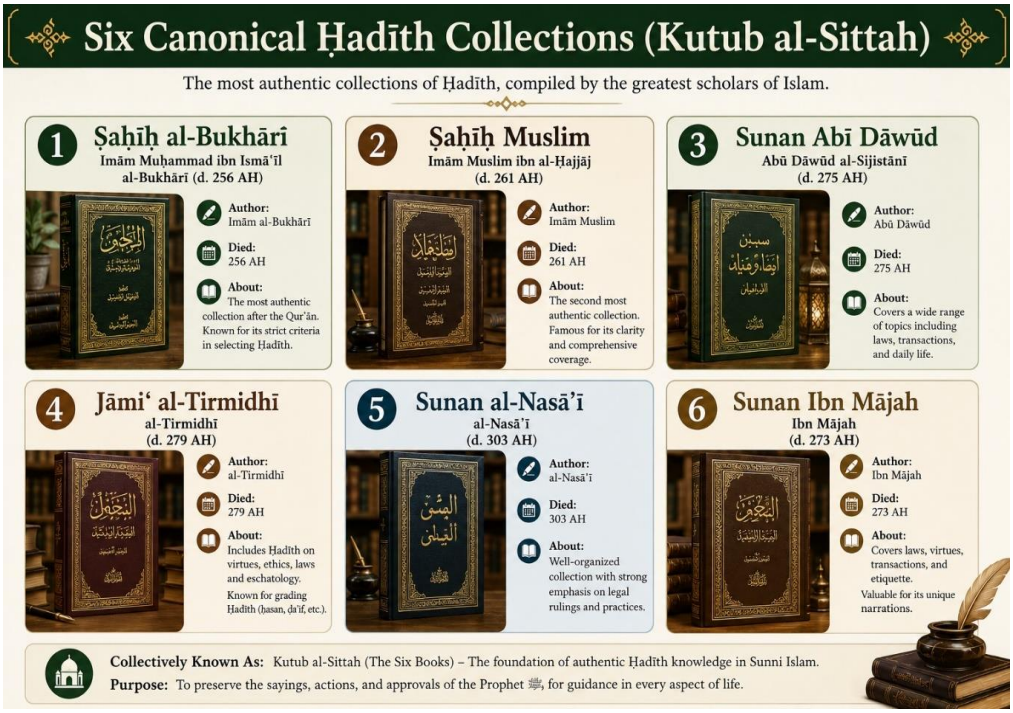


Figure 3.1 Six Canonical Hadith Collections (Kutub Al-Sittah)
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Table 1: Overview of *Kutub al-Sittah*

Book	**Compiler**	**Focus**	**Distinct Feature**
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī	al-Bukhārī	Authenticity	Strictest criteria
Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	Muslim	Authenticity	Thematic arrangement
Sunan Abī Dāwūd	Abī Dāwūd	Legal rulings	Fiqh-oriented
Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī	al-Tirmidhī	Classification	Includes grading
Sunan al-Nasāʾī	al-Nasāʾī	Rigorous selection	High reliability
Sunan Ibn Mājah	Ibn Mājah	Legal & social	Broad coverage

Diagram: Structure of *Kutub al-Sittah*

Kutub al-Sittah
↓
Ṣaḥīḥ Works (Bukhārī, Muslim)
↓
Sunan Collections (Abī Dāwūd, Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah)
↓
Jāmiʿ Work (Tirmidhī)
↓
Legal & Ethical Guidance for *Ummah*

3.4 Historical Context, Purpose, and Methodology of *Ḥadīth* Compilers Historical Context

The compilation of the *Kutub al-Sittah* occurred during the 3rd century AH, a period marked by:

- expansion of the Islamic empire;
- emergence of fabricated *Ḥadīth;*
- decline of direct access to Companions; and
- need for systematic preservation (Hallaq, 2009)

When you look at the overlapping crises of the 3rd century AH—such as the empire's massive geographical expansion occurring at the same time as political forgery was rising—how does the compilers' rigid workflow show that the Kutub al-Sittah were created to serve as an unyielding, centralised border check for religious truth rather than just a simple library project?

These challenges necessitated rigorous scholarly efforts to preserve authentic Prophetic traditions.

Purpose of Compilation

The main objectives of the compilers were:

- Preservation of the authentic Sunnah
- Protection against fabricated narrations
- Organisation of legal and ethical teachings
- Facilitation of Islamic jurisprudence (Kamali, 2003)

Methodology of Compilers

The methodology of the *Ḥadīth* scholars was highly scientific and systematic:

1. **Rigorous Authentication**
   - Strict evaluation of narrators
   - Verification of continuity in *isnād*
   - Rejection of weak or unreliable transmitters (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002)
2. **Textual Criticism (*Matn* Analysis)**
   - Consistency with Qurʾān
   - Logical coherence
   - Absence of contradictions or defects
3. **Organisation**
   - Thematic arrangement (*fiqh* chapters)
   - Classification by authenticity
   - Inclusion of legal interpretations

Table 2: Methodology of *Ḥadīth* Compilers

Method	Description	Purpose
Isnād Analysis	Chain verification	Authenticity
Matn Criticism	Text evaluation	Meaning accuracy
Classification	Grading *Ḥadīth*	Reliability
Thematic Arrangement	Legal chapters	Accessibility

Diagram: Methodology Flow

Collection of Reports
↓
Isnād Verification
↓
Matn Analysis
↓
Classification (Ṣaḥīḥ / Ḥasan / Ḍaʿīf)
↓
Compilation into Canonical Works

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The *Kutub al-Sittah* refers to:

A. Six Qurʾānic books
B. Six canonical *Ḥadīth* collections
C. Six schools of law
D. Six biographies

2. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is known for:

A. Weak narrations
B. Strict authenticity criteria
C. Legal opinions only
D. Poetry collection

3. The main purpose of *Ḥadīth* compilation was to:

A. Replace Qurʾān
B. Preserve Sunnah
C. Reduce scholarship
D. Limit Islam

4. *Matn* criticism focuses on:

A. Chain of narrators
B. Text of *Ḥadīth*
C. Book titles
D. Authors only

5. Sunan collections are mainly organised around:

A. Poetry
B. Legal rulings
C. Geography
D. History only

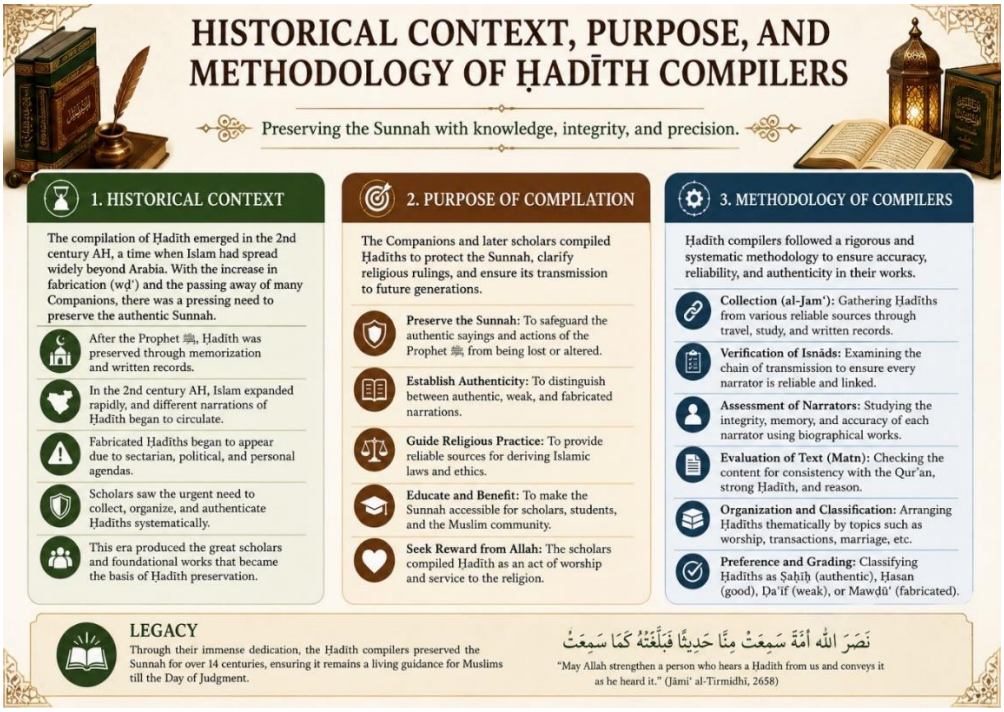


Figure 3.2 Historical Context, Purpose, and Methodology of Hadith Compilers
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

3.5 Comparison of the Criteria Used by the Compilers for *Ḥadīth* Authentication and Selection

The compilers of the Kutub al-Sittah applied rigorous yet varied criteria when selecting and authenticating Ḥadīth. Although they all agreed on the importance of evaluating isnād (chain) and matn (text), their levels of strictness and methodological priorities differed, resulting in diversity across their collections (Brown, 2009).

Given the spectrum of authentication, ranging from Imām al-Bukhārī's zero-tolerance demand for a physical meeting to Ibn Mājah's broader, more inclusive approach, how does this varied pipeline demonstrate that early scholarship deliberately balanced extreme historical scepticism with practical legal flexibility to keep the religion functional??

1. Strict Authenticity Criteria (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Imām al-Bukhārī set the most stringent conditions, requiring:

- continuous chain (ittiṣāl al-isnād);
- proven meeting between narrators (liqāʾ); and
- high moral integrity and precision.

Imām Muslim adopted slightly less stringent criteria for narrator meetings, but still maintained a high standard of authenticity (Azami, 1992).

2. Legal-Oriented Selection (Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah)

The compilers of the *Sunan* works prioritised legal applicability:

- Included some weaker *Ḥadīth* when relevant to jurisprudence
- Focused on chapters of *fiqh* (law)
- Aimed to support juristic reasoning (Kamali, 2003)

3. Analytical Classification (al-Tirmidhī)

Al-Tirmidhī introduced a distinct classification system, where he:

- Graded *Ḥadīth* (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf*)
- Provided scholarly commentary
- Compared opinions of jurists

This made his work both a *Ḥadīth* collection and a critical analytical resource (Brown, 2009).

Table 1: Comparison of Authentication Criteria

Compiler	Criteria Strictness	Key Feature
al-Bukhārī	Very strict	Requires a narrator meeting
Muslim	Strict	Slight flexibility in meeting
Abū Dāwūd	Moderate	Legal relevance
al-Tirmidhī	Moderate	Classification & commentary
al-Nasāʾī	Strict	Careful selection
Ibn Mājah	Less strict	Broader inclusion

Diagram: Levels of Strictness

Very Strict → al-Bukhārī
↓
Strict → Muslim, al-Nasāʾī
↓
Moderate → Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī
↓
Broad → Ibn Mājah

3.6 Thematic Organisation and Distinctive Features of Each Collection

Each book uses a unique filter—al-Bukhārī slices reports to reveal deep legal rulings, whereas Muslim groups them whole for narrative clarity. How does this show that the Kutub al-Sittah were designed to complement each other as an integrated research toolkit rather than simply repeating the same data?

Each of the Kutub al-Sittah is distinguished by its organisational structure and scholarly focus, making them complementary rather than redundant.

1. **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**
   - Organised into legal chapters (*abwāb al-fiqh*)
   - Includes repeated *Ḥadīth* for different legal implications
   - Known for deep jurisprudential insights
2. **Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**
   - • Arranged thematically with minimal repetition
   - • Focuses on clarity and systematic grouping of narrations
3. **Sunan Abī Dāwūd**
   - Structured strictly around legal rulings
   - Includes commentary on the strength of the narrations
4. **Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī**
   - Combines *Ḥadīth*, classification, and juristic opinions
   - Highly useful for comparative *fiqh*
5. **Sunan al-Nasāʾī**
   - Known for high reliability and careful selection
   - More stringent than other *Sunan* collections
6. **Sunan Ibn Mājah**
   - Covers a wide range of topics
   - Includes additional *Ḥadīth* not found in the other five collections

Table 2: Thematic Features of the Six Collections

Book	Organisation	Distinct Feature
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī	Legal chapters	Juristic depth
Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim	Thematic grouping	Minimal repetition
Sunan Abī Dāwūd	Legal topics	Fiqh emphasis
Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī	Mixed (Ḥadīth + analysis)	Classification system
Sunan al-Nasāʾī	Legal	High authenticity
Sunan Ibn Mājah	Broad topics	Additional narrations

Diagram: Functional Roles of the Collections

Ṣaḥīḥ Collections → Authentic Core
↓
Sunan Collections → Legal Application
↓
Jāmiʿ Collection → Analysis & Classification

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. Imām _____ applied the strictest criteria for Hadith authentication**.**
2. The requirement that narrators must meet is called _____.
3. The collection known for grading Ḥadīth is _____.
4. Sunan Abī Dāwūd is primarily organised around _____ rulings.
5. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim is known for reducing _____ in its arrangement.

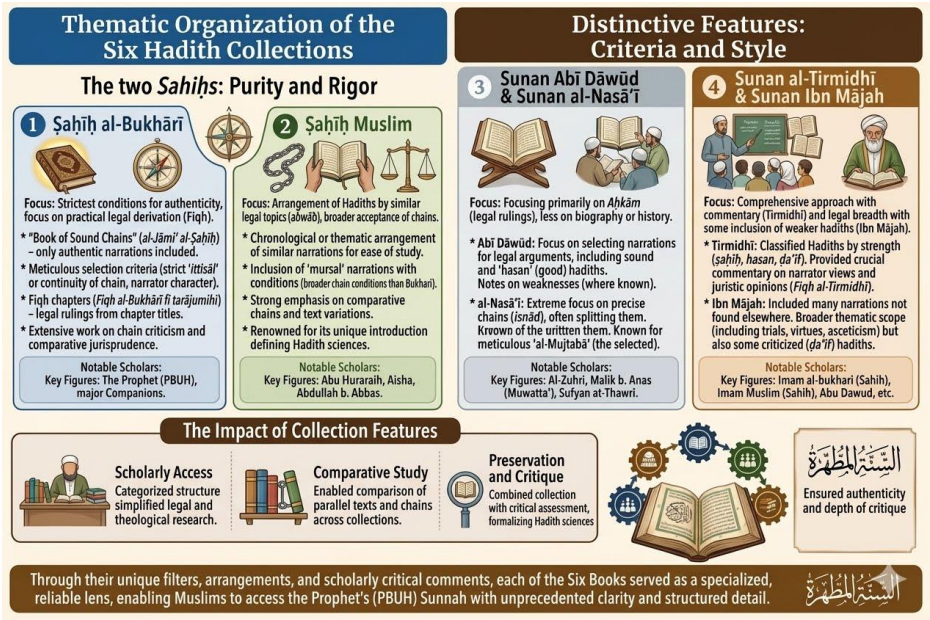


Figure 3.3 Thematic Organisation and Distinctive Features of Each Collection
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

3.7 Significance of the *Kutub al-Sittah* in shaping Islamic teachings

The Kutub al-Sittah (Six Canonical Ḥadīth Collections) hold a central place in Sunni Islam as the most authoritative sources of the Sunnah after the Qurʾān. Their compilation marked a major milestone in Islamic intellectual history, ensuring that the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings were preserved, authenticated, and systematically organised for future generations (Brown, 2009).

The Kutub al-Sittah established a universal, standardised framework for grading every narration (ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf). How does this scientific rigour protect a modern Muslim's daily practice and core theology from being hijacked by unverified, speculative ideas circulating online today?

1. **Foundation for Islamic Law (*Fiqh*)**
   The Kutub al-Sittah are primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence, offering detailed explanations and applications of Qurʾānic rulings. Many legal principles governing worship (ʿibādāt) and transactions (muʿāmalāt) are derived directly from these collections (Kamali, 2003). They enable jurists to formulate rulings grounded in authentic Prophetic guidance.

2. **Preservation of the Sunnah**
   These collections played a vital role in preserving the Sunnah in a reliable written form, safeguarding it against loss, distortion, and fabrication. Through rigorous isnād and matn criticism, the compilers ensured that only credible reports were included (Azami, 1992).
3. **Standardisation of Islamic Knowledge**
   The classification of Ḥadīth into categories such as ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, and ḍaʿīf established a standardised framework for evaluating religious knowledge. This enabled scholars and students to distinguish between authentic and weak narrations, thereby promoting intellectual clarity and consistency (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).
4. **Influence on Theology (ʿ*Aqīda*h)**
   The Kutub al-Sittah make a significant contribution to Islamic theology by explaining beliefs about the unseen, divine attributes, and eschatology. They complement the Qurʾān by offering detailed interpretations of doctrinal matters (Hallaq, 2009).
5. **Guidance for Daily Muslim Life**
   Beyond law and theology, these collections offer practical guidance for everyday life, covering acts of worship, ethics, social relations, and personal conduct. They serve as a living model of the Prophet's example, shaping Muslim identity and behaviour across generations (Brown, 2009).

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/NDHNAKTPYkU?si=HxLir-VonxjfFJOI



Self-Assessment Exercises 3

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The *Kutub al-Sittah* are significant because they:

A. Replace the Qurʾān
B. Preserve the Sunnah
C. Limit Islamic knowledge
D. Focus only on history

2. In Islamic law, the *Kutub al-Sittah* serve as:

A. Secondary literature only
B. Primary source after the Qurʾān
C. Optional texts
D. Political documents

3. The classification of *Ḥadīth* helps to:

A. Increase memorisation
B. Distinguish authenticity levels
C. Translate texts
D. Reduce knowledge

4. The *Kutub al-Sittah* influence theology by:

A. Ignoring beliefs
B. Explaining doctrinal matters
C. Replacing scholars
D. Limiting interpretation

5. One major impact of these collections on daily life is:

A. Economic control
B. Ethical guidance
C. Political authority
D. Cultural restriction

Scenario: Choosing a Reliable Source of Ḥadīth

During a study session, Hassan searched online for a Ḥadīth to support a class assignment. He found the same narration on several websites, each citing a different source. Unsure which to trust, he consulted his lecturer, who introduced him to the Kutub al-Sittah, the six canonical Ḥadīth collections recognised in Sunni Islam. The lecturer explained that these collections were compiled using rigorous methods of authentication and organisation, making them reliable references for understanding the Prophet's teachings. Hassan realised that understanding the sources and methodologies of the major Ḥadīth collections was essential for distinguishing authentic narrations from unreliable ones.

Why are the Kutub al-Sittah regarded as the most authoritative collections of Ḥadīth in Sunni Islam, and how do their methodologies support the preservation and application of the Sunnah?

3.8 Summary

We have discussed the Kutub al-Sittah (Six Canonical Ḥadīth Collections) and their vital role in preserving, authenticating, and applying the Sunnah in Islam. This builds on earlier discussions by shifting from the process of Ḥadīth compilation to an analysis of the most authoritative works in Sunni scholarship. It introduces the six major collections—Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī, Sunan al-Nasāʾī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah. These works represent the culmination of centuries of scholarly effort to collect and verify the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Despite differences in structure and emphasis, they collectively form the foundation of Ḥadīth literature.

A major focus of the unit is the historical context that necessitated compilation, including the spread of Islam and the rise of fabricated reports. In response, scholars developed rigorous methodologies, including isnād analysis, matn criticism, narrator evaluation, and classification systems. While al-Bukhārī and Muslim applied the strictest standards, other compilers, such as al-Tirmidhī, incorporated grading and commentary, reflecting methodological diversity. The unit also highlights differences in criteria and thematic organisation.

The Ṣaḥīḥ collections emphasise authenticity, the Sunan works focus on legal application, and Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī combines analysis with classification. These complementary approaches enhance their scholarly value.

3.9 References/Further Readings

Azami, M. M. (1992). *Studies in Ḥadīth methodology and literature*. Islamic Book Trust.

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Sunnah.com. (n.d.). *Hadith collections overview*. https://sunnah.com



3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. al-Bukhārī
2. Liqāʾ (meeting of narrators)
3. Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī
4. legal (fiqh)
5. repetition

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B

Unit 4 Classification of *Ḥadīth*

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Definition of key terms related to *Ḥadīth*
4.4 Criteria used by scholars to determine the authenticity and classification of a Ḥadīth.
4.5 Difference between the major categories of Ḥadīth.
4.6 Scholarly reasoning behind accepting or rejecting certain categories of Ḥadīth.
4.7 The role of Ḥadīth classification in safeguarding Islamic teachings.
4.8 Summary
4.9 References/Further Readings
4.10. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



4.1 Introduction

This unit examines the classification of Ḥadīth, a fundamental aspect of the Ḥadīth sciences that enables scholars and students to assess the authenticity, reliability, and applicability of Prophetic traditions. Having studied the compilation and major collections in previous units, this unit focuses on how Ḥadīth are systematically categorised according to established scholarly criteria.

The classification of Ḥadīth developed in response to the need to distinguish authentic reports from weak or fabricated ones. As the number of narrations grew and the risk of errors or intentional fabrication arose, early scholars established rigorous methods to assess both the isnād (chain of transmission) and the matn (text). These efforts led to a structured classification system that remains central to Islamic scholarship today.

This unit explores the main categories of Ḥadīth, including Ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), Ḥasan (good), and Ḍaʿīf (weak), as well as other classifications based on the continuity of transmission, the number of narrators, and textual characteristics. It also examines the criteria used by scholars such as Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim, whose methodologies set the highest standards for authenticity.

Furthermore, the unit emphasises the importance of classification in Islamic law, theology, and daily practice, as legal rulings and beliefs must be grounded in reliable sources. By understanding these categories,

learners will be better equipped to engage critically with Ḥadīth literature and apply it appropriately in academic and practical contexts. Overall, this unit provides essential tools for analysing, interpreting, and applying Ḥadīth, ensuring that the Sunnah is understood and utilised accurately and with scholarly integrity.



4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define key terms in Ḥadīth classification, such as ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf, mawḍūʿ, musnad, and mursal;
- describe the criteria used by scholars to determine the authenticity and classification of a *Ḥadīth*;
- differentiate between the major categories of Ḥadīth based on sanad (chain of transmission) and matn (text);
- analyse the scholarly reasoning for accepting or rejecting certain categories of Ḥadīth in legal and theological contexts; and
- evaluate the role of Ḥadīth classification in safeguarding Islamic teachings and in guiding the proper application of the sunnah.



4.3 Definition of Key Terms Related to *Ḥadīth*

Understanding *Ḥadīth* classification begins with key technical terms:

- ***Ḥadīth***: Reports of the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) (Brown, 2009).
- ***Sunnah***: The practical example and normative practice of the Prophet.
- ***Isnād***: The chain of narrators transmitting a *Ḥadīth*.
- ***Matn***: The actual text/content of the *Ḥadīth*.
- ***Ṣaḥīḥ***: A *Ḥadīth* with a continuous chain, reliable narrators, and free from defects.
- ***Ḥasan***: A *Ḥadīth* with slightly lesser precision than ṣaḥīḥ but still acceptable.
- ***Ḍaʿīf***: A weak *Ḥadīth* due to defects in the chain or narrators (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).
- ***Mawḍūʿ***: A fabricated *Ḥadīth* falsely attributed to the Prophet.

Given that a Ḥadīth must clear five rigid hurdles—including passing rigorous forensic checks for subtle, hidden flaws—how does this show that scholars treated scriptural verification more like a high-level

forensic science than a simple exercise in trusting a narrator's good reputation?

4.4 Criteria Used by Scholars to Determine Authenticity and Classification

Scholars developed strict criteria to evaluate *Ḥadīth*:

Core Criteria

1. **Continuity of *Isnād (Ittiṣāl)*** – uninterrupted chain
2. **Integrity of Narrators (*ʿAdālah*)** – moral uprightness
3. **Precision (*Ḍabṭ*)** – accuracy in transmission
4. **Absence of Irregularities (*Shudhūdh*)**
5. **Absence of Hidden Defects (*ʿIlal*)**

A *Ḥadīth* meeting all these conditions is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* (Azami, 1992).

Table 1: Criteria of *Ḥadīth* Authentication

Criterion	Meaning	Importance
Isnād continuity	Unbroken chain	Ensures transmission accuracy
Narrator integrity	Moral character	Prevents dishonesty
Precision	Memory/writing accuracy	Avoids errors
No irregularities	No contradictions	Maintains consistency
No hidden defects	No subtle flaws	Ensures reliability

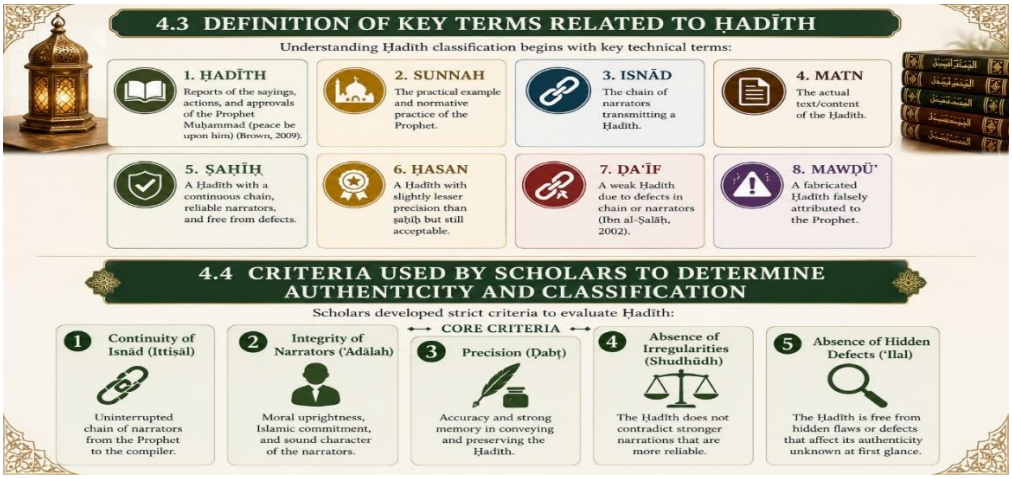


Figure 4.1 Definition of Key Terms Related to Hadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Diagram: Authentication Process

Collection of *Ḥadīth*
↓
Isnād Evaluation
↓
Narrator Verification
↓
Matn Analysis
↓
Classification (*Ṣaḥīḥ / Ḥasan / Ḍaʿīf*)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The term *isnād* refers to:
A. The content of a *Ḥadīth*
B. The chain of narrators
C. The classification of *Ḥadīth*
D. The book of *Ḥadīth*

2. A *Ḥadīth* that fulfils all conditions of authenticity is classified as:
A. *Ḍaʿīf*
B. *Mawḍūʿ*
C. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
D. *Ḥasan*

3. Which of the following is NOT a criterion for authentic *Ḥadīth*?
A. Continuity of *isnād*
B. Narrator integrity
C. Popularity of narration
D. Absence of defects

4. A weak *Ḥadīth* may be used in:
A. Legal rulings
B. Core beliefs
C. Virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*)
D. Qurʾānic interpretation

5. A fabricated *Ḥadīth* is known as:
A. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
B. *Ḥasan*
C. *Mawḍūʿ*
D. *Marfūʿ*

4.5 Difference Between the Major Categories of *Ḥadīth*

The major categories differ in terms of reliability and acceptance:

Table 2: Categories of *Ḥadīth*

Category	Definition	Level of Acceptance
Ṣaḥīḥ	Fully authentic	Highest
Ḥasan	Acceptable	Moderate
Ḍaʿīf	Weak	Limited use
Mawḍūʿ	Fabricated	Rejected

Ṣaḥīḥ and *ḥasan* are generally accepted for legal rulings, while *ḍaʿīf* is treated with caution (Kamali, 2003).

4.6 Scholarly Reasoning Behind Accepting or Rejecting Certain Categories

Scholars conditionally permit weak (ḍaʿīf) reports for motivational purposes but strictly prohibit them in courtroom legal rulings. How does this precise distinction demonstrate a balanced approach that respects historical memory without compromising the integrity of religious law?

Scholars base acceptance or rejection on evidence and reliability:

- **Accepted (*Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥasan*)**:
  - Meet essential criteria
  - Provide a strong basis for law and belief
- **Conditionally Accepted (*Ḍaʿīf*)**:
  - Used in virtues (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*) with caution
  - Not used for legal rulings
- **Rejected (*Mawḍūʿ*)**:
  - Proven fabrication
  - Contradicts Qurʾān or established Sunnah

This approach reflects a balanced methodology between preservation and caution (Hallaq, 2009).

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. The text of a *Ḥadīth* is called _____.
2. A *Ḥadīth* with slightly lower precision than *ṣaḥīḥ* is called _____.
3. The evaluation of narrators' moral character is known as _____.
4. A Ḥadīth with a broken chain is considered _____.
5. A completely fabricated *Ḥadīth* is termed _____.

4.7 Role of *Ḥadīth* Classification in Safeguarding Islamic Teachings

The classification system plays a vital role in:

1. **Protecting Authentic Sunnah**
   It ensures only reliable *Ḥadīth* are used in religious teachings.
2. **Preventing Misguidance**
   Weak or fabricated narrations are identified and excluded.
3. **Supporting Islamic Law**
   Legal rulings depend on authentic sources.
4. **Promoting Scholarly Integrity**
   Encourages critical analysis and academic rigour (Brown, 2009).

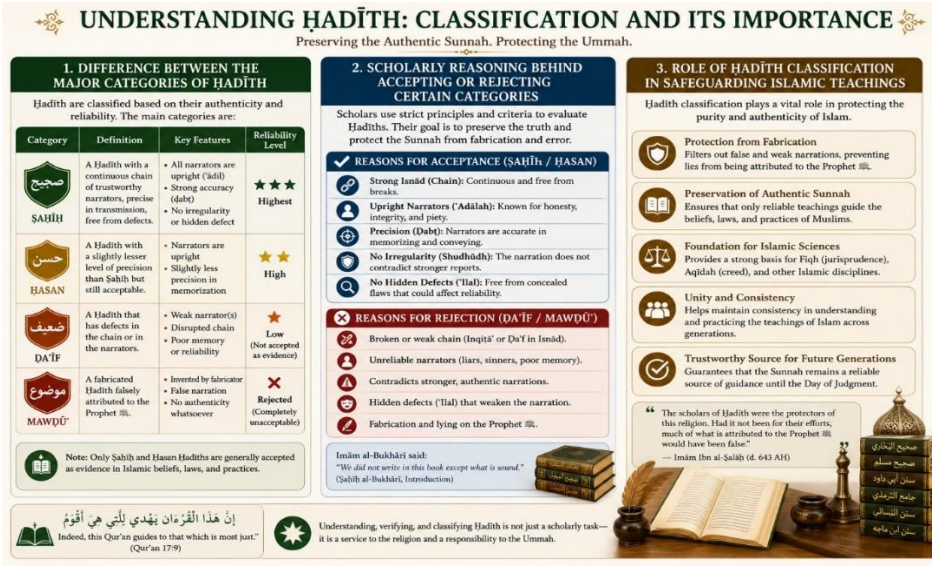


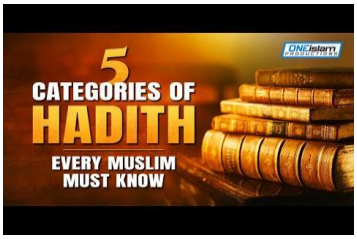
Figure 4.2 Understanding Hadith: Classification and its Importance
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Diagram: Role of Classification

Ḥadīth Classification
↓
Authenticity Verification
↓
Reliable Sunnah
↓
Correct Islamic Practice

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/lq3WoxgZWVo?si=g22QZUW7lUzv-qO9



Case Study: Verifying a Widely Shared Ḥadīth on Social Media

An Islamic society at a university planned to share a Ḥadīth circulating on social media that promised a specific reward for reciting a particular duʿāʾ. Before posting it, one student checked its authenticity using the principles of Ḥadīth classification. They examined the isnād (chain of narrators), reviewed scholars' assessments of the narrators' integrity and accuracy, and consulted reliable Ḥadīth references. They found that the report had a broken chain and hidden defects, leading scholars to classify it as ḍaʿīf (weak). The society decided not to present it as an authentic Prophetic statement and instead replaced it with a ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth from an authentic collection. This demonstrated how the science of Ḥadīth classification safeguards Islamic teachings by ensuring that only reliable narrations are used in religious education and practice.



4.8 Summary

As you come to the end of this unit, you have explored the classification of Ḥadīth as a fundamental aspect of the Ḥadīth sciences. You have become familiar with key technical terms, the criteria scholars use to assess the authenticity of narrations, and the major categories of Ḥadīth. You have also learned why some narrations are accepted and others rejected, grounded in well-established scholarly principles and methods.

These classification systems reflect the remarkable dedication of Muslim scholars to preserving the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings with accuracy and integrity. The knowledge gained in this unit provides a solid foundation for subsequent topics in Ḥadīth studies and helps you appreciate the precision and discipline that characterise this field. We hope this unit has deepened your understanding and inspired you to continue exploring the rich heritage of Islamic scholarship with confidence and enthusiasm.

This unit has examined the classification of Ḥadīth as a critical component of the Ḥadīth sciences. It introduced key technical terms, outlined the criteria scholars use to assess authenticity, and explained the major categories of Ḥadīth. The unit also highlighted the scholarly reasoning behind accepting or rejecting narrations and emphasised the role of classification in safeguarding Islamic teachings. In general, Ḥadīth classification ensures that the Sunnah is preserved, understood, and applied with accuracy, reliability, and scholarly discipline.



4.9 References / Further Readings (APA 7th Edition)

Azami, M. M. (1992). *Studies in Ḥadīth methodology and literature*. Islamic Book Trust.

Brown, J. A. C. (2009). *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world*. Oneworld Publications.

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Kamali, M. H. (2003). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence* (3rd ed.). Islamic Texts Society.

Sunnah.com. (n.d.). *Hadith collections overview*. https://sunnah.com



4.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. *Matn*
2. *Ḥasan*
3. *ʿAdālah*
4. *Ḍaʿīf*
5. *Mawḍūʿ*

Unit 5 Contributions of Key *Ḥadīth* Scholars

Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Outcomes
5.3 Major *Ḥadīth* scholars, their historical contexts, methodologies and Contributions (Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim).
5.4 Imām Abū Dāwūd, Imām al-Tirmidhī and Imām al-Nasāʾī.
5.5 Imām Ibn Mājah, Imām Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.
5.6 Impact of the works of *Ḥadīth* scholars on Islamic law and preservation of the Sunnah.
5.7 The continued relevance of their methodologies and collections in contemporary Islamic studies.
5.8 Summary
5.9 References/Further Readings
5.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



5.1 Introduction

It is great to have you here! In this unit, you will explore one of the greatest scholarly achievements in Islamic history: the preservation and formalisation of the Ḥadīth. You will learn about the dedicated efforts of Muslim scholars to record, safeguard, and transmit the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings accurately and with care. Get ready to discover how these remarkable efforts have shaped Islamic knowledge across generations.

This process, which spanned several centuries, was driven by a cohort of dedicated scholars known as *Muhaddithūn*, who meticulously developed the science of *Ḥadīth* criticism (*'ilm al- Ḥadīth*). Their work was essential for distinguishing authentic prophetic traditions from the numerous reports circulating during the rapidly expanding Islamic empire. Through their rigorous methodological approaches—such as the systematic analysis of *Isnad* (chains of transmission) and *Matn* (the content of the narrations)—these scholars ensured the integrity of the Prophet's legacy.

Figures such as Imām Mālik, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and the authors of the Kutub al-Sittah (the six canonical books) established the standard criteria for assessing narrator reliability, verifying geographical details, and organising themes. By transforming oral traditions into codified, verified texts, these key scholars laid a structured, reliable foundation for Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), theology, and ethical conduct that continues to guide Muslim life and scholarly discourse to the present day.



5.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discourse major *Ḥadīth* scholars, their historical contexts, methodologies, and contributions (imām al-bukhārī and imām muslim);
- examine imām Abū dāwūd, imām al-tirmidhī and imām al-nasāʾī;
- examine imām Ibn Mājah, imām Mālik ibn Anas, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal;
- elaborate on the impact of the works of Ḥadīth scholars on Islamic law and the preservation of the sunnah; and
- assess the ongoing relevance of their methodologies and collections to contemporary Islamic studies.



5.3 Major *Ḥadīth* scholars, their historical contexts, methodologies and Contributions (Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim).

The development and preservation of Ḥadīth literature were shaped by a group of outstanding scholars who lived between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, a period often described as the golden age of Ḥadīth scholarship. This era followed the generation of the Companions and Successors. It was marked by the systematic collection, verification, and classification of Ḥadīth in response to the spread of fabricated reports and the expansion of the Muslim world (Brown, 2009). The scholarly codification of Ḥadīth was a defining intellectual achievement of early Islamic history. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH (8th–9th centuries AD), prominent scholars known as Muhaddithūn refined rigorous methodologies to ensure the authenticity of these narrations (Britannica, 1998). The following are the prominent scholars of Ḥadīth and their respective historical context, methods, and contributions to Ḥadīth, in brief:

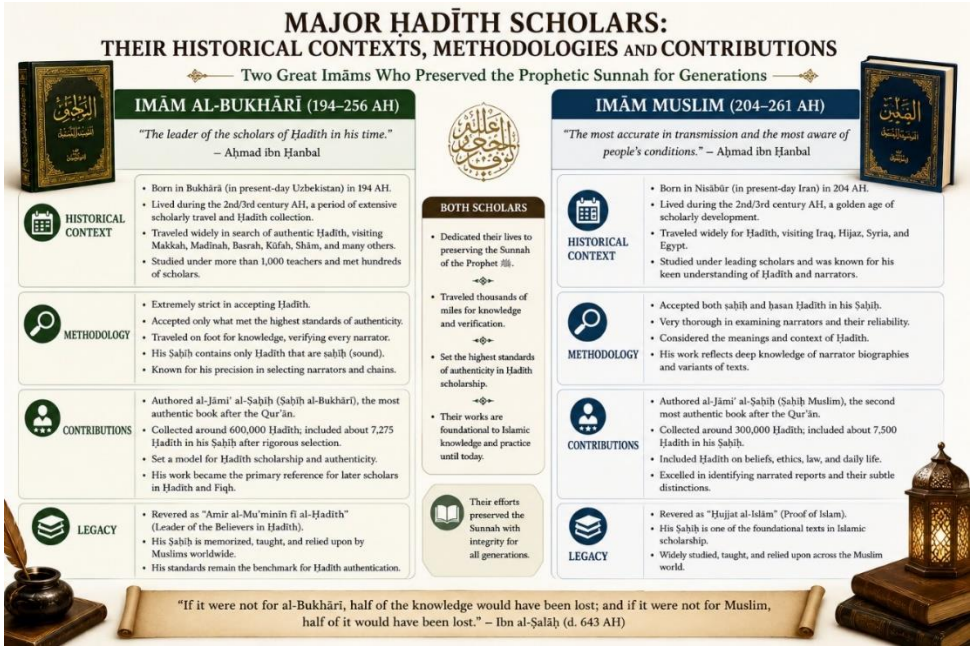


Figure 5.1 Major Hadith Scholar
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

When you compare Imām al-Bukhārī's strict requirement for verified face-to-face contact (liqāʾ) with Imām Muslim's focus on editorial precision and chronological overlap, how does this methodological distinction demonstrate that both masters successfully preserved the exact wording of the Sunnah through two equally brilliant yet distinct scientific filters?

1. Imām al-Bukhārī (194–256 AH)
Historical Context:
Lived during a period when Ḥadīth criticism had matured. Scholars were deeply concerned with authenticity due to widespread fabrication.
Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH) revolutionised the science of Hadith with his systematic, rigorous approach to authentication and compilation. His monumental work, Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ (commonly known as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī), remains the most authoritative Hadith source in Sunni Islam after the Qur'an (Scribd, 2025).

Key Contributions
- **Establishment of Rigorous Authentication Criteria:** Al-Bukhārī was the first to formalise a systematic approach to Hadith criticism. He established stringent conditions for narrator reliability, requiring narrators to be trustworthy (‘adl) and possess an excellent memory (dabt), as well as confirmed personal contact (liqa') between narrators in the chain (isnad) (Being (Muslimah, 2024; Academia.edu, 2024).

- **Thematic Compilation for Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*):** Unlike previous collections, which were often organised solely by narrator (Musnad), al-Bukhārī organised his Sahih thematically into books and chapters. This innovation enabled scholars to deduce legal rulings (fiqh) directly from the Hadith texts, effectively making the collection a comprehensive guide to daily life and Islamic law (Being Muslimah, 2024).
- **Unprecedented Selection Process:** Al-Bukhārī selected his narrations from a vast pool of approximately 600,000 Hadith he had memorised and studied. Over a period of sixteen years, he curated approximately 7,000 narrations (including repetitions) that met his exceptionally high standards for authenticity (Verse by Verse Quran Study Circle, 2015).
- **Formalisation of *'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*:** By developing specific methodologies for classifying Hadith (such as Sahih, Hasan, and Da'if), he transformed Hadith studies into a rigorous academic discipline. His work established a template for future generations, including his student Imām Muslim, and provided the intellectual tools to safeguard the tradition against corruption and innovation (Being Muslimah, 2024).

2. Imām Muslim (204–261 AH)
Historical Context:
A student of al-Bukhārī, he worked within the same scholarly environment characterised by rigorous verification.

Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261 AH) is revered as one of the most prominent figures in Hadith scholarship. His masterwork, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, is regarded as the second most authentic Hadith collection in Sunni Islam and is frequently cited alongside Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (IslamOnline, 2021; Arab News, 2012).

Key Contributions and Methodology

- **Systematic Thematic Classification:** Unlike some *Hadith* collections that prioritise the narrator's name, Imām Muslim organised his *Sahih* strictly by subject matter. This structural innovation made the collection exceptionally accessible for legal and theological study (Islamic Journals, 2020).
- **Rigorous Authentication Principles:** Imām Muslim refined and strictly adhered to methodologies for assessing Ḥadīth authenticity. He included only narrations with an unbroken chain (isnad) of reliable authorities and that were perfectly harmonious with other unanimously accepted reports. He categorised narrators into three distinct levels of trustworthiness to ensure that only the

most precise narrations were included (Dr Rafaqat, 2018; Islamic Journals, 2020).

- **Refinement of Narrator Scrutiny:** He introduced advanced criteria for narrator interaction, asserting that for a Hadith to be authentic, there must be confirmed contemporary interaction between narrators in the chain (Dr Rafaqat, 2018).
- **Editorial Precision:** Imām Muslim was renowned for his meticulous care in preserving the exact wording of a Hadith. He famously did not summarise or elaborate on the texts provided by his narrators, thereby ensuring the fidelity of the original transmission (Islamic Journals, 2020).
- **Illuminating Introduction:** He prefaced his Sahih with a foundational introduction that set out the principles of Hadith criticism he applied, providing future scholars with a blueprint for authenticating prophetic traditions (IslamOnline, 2021).

Method: Maintained high standards but allowed slightly more flexibility in *isnād* evaluation.

5.4 Imām Abū Dāwūd, Imām al-Tirmidhī and Imām al-Nasāʾī

1. Abū Dāwūd (202–275 AH)

Historical Context:
Period of growing Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Contribution:
Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275 AH) made a seminal contribution to Hadith scholarship through his monumental work, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, universally recognised as one of the six primary canonical sources of the Sunni Islamic tradition.

Key Contributions to *Hadith* Literature

- **Jurisprudential Focus (*Ahkam*):** Unlike general Hadith collections, Abū Dāwūd deliberately focused his Sunan on narrations containing legal rulings (Ahkam). This structural decision made his collection an indispensable resource for jurists and scholars of Fiqh (The Faith, 2024).
- **Rigorous Methodology and Selection:** He meticulously curated his collection from a vast repository of 50,000 narrations, selecting approximately 4,800 that met his high standards of reliability. He travelled to meet the foremost traditionists of his era to establish reliable chains of transmission (isnad) (Hadith Collection, 2009; Sunnah.com, n.d.).

- **Authentication Transparency:** Abū Dāwūd was remarkably transparent about his methodology. He wrote a famous letter to the people of Makkah, in which he detailed his authentication processes, the criteria he used to accept narrations, and the significance of his work (Sunnah.com, n.d.).
- **Legal Contextualisation:** He excelled not only in providing the text of the Hadith but also in providing its jurisprudential context. When faced with apparently contradictory narrations, he often examined the practical application and understanding adopted by the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) to clarify the intended meaning (Hadith Collection, 2009).
- **Establishing Academic Standards:** Along with al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd is celebrated as one of the four legendary figures who fundamentally transformed the academic standards of Hadith criticism, shaping centuries of scholarship on the Prophetic tradition (Slideshare, 2017).



Figure 5.2 The Legacy of the Sunnah Masters
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Imām Abū Dāwūd focused solely on extracting practical legal rulings for courtroom judges, while Imām al-Tirmidhī revolutionised the field by introducing the Hasan grade and tracking comparative juristic debates. How does this joint effort demonstrate that the Sunan masters successfully transformed Ḥadīth from raw historical texts into highly organised, accessible blueprints for everyday Islamic law?

2. al-Tirmidhī (209–279 AH)
Historical Context:
Era of synthesis between *Ḥadīth* and jurisprudence.

Contribution:
Imām al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH) is distinguished in Islamic scholarship for revolutionising *Hadith* criticism and organisation through his masterpiece, *Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī* (also known as *Sunan at-Tirmidhī*).

Key Contributions to *Hadith* Literature

- **Pioneering Authenticity Classification:** Imām al-Tirmidhī is credited with being the first scholar to consistently categorise Hadith narrations into specific authenticity grades, most notably Sahih (authentic), Hasan (good), and Da'if (weak). This established a standardised terminology that remains the foundation of Hadith criticism today (IJITEE, 2019).
- **Systematic Critical Apparatus:** His work is distinctive for its extensive critical commentary. After each Hadith, al-Tirmidhī often evaluated the report's authenticity, identified the narrators, and—crucially—recorded the opinions of various jurists on the Hadith's application, making it an essential resource for comparative jurisprudence (Sunnah.com, n.d.; Hashiya, 2025).
- **Defining *Hasan*:** He was the scholar who formally defined and popularised the term Hasan (good/acceptable), a middle category for narrations that did not meet the highest standard of Sahih but were still reliable for legal and ethical application (Hashiya, 2025).
- **Comprehensive Thematic Approach:** His work, titled Jāmi‘ (the "complete" collection), encompasses all major categories of Islamic knowledge, including beliefs, law, ethics, and history. This structure facilitated its adoption as a primary textbook for students of Islamic sciences (Wikipedia, 2005; Slough Islamic Trust, 2026).
- **Narrator Biographical Data:** He was highly attentive to narrators' identities and characteristics, often providing biographical notes and clarifying ambiguities in names or lineage, which significantly aided later scholars in assessing narrators' reliability (Slough Islamic Trust, 2026).

3. al-Nasāʾī (215–303 AH)
Historical Context:
Later stage of *Ḥadīth* refinement.
Imām al-Nasāʾī (d. 303 AH) made extraordinary contributions to the science of Hadith through his meticulous scrutiny and systematic compilation, thereby establishing his work, Sunan al-Nasāʾī (also known as Al-Sunan al-Ṣughrā), as one of the six canonical collections (Kutub al-Sittah) of Sunni Islam (Wikipedia, 2005; Sunnah.com, 2026).

Key Contributions to *Ḥadīth* Literature

- **Exacting Standards of Narrator Scrutiny:** Imām al-Nasāʾī is widely regarded by scholars as upholding the most rigorous standards for narrator reliability, often exceeding those of his contemporaries, such as Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī. He was an unmatched expert in identifying subtle defects (ʻillat) in Hadith chains (Ulum al-Hadith, 2022; Muftisays, 2025).
- **Precision in Jurisprudential Derivation:** He was highly precise in extracting legal rulings (Fiqh) from Hadith. He famously utilised a technique of repeating a single Hadith text across multiple chapters, each with a different heading, linking each chapter to a distinct legal ruling he derived from that narration (Ulum al-Hadith, 2022).
- **Critical Evaluation of Narrators:** Beyond simply compiling Hadith, his work is a repository of critical analysis. He frequently included detailed notes identifying narrators' flaws, clarifying disagreements over their names or lineages, and highlighting variations across different versions of the same narration (Muftisays, 2025).
- **Comprehensive Methodology:** He authored As-Sunan al-Kubrā, a comprehensive, encyclopaedic collection, and later summarised it as Al-Mujtabā (the "selected" Sunan), the version commonly studied today. This enabled him to provide both an exhaustive academic resource and a refined, practical textbook for students (PRDB, 2025).
- **Methodological Transparency:** He provided a transparent approach to Hadith criticism by outlining his criteria for accepting narrators. His work significantly advanced methodologies for evaluating Hadith authenticity and served as a critical reference point for subsequent generations of scholars (A-empat, 2025).

Method: Highly selective, emphasising authenticity.

5.5 Imām Ibn Mājah, Imām Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

1. Ibn Mājah (209–273 AH)

Historical Context:

Expansion of *Ḥadīth* collections.

Imām Ibn Mājah (d. 273 AH) is a seminal figure in Islamic scholarship, best known for compiling Sunan Ibn Mājah, the sixth canonical Hadith collection in Sunni Islam, often included among the Kutub al-Sittah.

Key Contributions to *Hadith* Literature

- **Canonical Inclusion:** Ibn Mājah's Sunan earned its place as the sixth essential reference in the Kutub al-Sittah because of its exceptional prestige and the rigorous standards upheld throughout the compilation (IslamOnline, 2022).
- **Unique *Hadith* Additions (*Zawā'id*):** A defining contribution of his work is the inclusion of Zawā'id—approximately 1,339 narrations not found in the other five major canonical collections. Among these, he included 482 Sahih (authentic) Hadith, providing scholars with a unique and broader foundation for legal and ethical discourse (Sunnah.com, n.d.).
- **Strengthening Existing Narrations:** Ibn Mājah often presented Hadith that were already known, but he frequently transmitted them through different, previously unknown chains of transmission (isnāds). The presence of these multiple, distinct chains significantly strengthened the authenticity of these reports (Sunnah.com, n.d.).
- **Thematic Breadth:** His Sunan is highly valued for its thematic comprehensiveness, comprising 37 books and 1,560 chapters that span a wide spectrum of Islamic knowledge, from fundamental rituals to complex jurisprudence and social conduct (Sunnah.com, n.d.).
- **Encyclopedic Scholarship:** Beyond his Sunan, Ibn Mājah was a polymath who made significant contributions to other disciplines. He authored an extensive commentary on the Qur'an (Tafsīr) and a historical record (Tārīkh), works that were highly esteemed by subsequent generations of scholars, including Ibn Kathīr and As-Suyūṭī, even though their complete manuscripts were unfortunately lost to history (IslamOnline, 2022; Wikipedia, 2005).

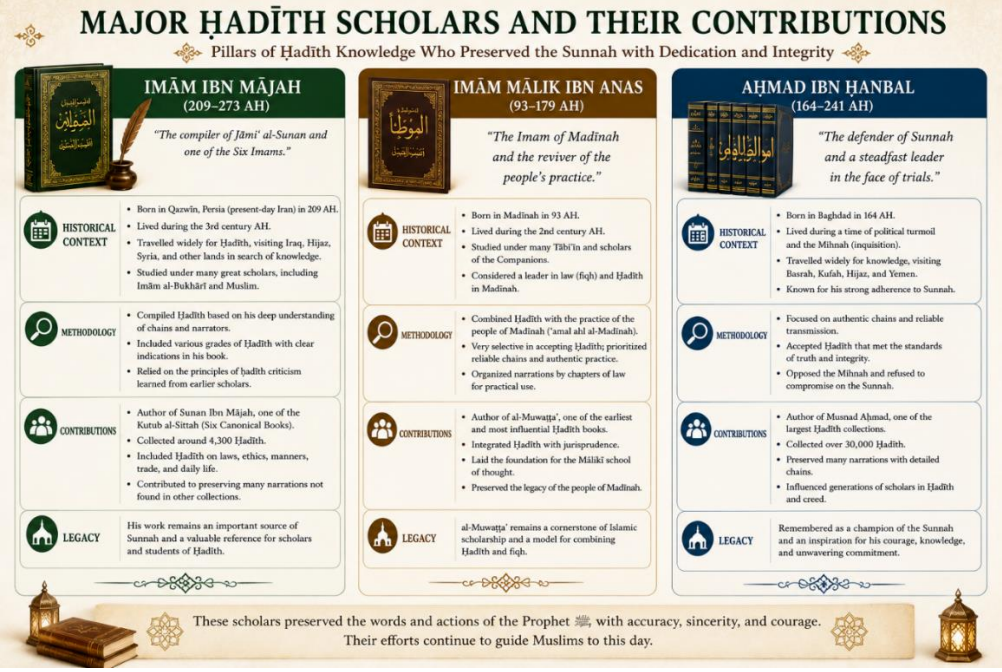


Figure 5.3 Major Hadith Scholars and Their Contributions
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

2. Mālik ibn Anas (93–179 AH)
Historical Context:
Earlier generation (*Tābiʿūn* period), closer to the Prophet's era.
Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH) was a monumental figure whose contributions fundamentally shaped the trajectory of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) and Hadith scholarship. Known as the "Scholar of Medina" (Imām Dār al-Hijrah), he is remembered for founding the Maliki school of jurisprudence and authoring Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ.

When you consider the stark contrast between Imām Mālik's reliance on the living oral traditions of Medina, Imām Aḥmad's memorisation of a million reports to compile a massive narrator-based Musnad, and Imām Ibn Mājah's addition of over a thousand unique textual variants (Zawā'id), how does this generational shift demonstrate that the preservation of the Sunnah evolved from a local community practice into a vast, borderless data science?

Key Contributions to *Hadith* and Jurisprudence

- **Compilation of *Al-Muwaṭṭa'*:** This work is recognised as one of the oldest and most authoritative compendia of Hadith and legal doctrine. It represented a groundbreaking effort to organise Prophetic traditions alongside the established religious and legal practices of Medina (Britannica, 2025; IQRA Network, 2025).

- **Founder of the Maliki School:** He founded one of the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence. His approach to law was distinctive, emphasising the "practice of the people of Medina" (‘Amal Ahl al-Madinah) as a primary and living source of law, reflecting the continuous transmission of the Prophet’s Sunnah in the city where he lived and taught (Wikipedia, 2003; Zamzam Academy, 2026).
- **Systematisation of Early Legal Doctrine:** Imām Mālik played a pivotal role in shaping early Islamic legal doctrine. By integrating Hadith into Fiqh, he provided a holistic framework for interpreting Islamic law that balanced scriptural tradition with community practice (Britannica, 2025; CPS Global, 2004).
- **Methodological Innovation:** His methodology was characterised by the synthesis of scriptural evidence and community consensus (Ijma‘), providing a structured model for legal reasoning (Ijtihad) that avoided the extremes of purely rationalist or purely traditionalist interpretations (Academia.edu, 2016).

3. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241 AH)

Historical Context:

Period of theological debates and the consolidation of Sunnī orthodoxy.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH) was one of the most venerated figures in Islamic intellectual history, renowned both as the founder of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence and as an unparalleled expert in *Hadith* scholarship (Wikipedia, 2004; IQRA Network, 2025).

Key Contributions to *Hadith* and Islamic Thought

- **Compilation of *Al-Musnad*:** His most famous scholarly achievement is the Musnad, an extensive collection of over 30,000 prophetic narrations. By organising this vast body of Hadith according to the name of the original narrator (Sahabah), he created a foundational resource that significantly influenced the methodological frameworks later refined by scholars such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim (Wikipedia, 2004; Arab News, 2002).
- **Unrivalled Mastery of *Hadith*:** Ibn Ḥanbal was legendary for his prodigious memory; it is reported that he memorised more than one million prophetic narrations. His lifelong dedication to travelling across the Muslim world to collect and verify these traditions ensured the preservation of a vast Hadith corpus (Wikipedia, 2004; About Islam, 2017).

- **Founder of the Hanbali School:** He established one of the four orthodox Sunni schools of law. The school is distinguished by its strict adherence to the literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, prioritising textual evidence over human reasoning or speculative analogy (IQRA Network, 2025; Britannica, 2025).
- **Defensive of Islamic Orthodoxy:** Beyond his academic work, he is remembered for his courage during the Mihna (the inquisition), when he endured imprisonment and flogging for refusing to accept the Mu'tazili doctrine that the Qur'an was created. This sacrifice made him a symbol of unwavering commitment to traditionalist orthodoxy (Britannica, 2025; IQRA Network, 2025).
- **Methodological Framework:** His emphasis on prioritising authentic narrations—even those deemed "weaker" (Da'if)—over personal opinion or ra'y (speculative reasoning) established a distinctive legal methodology that prioritised the direct words and actions of the Prophet and his companions (Wikipedia, 2005; Muslim Heritage, 2004).

Method: Organised *Ḥadīth* by companions.

Table 1: Scholars and Their Historical Contexts

Scholar	Period	Context	Contribution
al-Bukhārī	3rd century AH	Peak *Ḥadīth* criticism	*Ṣaḥīḥ* collection
Muslim	3rd century AH	Scholarly refinement	Systematic compilation
Abū Dāwūd	3rd century AH	Growth of *fiqh*	Legal *Ḥadīth*
al-Tirmidhī	3rd century AH	Analytical phase	Classification
al-Nasāʾī	Late 3rd century AH	Advanced scrutiny	Selective authenticity
Ibn Mājah	3rd century AH	Expansion	Additional reports
Mālik	2nd century AH	Early codification	Muwaṭṭaʾ
Aḥmad	3rd century AH	Theological consolidation	Musnad

In summary, these scholars mark the transition from oral transmission to systematic documentation and critical evaluation of Ḥadīth. Their works emerged in response to historical challenges, including the spread of weak and fabricated narrations, and they established methodological standards

that continue to shape Islamic scholarship. Together, they ensured the preservation, authenticity, and practical application of the Sunnah across Islamic law, theology, and daily life.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by selecting the most suitable option:

1. Who compiled Al-Muwaṭṭaʾ, one of the earliest surviving collections of Hadith?

a) Imām al-Bukhārī
b) Imām Mālik ibn Anas
c) Al-Tirmidhī
d) Ibn Mājah

2. Which scholar is famous for organising his *Musnad* by the names of the narrators (*Sahabah*)?

a) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal
b) Imām Muslim
c) Abū Dāwūd
d) Al-Nasāʾī

3. Which collection is widely regarded by Sunni scholars as the most authentic book after the Qur'an??

a) *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*
b) *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
c) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*
d) *Sunan Ibn Mājah*

4. Which scholar is noted for pioneering the classification of Hadith grades, including Sahih, Hasan, and Da'if?

a) Al-Nasāʾī
b) Abū Dāwūd
c) Al-Tirmidhī
d) Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

5. During which century did the formalisation of 'ilm al-Ḥadīth (the science of Hadith) primarily occur?

a) 1st century AH
b) 3rd century AH
c) 5th century AH
d) 9th century AH

5.6 Impact of the works of *Ḥadīth* scholars on Islamic law and preservation of the Sunnah.

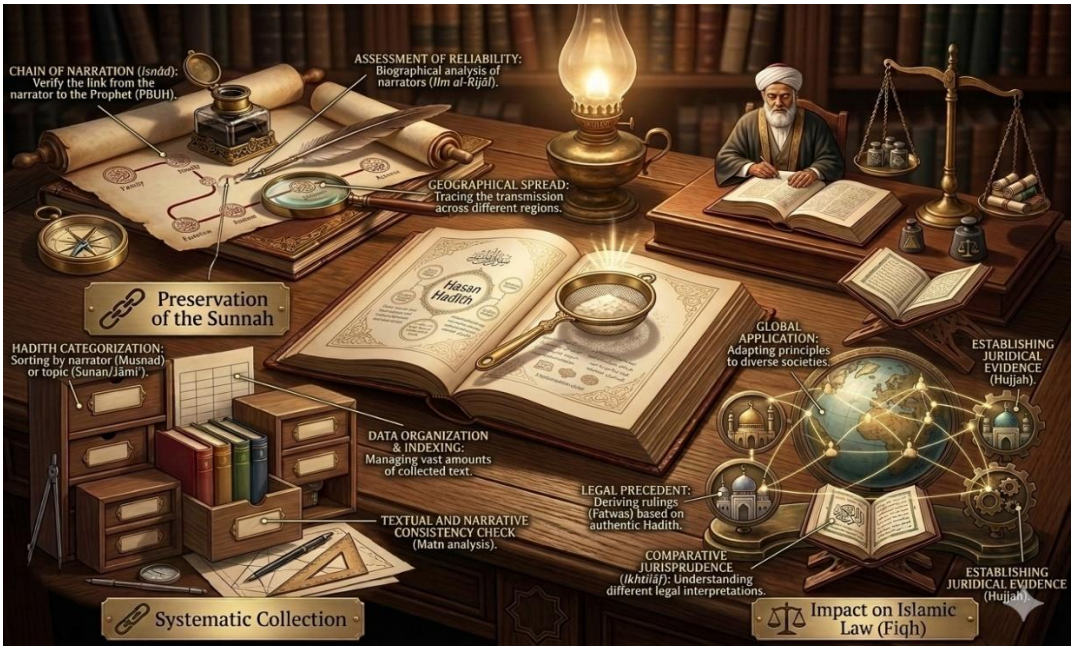


Figure 5.4 Impact of the works of Ḥadīth scholars on Islamic law and preservation of the Sunnah

Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

The efforts of Ḥadīth scholars form the backbone of Islamic legal theory (Usul al-Fiqh) and the primary means of preserving the Sunnah. Their rigorous work transformed fragmented oral reports into a structured, authenticated body of knowledge that defines Islamic practice and jurisprudence.

Classical Ḥadīth filters are now actively used to analyse modern digital research databases, solve 21st-century financial puzzles, and address healthcare dilemmas. How does this ongoing reliance prove that the rigorous authentication models built centuries ago are not merely historical artefacts but a living, breathing blueprint for modern human reason?

1. Preservation of the *Sunnah*

The preservation of the Sunnah was achieved through the sophisticated development of ‘ilm al-Ḥadīth (the science of Ḥadīth criticism). To safeguard the Prophet’s legacy against fabrication and error, scholars developed an unprecedented system of verification:

- **The *Isnad* System:** Scholars established the necessity of isnad (chain of narrators), requiring that every reporter in the chain be verified for trustworthiness and memory. This

provided historical continuity, enabling scholars to trace narrations back to the Prophet Muhammad.

- ***Jarh wa Ta'dil* (Criticism and Accreditation):** Scholars compiled extensive biographical dictionaries detailing the lives, reliability, and moral character of thousands of narrators. This biographical science ensured that any potential for error or dishonesty was systematically identified and addressed.
- ***Matn* (Content) Criticism:** Alongside chain verification, scholars examined the *matn* (content) of each narration to ensure it did not contradict the Qur'an or established core principles of Islamic law.

2. Impact on Islamic Law (*Fiqh*)

Ḥadīth provides essential context, clarification, and practical detail for the Qur'an, making it a primary pillar of the Sharīʿah. Its impact on Islamic law includes:

- **Constitutive Role in Jurisprudence:** The Ḥadīth collections are the primary sources from which jurists derive rulings on worship, commercial transactions, family law, and criminal justice.
- **Methodological Influence:** The reliability and thematic organisation of these collections directly shaped legal methodologies such as Qiyas (analogical reasoning) and Ijma' (consensus). Jurists from all major Sunni schools—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—treated Ḥadīth authentication as the foundational step in their legal reasoning.
- **Dynamic Application:** By providing authentic prophetic examples, the Ḥadīth corpus enabled scholars to adapt Islamic teachings to new circumstances through Ijtihad (independent legal reasoning), ensuring the Prophet's example remained a dynamic guide for evolving societies.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. The science developed to preserve the Sunnah and to verify narrations is known as _____.

2. The system that ensures continuity of transmission through a chain of narrators is known as _____.

3. The biographical evaluation of narrators for reliability and moral character is known as _____.

4. The examination of a Ḥadīth's content to ensure it does not contradict the Qurʾān is called _____ criticism.
5. The process by which scholars apply independent reasoning to address new issues using Ḥadīth is called _____.

5.7 The continued relevance of their methodologies and collections in contemporary Islamic studies.

The methodologies and classical collections established by the early Ḥadīth scholars remain the vital bedrock of contemporary Islamic studies. While modern academic contexts introduce new tools and critical approaches, the fundamental principles of narrator scrutiny and source verification developed in the 3rd century AH continue to define the parameters of authoritative Islamic knowledge.

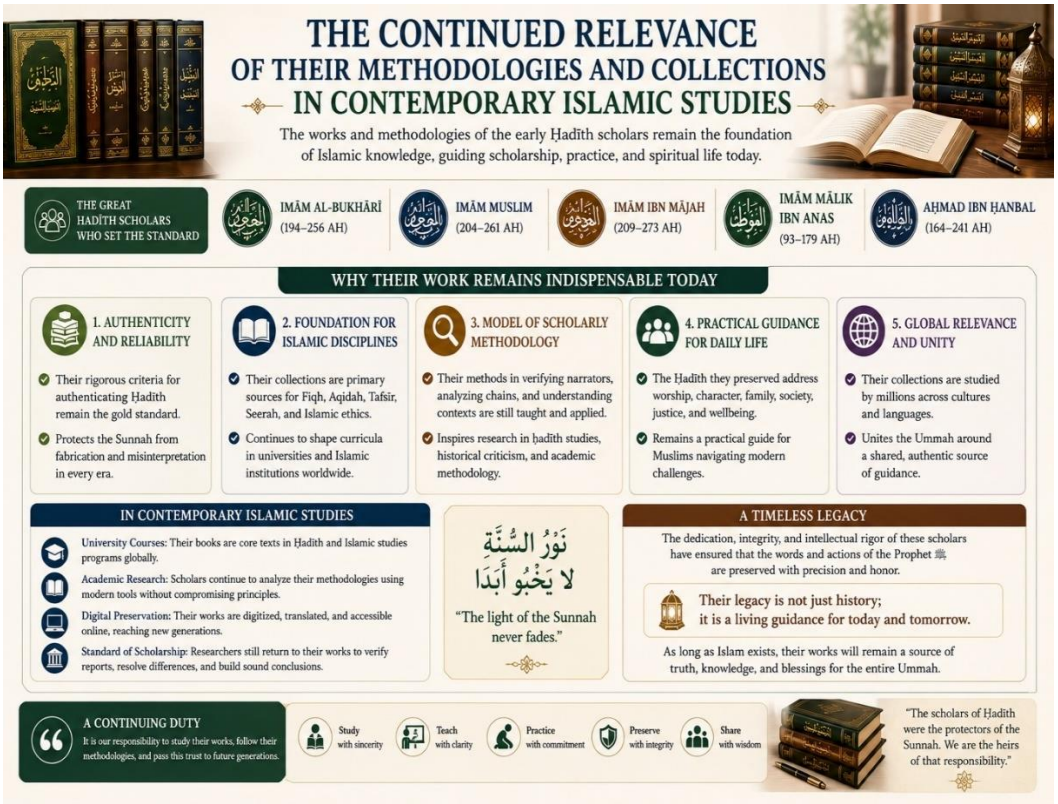


Figure 5.5 The continued relevance of their methodologies and collections in contemporary Islamic studies.
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

Continued Relevance of Classical Methodologies

- **Foundation for Jurisprudential Reasoning:** Modern comparative jurisprudence consistently relies on the thematic categorisations and authenticity grades established by scholars such as al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasāʾī. Contemporary jurists use these classical frameworks to navigate modern ethical dilemmas in

finance, healthcare, and human rights, ensuring that new rulings remain grounded in the authentic Prophetic tradition.

- **Academic Rigour in Contemporary Research:** The isnad-based verification methodology serves as a model for source criticism in historical and social research. Modern Muslim researchers increasingly integrate these historical-critical principles with contemporary digital tools and interdisciplinary approaches to assess textual authenticity and analyse historical narratives.
- **Countering Contemporary Challenges:** Classical methodologies are instrumental in responding to modern critiques of Islamic sources. By revisiting historical contexts and the rigorous authentication standards established by classical scholars, modern academics can counter destructive speculation about the reliability of the Ḥadīth corpus and provide evidence-based defences of Islamic heritage.
- **Integration in Modern Islamic Education:** Classical collections remain core textbooks in major universities and Islamic institutions worldwide. The systematic approaches of scholars such as al-Bukhārī are now integrated into modern pedagogical structures, providing a robust, structured foundation for character formation and values education.

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/EiJWO6-zbFo?si=jcR1K4Twr3TKcMJK



Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. The classical methodologies of Ḥadīth scholars remain relevant primarily because they:

A. Replace the Qurʾān in legal rulings

B. Provide a foundation for verifying authenticity and authority

C. Eliminate the need for modern research

D. Focus only on historical narration

2. Contemporary jurists rely on classical *Ḥadīth* classifications to address modern issues in:

A. Agriculture only

B. Finance, healthcare, and human rights

C. Literature and poetry
D. Language studies only
3. The *isnād*-based methodology is considered a model for:
A. Political leadership
B. Scientific experimentation
C. Source criticism in historical research
D. Linguistic translation
4. One major role of classical methodologies today is to:
A. Replace modern education systems
B. Support speculative interpretations
C. Countermodern critiques of *Ḥadīth* authenticity
D. Limit academic inquiry
5. Classical Ḥadīth collections remain in use in modern Islamic education because they:
A. Are easier to memorise
B. Provide structured and authentic foundations for learning
C. Focus only on rituals
D. Replace all modern textbooks

Case Study: Resolving a Juristic Question Using Different Ḥadīth Scholars' Collections

An Islamic legal council was asked to issue a ruling on a contemporary financial practice. Before deciding, the scholars consulted Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim for the most authentic narrations on trade. They then consulted Sunan Abī Dāwūd for legal rulings, Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī to compare juristic opinions and Ḥadīth classifications, and Sunan al-Nasāʾī and Sunan Ibn Mājah for supporting narrations. By applying the rigorous authentication methods developed by these classical scholars, the council reached a ruling grounded in reliable evidence rather than personal opinion. This case demonstrates how the methodologies and collections of the major Ḥadīth scholars continue to guide contemporary Islamic law and preserve the authentic Sunnah.



5.8 Summary

We have discussed the key figures in the development of Ḥadīth scholarship, focusing on their historical contexts, methodologies, and distinctive contributions to the preservation and authentication of the Sunnah. The unit situates these scholars within the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, a critical period during which Ḥadīth studies evolved into a highly systematic and disciplined field in response to the spread of fabricated

narrations and the growing needs of the Muslim community (Brown, 2009).

The unit identifies major scholars, including Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim, whose Ṣaḥīḥ collections set the highest standards of authenticity. It also highlights the contributions of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasāʾī, and Ibn Mājah, whose Sunan works emphasise the legal application, classification, and accessibility of Ḥadīth. Earlier scholars, such as Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, are also examined for their foundational roles in early compilation and large-scale preservation.

A central focus of the unit is the methodologies these scholars employed, including isnād criticism, matn analysis, narrator evaluation (jarḥ wa taʿdīl), and the systematic classification of Ḥadīth into categories such as ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, and ḍaʿīf (Azami, 1992; Kamali, 2003). The unit further demonstrates how each scholar contributed uniquely—for example, al-Bukhārī's strict criteria, al-Tirmidhī's classification system, and Mālik's reliance on the practice of Madinah. In conclusion, Unit 5 shows that the combined efforts of these scholars established a robust scientific framework that ensured the authentic transmission of the Sunnah, thereby sustaining Islamic law, theology, and daily religious practice across generations.



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5.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. C
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*
2. *Isnād*
3. *Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl*
4. *Matn*
5. *Ijtihād*

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. B

MODULE 3 METHODOLOGY AND AUTHENTICATION OF *ḤADĪTH*

Unit 1 Science of *Ḥadīth* Criticism (*ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth*)
Unit 2 Principles of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*
Unit 3 Conditions for Accepting a *Ḥadīth*
Unit 4 Modern Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Criticism

Unit 1 Science of *Ḥadīth* Criticism (*ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth*)

Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Learning Outcomes
1.3 Definition of the science of *Ḥadīth* criticism (*ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth*) and its place within the broader Islamic sciences.
1.3.1 Core Components of *Ḥadīth* Criticism
1.3.2 Place of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* within the Islamic Sciences
1.3.3 Significance in Contemporary Islamic Studies
1.4 Historical emergence and development of *ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth*.
1.5 Key principles and terminology used in assessing the authenticity of *Ḥadīth*.
1.6 Methods used by scholars to evaluate narrators, *isnād* and *matn*.
1.7 Significance of *ʻIlm al-Ḥadīth* in preserving the Sunnah.
1.8 Summary
1.9 References/Further Readings
1.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1.1 Introduction

Let us begin! You will discover the remarkable efforts of early Muslim scholars to preserve the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). You will explore the systematic methods they developed to examine narrations with great care, ensuring that only authentic and reliable Aḥādīth were accepted. By the end of the unit, you will have a greater appreciation of the depth and precision of this important field of Islamic scholarship. As the Ḥadīth became the primary source for understanding the Sunnah (the Prophet's personal example), it became imperative to establish a methodology that could effectively distinguish genuine prophetic accounts from those that were weak, doubtful, or fabricated. The foundation of this science rests on the systematic scrutiny of two core elements: the Isnād (the chain of transmission) and the Matn (the text of the narration). Scholars developed advanced analytical fields such as 'ilm al-rijāl (the science of biographical evaluation of transmitters) and 'ilm al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl (the science of disparaging and accrediting narrators)

to assess the moral integrity, memory, and precision of each individual in a chain of transmission.

By setting strict parameters, Muhaddithūn (Ḥadīth experts) could categorise narrations by authenticity, such as Ṣaḥīḥ (sound), Ḥasan (good), or Ḍaʿīf (weak), thereby providing a reliable academic basis for Islamic law, ethics, and theology. This Unit introduces the historical emergence, fundamental terminology, and methodical classification systems that define ‘ilm al-Ḥadīth. By exploring these principles, students will gain insight into how early scholars transformed oral traditions into a verified academic discipline, safeguarding the Sunnah for over 1,400 years and offering an enduring model for historical and critical inquiry.



1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the science of Ḥadīth criticism (‘ilm al-Ḥadīth) and its place within the broader Islamic sciences;
- describe the historical emergence and development of ‘ilm al-Ḥadīth from the early generations of Muslims;
- identify key principles and terminology used to assess the authenticity of Ḥadīth (e.g., ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf);
- analyse the methods scholars use to evaluate narrators, isnād (chain of transmission), and matn (text content); and
- evaluate the significance of ‘ilm al-Ḥadīth in preserving the sunnah and ensuring its correct application in Islamic law and daily life.



1.3 Definition of the science of *Ḥadīth* criticism (‘*Ilm al-Ḥadīth*) and its place within the broader Islamic sciences.

ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, the science of Ḥadīth criticism, is the systematic discipline developed by Muslim scholars to examine, verify, classify, and preserve the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It encompasses both the analysis of the chain of transmission (isnād) and the text (matn) of a Ḥadīth to determine its authenticity and reliability (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002; Azami, 1992).

Classical scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ defined this science as the study of the conditions of narrators and transmitted reports, enabling scholars to distinguish between accepted (maqbūl) and rejected (mardūd) narrations. Similarly, Al-Nawawī emphasised that ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth concerns the principles governing the evaluation of narrators, the continuity of transmission, and textual consistency. Broadly, ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth is divided into two main branches:

- ***ʿIlm al-Riwāyah* (Science of Transmission):** Concerned with the accurate narration and preservation of *Ḥadīth*.
- ***ʿIlm al-Dirāyah* (Science of Criticism):** Focuses on the critical evaluation of *isnād* and *matn*, including classification into *ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan*, and *ḍaʿīf* categories (Kamali, 2003).

By cleanly splitting the field into ʿIlm al-Riwāyah (the pure recording of text) and ʿIlm al-Dirāyah (the critical vetting of both chain and message), how does this dual framework demonstrate that early Muslim scholars prioritised rigorous analytical logic over blind trust when preserving the Prophetic legacy?

1.3.1 Core Components of *Ḥadīth* Criticism

The science operates through several key methodologies:

1. ***Isnād* Analysis:** Verification of the chain of narrators to ensure continuity and reliability.
2. ***Matn* Criticism:** Examination of the content to ensure consistency with the Qurʾān and the established Sunnah.
3. ***Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl*:** Biographical evaluation of narrators' moral integrity and precision.
4. **Classification:** Categorisation of *Ḥadīth* based on authenticity and reliability (Brown, 2009).

These tools collectively form a rigorous verification system that is unparalleled in other historical traditions.



Figure 1.1 Core Components of Ḥadīth Criticism
Source – AI-generated image, (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

1.3.2 Place of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* within the Islamic Sciences

ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth holds a central and foundational place within the broader framework of Islamic sciences. It is closely connected to several key disciplines*:*

1. **Relationship with the Qurʾān**
   While the Qurʾān is the primary source of Islamic guidance, Ḥadīth serves as its explanation and practical application. The science of Ḥadīth ensures the authenticity and reliability of these explanations.

2. **Role in Islamic Law (*Fiqh* and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*)**
   Ḥadīth is the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān. Jurists rely on authenticated Ḥadīth to derive rulings on acts of worship, social transactions, and legal matters (Hallaq, 2009). Without ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, the legal system would lack a reliable evidentiary basis.
3. **Connection with Theology (*ʿAqīdah*)**
   Authentic Ḥadīth provide essential teachings on belief, covering matters of faith, eschatology, and divine attributes. The science of

Ḥadīth ensures that theological doctrines are grounded in sound evidence.

4. **Integration with Arabic Language Sciences**
   Understanding *Ḥadīth* requires knowledge of Arabic linguistics, grammar, and rhetoric, as subtle variations in wording can affect meaning and legal interpretation.
5. **Contribution to Islamic History and Civilisation**
   ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth preserves detailed historical records of the Prophet's life and of the early Muslim community, contributing to the broader field of Islamic historiography.

ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth serves as the vital pipeline supplying validated evidence directly to law, theology, grammar, and history. How does its long evolution—from basic oral memorisation to the famous demand of "Name your narrators" during early political trials—prove that this science was the intellectual engine protecting the integrity of all other Islamic fields?

1.3.3 Significance in Contemporary Islamic Studies

In modern times, *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* continues to play a vital role in:

- academic research and source criticism;
- responding to modern challenges and scepticism; and
- guiding ethical and legal decision-making in contemporary contexts

Its methodologies have also shaped modern historical and textual criticism, underscoring the enduring relevance of classical Islamic scholarship. In summary, ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth is a highly sophisticated and essential discipline that ensures the authentic preservation and transmission of the Sunnah. By combining rigorous methodologies with a deep commitment to accuracy, it safeguards the integrity of Islamic teachings and serves as a cornerstone of Islamic law, theology, and scholarship across generations.

1.4 Historical Emergence and Development of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*

The science of Ḥadīth (ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth) did not emerge as a fully systematised discipline overnight; rather, it developed gradually in response to the early Muslim community's religious, social, and intellectual needs. Its primary aim has always been to preserve and authenticate the Sunnah, ensuring that the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace

be upon him) teachings are transmitted accurately across generations (Azami, 1992).

1. **The Prophetic Era (1–11 AH): Foundation of Transmission**
   During the Prophet's lifetime, Ḥadīth transmission was primarily oral, supported by the Arabs' strong culture of memorisation. The Prophet encouraged accurate transmission of his sayings while exercising caution to avoid confusion with the Qurʾān.
- Companions memorised and occasionally wrote down *Ḥadīth*;
- Emphasis was placed on precision and trustworthiness.
  This period laid the foundations of reliable transmission, though formal critical sciences had not yet developed.

2. **The Era of the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) (11–100 AH)**
   After the Prophet's death, the Companions became the primary transmitters of Ḥadīth.

Key Developments:
- Expansion of the Muslim world led to wider transmission;
- Increased caution in narrating *Ḥadīth;* and
- Emergence of early verification practices.

The onset of political conflicts, such as the First Fitna, led to the fabrication of Ḥadīth, prompting stricter verification.

3. **The Era of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*) (1st–2nd Century AH)**
   This period witnessed the formal beginnings of *the use of isnād*.

Major Features:
- Introduction of *isnād* (chain of transmission) as a requirement;
- Development of early regional schools of *Ḥadīth* (e.g., Madinah, Kūfah); and
- Increased recording of narrations.

Scholars began asking: "Name your narrators," marking a turning point in critical evaluation (Brown, 2009).

4. **The Era of Compilation (2nd–3rd Century AH)**
   This period is regarded as the golden age of Ḥadīth scholarship, when systematic compilation and critical methodologies were fully developed.

Key Developments:
- Compilation of major *Ḥadīth* collections;
- Establishment of *jarḥ wa taʿdīl* (narrator criticism**)**; and
- Development of classification systems (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf*).

Prominent scholars such as Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim applied rigorous criteria when compiling their authentic collections.

5. The Period of Refinement and Systematisation (4th Century AH onwards)

After the major compilations, scholars focused on refining and codifying the Ḥadīth sciences.

Key Features:

- Writing of foundational manuals on *Ḥadīth* methodology;
- Systematic categorisation of *Ḥadīth* sciences; and
- Development of specialised sub-disciplines

.

Scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Al-Nawawī played a major role in formalising the science.

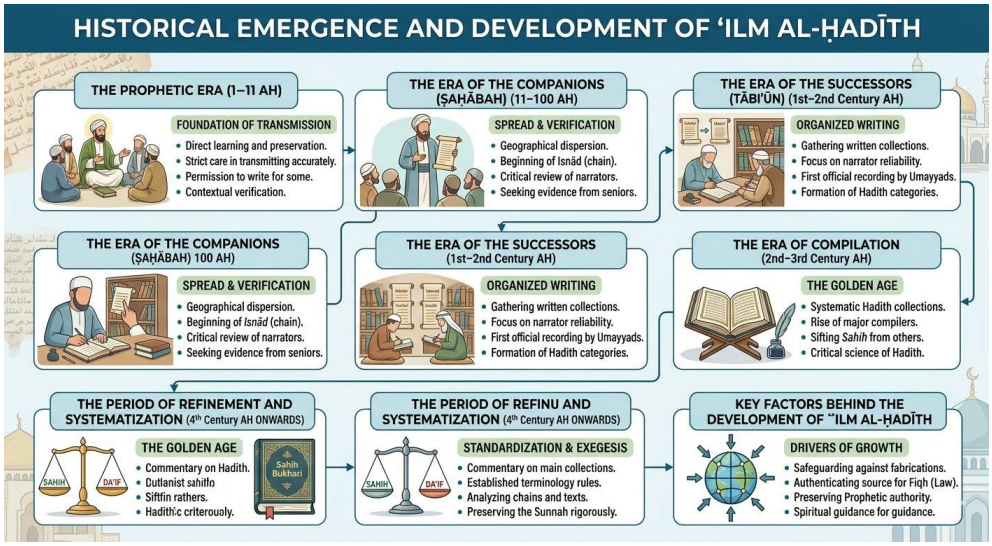


Figure 1.2 Historical Emergence and Development of 'Ilm Al-Hadith
Source – AI-generated image, (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

When you consider how political fabrication and the rapid global expansion of Islam forced early scholars to abandon simple oral trust in favour of strict, forensic verification, how does this prove that ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth did not merely grow out of quiet academic interest, but instead emerged as an urgent, real-world defence system to save the core of Islamic law from permanent dilution?

6. Key Factors Behind the Development of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*

Factor	Explanation
Preservation of Sunnah	Protecting the teachings of the Prophet
Spread of Islam	Necessitated wider transmission
Fabrication of *Ḥadīth*	Required critical verification
Legal needs	Supported the development of Islamic law

Scholarly dedication	Systematic efforts of early scholars

The historical development of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth traces a progression from simple oral transmission to a highly sophisticated scientific discipline. Across successive generations, Muslim scholars met emerging challenges by developing rigorous methodologies to preserve the Sunnah authentically. This evolution not only safeguarded Islamic teachings but also established a model of critical scholarship and historical verification that remains relevant to contemporary studies.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by selecting the most suitable option:

1. The science of *Ḥadīth* criticism (*ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*) primarily deals with:
A. **تفسير القرآن فقط**
B. Verification and classification of *Ḥadīth*
C. Arabic grammar rules
D. Islamic political theory

2. Which of the following is NOT a core element of Ḥadīth criticism?
A. *Isnād* analysis
B. *Matn* criticism
C. *Jarḥ wa taʿdīl*
D. Poetry analysis

3. The formal use of isnād (chain of transmission) became prominent during the era of the:
A. Prophet
B. Companions
C. Successors (*Tābiʿūn*)
D. Abbasid rulers

4. The period known as the "golden age of Ḥadīth compilation" occurred in the:
A. 1st century AH
B. 2nd–3rd centuries AH
C. 5th century AH
D. Modern period

5. One major reason for the development of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth was
A. Translation of Greek texts
B. Spread of fabricated *Ḥadīth*
C. Development of Arabic poetry
D. Expansion of trade routes

1.5 Key principles and terminology used in assessing the authenticity of *Ḥadīth*

The authentication of Ḥadīth is governed by a set of well-defined principles developed within ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth. These principles enable scholars to distinguish reliable from unreliable reports through a systematic evaluation of both the chain of transmission (isnād) and the text (matn). Over time, this evolved into a highly rigorous scientific discipline dedicated to preserving the integrity of the Sunnah (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

1. Key Principles of *Ḥadīth* Authentication

- **Continuity of the Chain (*Ittiṣāl al-Isnād*)**
  A Ḥadīth must have an unbroken chain of narrators, with each narrator receiving the report directly from the previous one. Any gap (inqiṭāʿ) weakens the Ḥadīth.
- **Integrity of Narrators (*ʿAdālah*):** Narrators must possess:

a. Moral uprightness
b. Honesty
c. Religious commitment
   This ensures that the report is free from deliberate falsehood.

- **Precision of Narrators (*Ḍabṭ*):** Narrators must demonstrate:

a. Strong memory (*ḍabṭ al-ṣadr*) or
b. Accurate written records (*ḍabṭ al-kitāb*)

Weak memory reduces the reliability of the narration.

- **Absence of Irregularities (*Shudhūdh*)**
  A Ḥadīth must not contradict stronger or more reliable narrations. If it does, it is deemed shādh (irregular).
- **Absence of Hidden Defects (*ʿIllah*)**
  A Ḥadīth must be free from subtle, hidden flaws that may not be obvious but undermine its authenticity.

A Ḥadīth must satisfy all five strict criteria—including a flawless cross-examination to rule out subtle, hidden contradictions. How does this prove that the grading system (ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf) functions more like an objective, forensic engineering filter than a simple process of trusting a good narrator's memory?

2. Key Terminology in *Ḥadīth* Criticism

- ***Isnād*:** The chain of narrators transmitting the *Ḥadīth* from the Prophet.
- ***Matn*:** The text or content of the *Ḥadīth*.
- ***Ṣaḥīḥ* (Authentic):** A *Ḥadīth* that fulfils all five conditions:

a. Continuous chain

b. Reliable narrators
c. Precise transmission
d. No irregularities
e. No hidden defects (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002)

- ***Ḥasan* (Good):** A Ḥadīth similar to ṣaḥīḥ but with slightly less precision in narration.
- ***Ḍaʿīf* (Weak):** A Ḥadīth that fails to satisfy one or more conditions of authenticity.
- **Mawḍūʿ (Fabricated):** A false *Ḥadīth* deliberately attributed to the Prophet.
- ***Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl:*** The science of criticising and accrediting narrators based on their reliability.
- ***Mutawātir*:** Reported by many narrators at every level, making fabrication impossible
- ***Āḥād*:** Reported by fewer narrators; requires verification

3. Significance of These Principles: These principles:

- safeguard the authenticity of the Sunnah;
- provide a scientific framework for verification;
- support Islamic law, theology, and practice; and
- serve as a model for historical and textual criticism

In summary, the principles and terminology of Ḥadīth authentication form the core of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, ensuring that only reliable reports are accepted as part of Islamic teachings. Through meticulous scrutiny of narrators and texts, scholars established a robust system of verification that continues to guide Islamic scholarship.

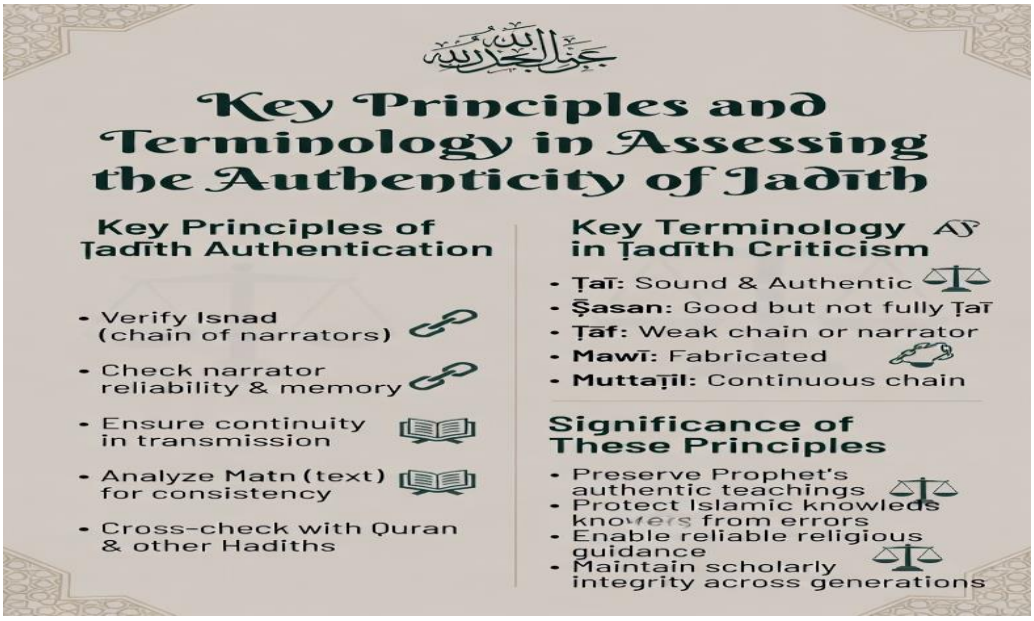


Figure 1.3 Key Principles and Terminology in Assessing the Authenticity of Hadith
Source – AI-generated image, (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

1.6 Methods Used by Scholars to Evaluate Narrators, *Isnād*, and *Matn*

The authentication of Ḥadīth relies on a comprehensive, multi-layered methodology developed by classical scholars within ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth. This methodology focuses on three interrelated components: the narrators (ruwāt), the chain of transmission (isnād), and the textual content (matn). Together, these components form a rigorous system that ensures the reliability and authenticity of Prophetic traditions (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

Look at this complete checklist—where a report can be dismissed outright just because the text uses the wrong historical vocabulary or fails a micro-analysis for hidden technical flaws—how does this prove that early Ḥadīth scholars treated text authentication as a multi-layered forensic science, rather than simply tracking the names in a chain of custody?

1. Evaluation of Narrators (*Naqd al-Ruwāt*)

The credibility of a *Ḥadīth* begins with assessing its narrators through the science of *jarḥ wa taʿdīl* (criticism and accreditation).

Key Methods:

- **Biographical Analysis (*ʿIlm al-Rijāl*):** Scholars compiled detailed biographies of narrators, documenting:

a. birth and death dates;
b. teachers and students;
c. character and lifestyle; and
d. memory and accuracy.

This allowed verification of whether narrators could have met and transmitted reliably (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

- **Assessment of Integrity (*ʿAdālah*):** Narrators were evaluated for:

a. moral uprightness;
b. honesty; and
c. religious commitment.

Those found unreliable or dishonest were rejected.

- **Assessment of Precision (*Ḍabṭ*):** Scholars assessed whether narrators:

a. had a strong memory;
b. maintained accurate written records.

Narrators with weak memory were graded lower.

- **Classification of Narrators:** Narrators were categorised into:

a. *Thiqa* (trustworthy)
b. *Ṣadūq* (truthful but less precise)
c. *Ḍaʿīf* (weak)

2. Evaluation of *Isnād* (*Naqd al-Isnād*): The *isnād* forms the backbone of *Ḥadīth* authentication.

Key Methods:

- **Continuity (*Ittiṣāl al-Isnād*):** Scholars ensured that:

a. the chain is unbroken;
b. each narrator directly received from the previous one.

- **Verification of Meeting (Liqāʾ):** Particularly emphasised by Imām al-Bukhārī, scholars verified whether narrators had actually met.
- **Multiplicity of Chains (*Turuq*):** A *Ḥadīth* reported through multiple independent chains is stronger and more reliable.
- **Detection of Hidden Defects (ʿ*Ilal*):** Experts examined subtle flaws such as:

a. missing links;
b. incorrect attributions.

3. Evaluation of *Matn (Naqd al-Matn*): Beyond the chain, scholars critically examined the content of the Ḥadīth.

Key Methods:

- **Consistency with the Qurʾān:** A *Ḥadīth* must not contradict the Qurʾān.
- **Consistency with Established Sunnah:** The content must align with stronger, well-established narratives.
- **Rational and Historical Soundness:** The *matn* should not:

a. contradict facts;
b. contain illogical statements.

- **Linguistic Analysis:** Scholars examined:

a. Grammar
b. Style
c. Vocabulary

To ensure the authenticity of expression.

4. Integrated Evaluation Process

Diagram: *Ḥadīth* Authentication Process (Text-Based Flowchart)

Narration Received
↓
Evaluate Narrators (ʿAdālah & Ḍabṭ)
↓
Check Isnād Continuity (Ittiṣāl & Liqāʾ)
↓
Compare Multiple Chains (Turuq)
↓
Examine Matn (Consistency & Logic)
↓
Detect Hidden Defects (ʿIlal)
↓
Classify Ḥadīth (Ṣaḥīḥ / Ḥasan / Ḍaʿīf)

5. Table: Summary of Evaluation Methods

Component	**Method**	**Purpose**
Narrators	*Jarḥ wa taʿdīl*	Assess credibility
Narrators	*ʿIlm al-rijāl*	Biographical verification
Isnād	*Ittiṣāl*	Ensure continuity
Isnād	*Liqāʾ*	Confirm narrator meeting
Isnād	*Turuq*	Strengthen reliability
Matn	Qurʾān consistency	Ensure doctrinal accuracy
Matn	Logical analysis	Prevent irrational content
Matn	*ʿIlal* detection	Identify hidden flaws

The evaluation of narrators, isnād, and matn constitutes a comprehensive and sophisticated system of verification developed by Ḥadīth scholars. By integrating biographical scrutiny, chain analysis, and textual criticism, this methodology ensures that only authentic and reliable Ḥadīth are accepted. This system remains a cornerstone of Islamic scholarship and continues to influence both traditional and contemporary studies.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. A narrator is known to be honest but has a weak memory. According to Ḥadīth evaluation principles, his narration would be classified as _____ rather than ṣaḥīḥ.

2. If a *Ḥadīth* has a continuous chain but contradicts a stronger and more authentic narration, it is considered _____.

3. When scholars investigate whether two narrators actually met to confirm transmission, they are applying the principle of _____.

4. A report is rejected despite having trustworthy narrators because of a subtle, hidden defect; this demonstrates the application of detecting _____.

5. In contemporary Islamic legal reasoning, scholars rely on authenticated Ḥadīth to ensure rulings remain grounded in the _____.

6. If a narration is found to contradict the teachings of the Qurʾān, scholars will question its _____ rather than its isnād alone.

7. The process of comparing multiple chains of the same *Ḥadīth* to strengthen its reliability is known as examining _____.

8. A fabricated Ḥadīth falsely attributed to the Prophet undermines the preservation of the Sunnah, which ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth seeks to _____.

9. When jurists derive rulings on new issues from authentic Ḥadīth, they demonstrate the role of Ḥadīth in supporting _____.

10. The classification of a Ḥadīth as weak because of a missing link in the chain underscores the importance of _____ in isnād evaluation.

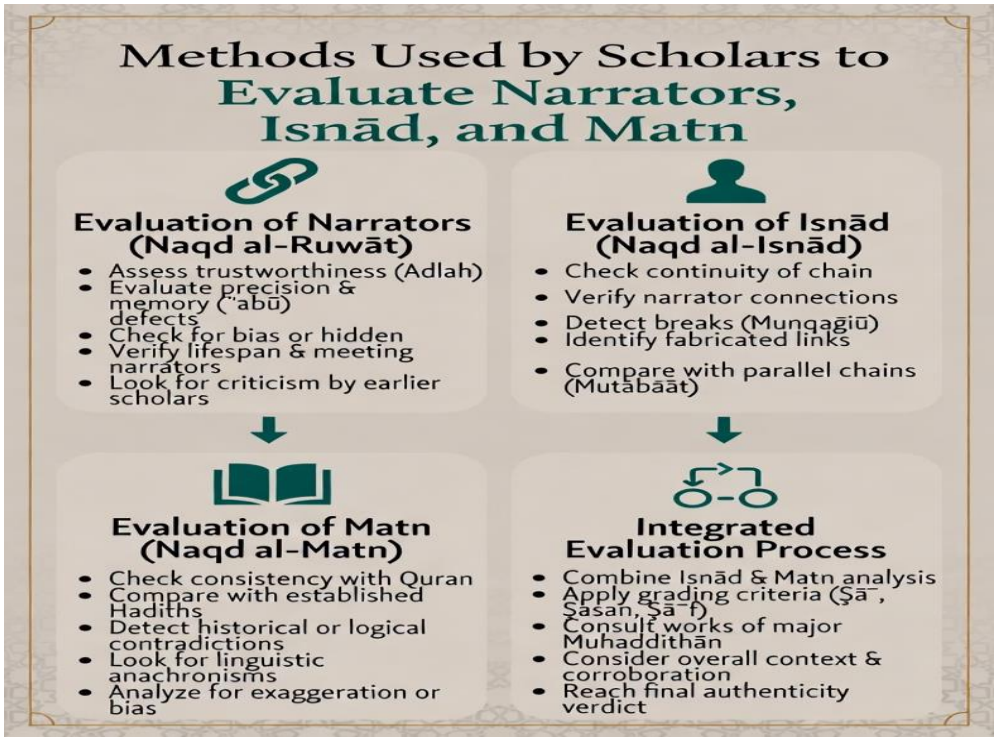


Figure 1.4 Methods used by Scholars to Evaluate Narrators, Isnad, and Matn
Source – AI-generated image, (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

1.7 Significance of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* in Preserving the Sunnah

The science of Ḥadīth (ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth) holds a central place in Islamic scholarship for its critical role in preserving the Sunnah—the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Without this discipline, the Sunnah would have been vulnerable to distortion, fabrication, and loss. Through rigorous methodologies, Muslim scholars ensured that only authentic reports were transmitted and accepted (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

By constructing an unyielding, standardised filter that tracks everything from courtroom legislation to the Prophet's personal leadership style and daily social interactions, how does ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth demonstrate that preserving a civilisation's spiritual legacy requires developing a dynamic, scientific methodology rather than relying on passive historical memory?

1. **Safeguarding the Authenticity of the Sunnah:** One of the most important contributions of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth is distinguished by its ability to distinguish authentic narrations from weak or fabricated ones. Through tools such as:*

- *Isnād* analysis (chain verification);
- *Matn* criticism (textual evaluation); and
- *Jarḥ wa taʿdīl* (narrator assessment).

Scholars established a reliable filter that protected the Prophetic tradition from corruption (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

2. **Prevention of Fabrication and Distortion:** As Islam spread geographically and politically, the proliferation of fabricated Ḥadīth (mawḍūʿ) posed a serious threat. ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth developed in response to this challenge by:
   - identifying unreliable narrators;
   - detecting inconsistencies in transmission; and
   - exposing deliberate fabrications.

   This ensured that false attributions to the Prophet were systematically rejected.

3. **Preservation of Religious Knowledge:** The Sunnah provides essential guidance on:
   - Acts of worship (*ṣalāh, ṣawm, zakāh, ḥajj*);
   - Ethical conduct and social relations; and
   - Legal rulings and daily practices.

   ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth ensures that this knowledge is accurately preserved and transmitted, thereby making it accessible to future generations (Hallaq, 2009).

4. **Foundation for Islamic Law (*Sharīʿah*)**
   Ḥadīth is the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān. The science of Ḥadīth ensures that:
   - legal rulings are based on authentic evidence;
   - juristic reasoning remains grounded in the Sunnah.

   Without reliable Ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) would lack a solid foundation.

5. **Preservation of the Prophet's Legacy:** Through ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, scholars preserved not only legal teachings but also:
   - the characters and personality of the Prophet;
   - his leadership style and decision-making; and
   - his interactions with companions and society.

   This enables Muslims to emulate the Prophet's example in all aspects of life.

6. **Development of a Scientific Methodology:** *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* introduced a distinctive and sophisticated system of verification, including:
   - biographical evaluation of narrators;
   - cross-checking multiple chains; and
   - detection of hidden defects (*ʿilal*).

   This methodology is regarded as one of the earliest forms of systematic historical criticism (Brown, 2009).

7. **Continuity and Unity of the Muslim *Ummah*:** By preserving a standardised and authenticated body of teachings, *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth*:
- promotes unity in religious practice;
- reduces اختلاف (disagreement) based on unreliable reports; and
- ensures continuity of Islamic teachings across generations.

8. **Relevance in Contemporary Islamic Studies:** Even in modern times, *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* remains essential for:
- addressing contemporary issues through authentic guidance;
- responding to criticisms of *Ḥadīth* literature; and
- supporting academic research and interdisciplinary studies.

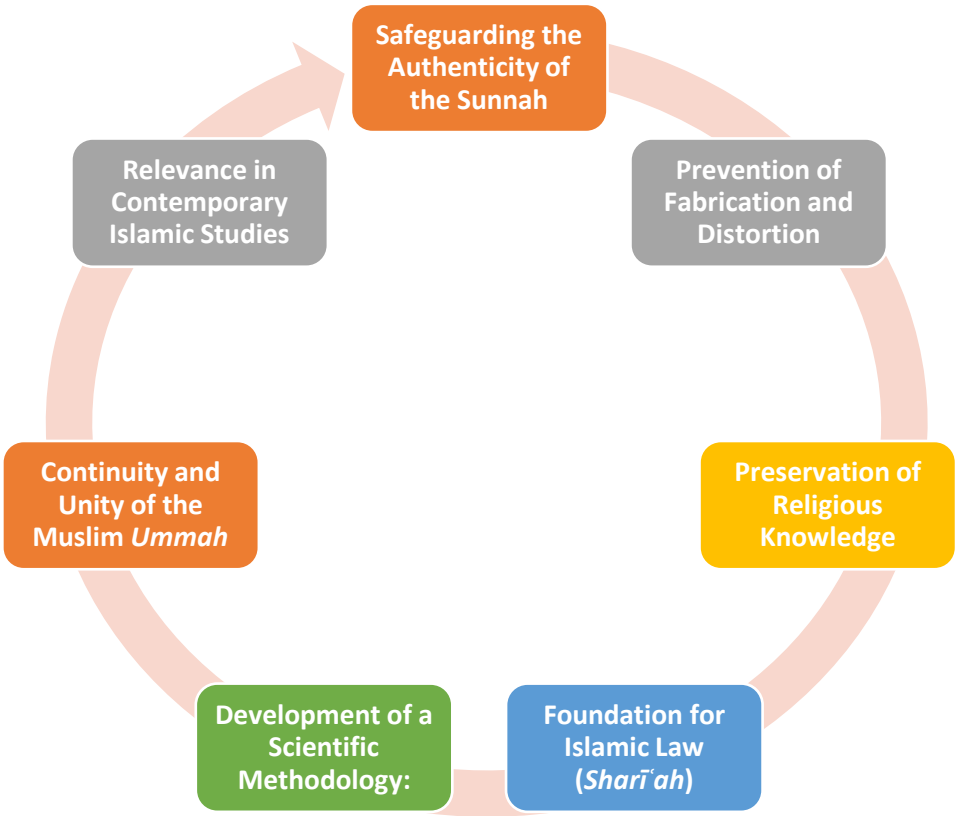
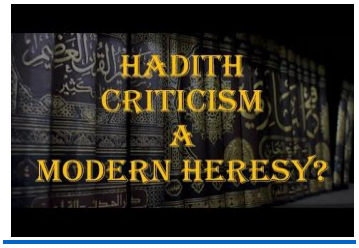


Figure 1.5
Source –created with SmartArt, (July 2026) by Fatimah

The significance of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth lies in its unparalleled role in preserving the Sunnah with accuracy and integrity. Through meticulous verification, it has safeguarded the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings from distortion and ensured their continuity across Islamic law, theology, and daily life. As a result, it remains a cornerstone of Islamic scholarship and a vital tool for both classical and contemporary studies.

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/jJO90FAJAII?si=mGhsP85HeiPyOZUA



Self-Assessment Exercises 3

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. The science used to evaluate the moral integrity and reliability of narrators is known as _____.

2. The examination of the chain of transmission to ensure continuity is called _____ analysis.

3. The critical evaluation of the content of a *Ḥadīth* to ensure it does not contradict the Qurʾān is known as _____ criticism.

4. One major significance of *ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth* is the prevention of _____ *Ḥadīth* (false narrations).

5. *Ḥadīth* serves as the _____ source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān.

1.8 Summary

This unit provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth (the science of Ḥadīth criticism), its development, methodologies, and significance in preserving the Sunnah. It begins by defining ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth as a systematic discipline concerned with the verification, classification, and preservation of Ḥadīth. It highlights its two major dimensions: the study of transmission (riwāyah) and critical analysis (dirāyah), both of which ensure that only authentic narrations are accepted. It then traces the historical development of the science from the Prophetic era through the periods of the Companions and Successors to the era of compilation and subsequent codification. This evolution was driven by the need to safeguard the Sunnah, particularly in response to the emergence of fabricated narrations and the expansion of the Muslim community.

The unit further explores the key principles and terminology used in Ḥadīth authentication, including concepts such as isnād (chain), matn

(text), ʿadālah (integrity), ḍabṭ (precision), and classifications such as ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, and ḍaʿīf. These principles form the criteria for assessing the reliability of any narration. A major focus is on the methods of evaluation, in which scholars rigorously assess:

- narrators through biographical criticism (*jarḥ wa taʿdīl*);
- *Isnād* through continuity and verification of transmission; and
- *Matn* through textual, logical, and doctrinal analysis.

Finally, the unit emphasises the importance of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth in preserving the Sunnah. It shows how this science:

- protects against fabrication;
- provides a foundation for Islamic law and theology;
- preserves the legacy of the Prophet; and
- ensures continuity and authenticity in Muslim practice.

1.9 References/Further Readings

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Unit 2 Principles of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*

Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Learning Outcomes
2.3 Definition of concepts of *al-Jarḥ* (criticism) and *al-Taʿdīl* (commendation)
2.4 The historical emergence and scholarly development of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*.
2.5 The qualifications of a narrator and the criteria used to judge their reliability.
2.6 The different levels and terminologies of *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl*.
2.7 The importance of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* in safeguarding the Sunnah and the integrity of the *Ḥadīth* corpus.
2.8 Summary
2.9 References/Further Readings
2.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



2.1 Introduction

The science of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl is one of the most critical disciplines within ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, dedicated to evaluating narrators to determine the authenticity of Prophetic traditions. The term al-jarḥ refers to the criticism or identification of a narrator's weaknesses, while al-taʿdīl denotes the accreditation or validation of a narrator's integrity and reliability. Together, they form a balanced and systematic framework for assessing the trustworthiness of individuals who transmitted Ḥadīth (Azami, 1992; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

This unit explores the principles, methods, and scholarly standards that govern the evaluation of narrators in the transmission of Ḥadīth. It highlights how early Muslim scholars developed sophisticated criteria to ensure that only reliable narrations were accepted into the body of Islamic knowledge. These criteria include assessments of a narrator's moral integrity (ʿadālah), precision (ḍabṭ), memory, honesty, and consistency in transmission.

The unit also examines the historical development of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, showing how scholars such as Imām Mālik, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and later Ḥadīth critics developed structured methodologies for evaluating thousands of narrators. Their efforts were essential to

safeguarding the Sunnah against fabrication, error, and weak transmission.

Furthermore, the unit emphasises the importance of this discipline in preserving the authenticity of Islamic teachings, particularly regarding Islamic law (fiqh), theology (ʿaqīdah), and ethical guidance. By distinguishing reliable narrations from weak or fabricated ones, al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl ensures that Islamic scholarship is grounded in verified knowledge.

In summary, this unit provides learners with a foundational understanding of how critical evaluation of narrators underpins Ḥadīth authentication, reinforcing the credibility and preservation of the Prophetic tradition across generations.



2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the concepts of *al-jarḥ* (criticism) and *al-taʿdīl* (commendation) in the context of *Ḥadīth* authentication;
- describe the historical emergence and scholarly development of *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*;
- identify the qualifications of a narrator and the criteria used to judge their reliability;
- analyse the different levels and terminology of jarḥ and taʿdīl used by Ḥadīth scholars; and
- evaluate the importance of *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl* in safeguarding the sunnah and maintaining the integrity of the *Ḥadīth* corpus.



2.3 Definition of concepts of *al-Jarḥ* (criticism) and *al-Taʿdīl* (commendation)

The entire framework of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl operates as a strict binary—where one side forensically exposes flaws in memory or character, while the other certifies total trustworthiness—how does this show that early scholars viewed the preservation of truth not as a matter of personal politeness, but as an uncompromising, objective science in which text security always came before protecting a narrator's feelings??

In the science of Ḥadīth, al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl is the scholarly discipline for evaluating the reliability of narrators to determine the authenticity of transmitted reports. It is a foundational component of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth and plays a central role in preserving the Sunnah (Azami, 1992; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

1. *al-Jarḥ* (Criticism)

Al-Jarḥ is the critical evaluation of a narrator that results in their discrediting due to weakness in character, memory, or integrity. It involves identifying factors that may render a narrator unreliable in transmitting Ḥadīth. Such factors may include:

- weak memory or poor retention;
- dishonesty or moral misconduct;
- inconsistency in narration; and
- evidence of fabrication or error.

A narrator who is subject to valid jarḥ is considered weak (ḍaʿīf), and their narrations are generally rejected or treated with caution.

2. *al-Taʿdīl* (Commendation)

Al-Taʿdīl is the affirmation of a narrator's reliability, integrity, and precision in transmitting Ḥadīth. It is the process of declaring a narrator trustworthy based on their:

- moral uprightness (*ʿadālah*);
- strong memory and accuracy (*ḍabṭ*);
- consistency in transmission; and
- reputation among scholars.

A narrator granted taʿdīl is regarded as trustworthy (thiqa), and their reports are generally accepted as authentic evidence.

3. Importance in *Ḥadīth* Authentication

Together, al-Jarḥ and al-Taʿdīl form a balanced system of verification, ensuring that:

- false narrations are identified and rejected;
- reliable narrators are recognised and accepted; and
- the Sunnah is preserved in its authentic form.

This methodology was developed and refined by early Ḥadīth scholars and remains essential for assessing the acceptability of Ḥadīth in Islamic law and theology. In essence, al-Jarḥ identifies weaknesses, while al-Taʿdīl affirms reliability. Together, they ensure the integrity of Ḥadīth transmission and the preservation of Islamic teachings.



Figure 2.1 Al- Jari
Source – AI-generated image, (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

2.4 The historical emergence and scholarly development of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*

The science of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl (criticism and commendation of narrators) emerged gradually as part of the broader development of ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth, in response to the need to preserve the authenticity of the Sunnah. Its evolution was closely linked to the expansion of the Muslim community and the growing complexity of Ḥadīth transmission (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

When you look at the historical timeline—moving from informal verification among the Companions to the famous, urgent demand of "Name your men" during early political trials, and finally to massive biographical databases—how does this demonstrate that al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl was designed as an active, real-world defence system rather than merely a quiet academic project?

1. Early Foundations in the Prophetic and Companions' Era
During the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), Ḥadīth transmission was primarily based on trust and direct companionship, with little need for formal criticism of narrators. However, the Prophet himself emphasised accuracy in transmission, warning against false attribution.

After his passing, the Companions (Ṣaḥābah) began exercising caution when accepting reports, often verifying narrations through multiple

sources. This marked the initial stage of critical evaluation, though it was not yet formalised.

2. The Era of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*)

With the expansion of Islam and the emergence of political and theological differences, the risk of fabricated *Ḥadīth* increased significantly. During this period, scholars began to:

- question narrators explicitly;
- demand identification of transmission chains (*isnād*); and
- reject unknown or unreliable transmitters.

This period saw the early development of structured criticism.

A major turning point was the emergence of the statement: "Name your men" **(سمّوا لنا رجالكم),** which reflected the demand for narrator identification.

3. Systematisation in the 2nd–3rd Century AH

The discipline reached full scholarly maturity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH, when scholars established formal principles and evaluation criteria. Key developments included:

- compilation of biographical dictionaries (*kutub al-rijāl*);
- classification of narrators into categories such as *thiqa* (reliable) and *ḍaʿīf* (weak); and
- establishment of objective standards for credibility and precision.

Prominent scholars such as Imām Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal played key roles in the development of early forms of narrator evaluation.

4. Institutionalisation by Major *Ḥadīth* Critics

By the 3rd century AH, scholars such as:

- Imām al-Bukhārī
- Imām Muslim

further refined the methodology by:

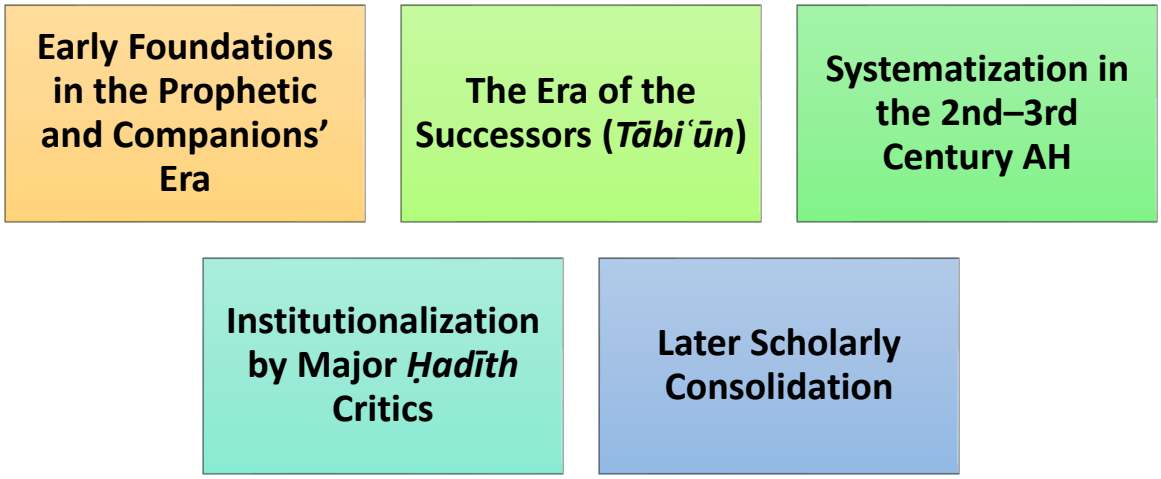
- strictly verifying narrator reliability;
- cross-checking multiple chains; and
- rejecting narrations with hidden defects.

Their works set the gold standard for authentication in Sunni Ḥadīth literature.

5. Later Scholarly Consolidation

From the 4th century AH onwards, scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ systematised the discipline in methodological manuals, defining its rules and terminology. This stage marked the formal codification of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl as a distinct science. The historical development of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl reflects a gradual yet systematic response to the need to preserve the Sunnah. From informal verification among the Companions to the sophisticated scholarly frameworks of later generations, the discipline

became essential to ensuring the authentic transmission of Ḥadīth and safeguarding Islamic teachings.



2.5 Figure 2.2 The historical emergence and scholarly development of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl
Source – created with SmartArt, July 2026 by Fatimah

Self-Assessment Exercises:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:
1. What is the primary purpose of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* in *Ḥadīth* studies?
A. To memorise *Ḥadīth* texts
B. To evaluate the reliability of narrators
C. To compile Qurʾānic verses
D. To translate Arabic texts
2. A narrator described as *ḍaʿīf* (weak) is one who:
A. Has excellent memory and integrity
B. Is unknown but trustworthy
C. Has deficiencies in character or memory
D. Is always accepted in legal rulings
3. Which of the following best describes *al-Taʿdīl*?
A. Rejecting a narrator due to dishonesty
B. Affirming the reliability and integrity of a narrator
C. Ignoring weak narrations
D. Memorising chains of transmission
4. The statement "Name your men" **(سمّوا لنا رجالكم)** emerged during which period?
A. The Prophet's lifetime

B. The era of the Companions only
C. The era of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*)
D. The modern period
5. Which scholars are known for refining and institutionalising *Ḥadīth* authentication methodologies in the 3rd century AH?
A. Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfiʿī
B. Imām Mālik and Ibn Taymiyyah
C. Imām al-Bukhārī and Imām Muslim
D. Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd

2.5 The Qualifications of a Narrator and the Criteria Used to Judge Their Reliability

In the science of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, the acceptance or rejection of a Ḥadīth largely depends on the reliability of its narrators. Early Muslim scholars developed precise criteria to assess whether a narrator could be trusted to transmit the Sunnah. These criteria ensure that only authentic reports are incorporated into Islamic teachings (Azami, 1992; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

1. Core Qualifications of a Reliable Narrator

a. ***ʿAdālah*** **(Moral Integrity):** A narrator must possess an upright character and strong ethical conduct. This includes:

- avoiding major sins (*kabāʾir*);
- not persisting in minor sins;
- being known for honesty and piety; and
- upholding Islamic moral standards.

A narrator lacking integrity is unreliable, even if their memory is strong.

b. ***Ḍabṭ*** **(Precision and Accuracy)**: *Ḍabṭ* denotes a narrator's ability to accurately preserve and transmit information. It includes:

- strong memory (*ḥifẓ*);
- accuracy in writing and narration;
- consistency in reporting *Ḥadīth;* and
- avoidance of confusion or frequent mistakes.

A narrator with weak precision may transmit distorted or incomplete reports.

c. ***Sanad*** **Awareness (Connection to Teachers):** A reliable narrator must:

- have direct contact with their teacher;
- clearly establish the chain of transmission (*isnād*); and
- avoid unknown or unclear links in narration.

d. Freedom from *Shudhūdh* and *ʿIllah*: Even a trustworthy narrator may be rejected if:

- their narration contradicts stronger reports (*shādh*);
- hidden defects (*ʿillah*) are discovered in their transmission.

2. Criteria Used by Scholars to Judge Narrators

Early scholars of Ḥadīth developed structured methods for evaluation:

i. Biographical Evaluation (*ʿIlm al-Rijāl*): Scholars compiled detailed records of narrators, assessing:

- birth and death dates;
- teachers and students;
- moral character; and
- reliability ratings.

ii. *Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl* Classification: Narrators were categorised as:

- *Thiqa* (reliable)
- *Ṣadūq* (truthful but less precise)
- *Ḍaʿīf* (weak)
- *Matrūk* (abandoned)

iii. Cross-Verification of Narrations: Scholars compared:

- multiple chains of transmission;
- variations in wording; and
- consistency across narrators.

The reliability of a Ḥadīth narrator is assessed through a combination of moral integrity, precision, and methodological verification. These strict standards, developed by early scholars, ensured that the Sunnah was transmitted with maximum accuracy and authenticity, forming the backbone of Islamic Ḥadīth preservation.

Since a narrator can be entirely excluded for weak memory (ḍabṭ), even if they are a deeply pious saint, or rejected for character flaws (ʿadālah), even if they have an exceptional mind, how does this rigid checklist prove that early scholars treated historical data collection as an objective forensic audit in which personal spiritual status alone could never override text security?

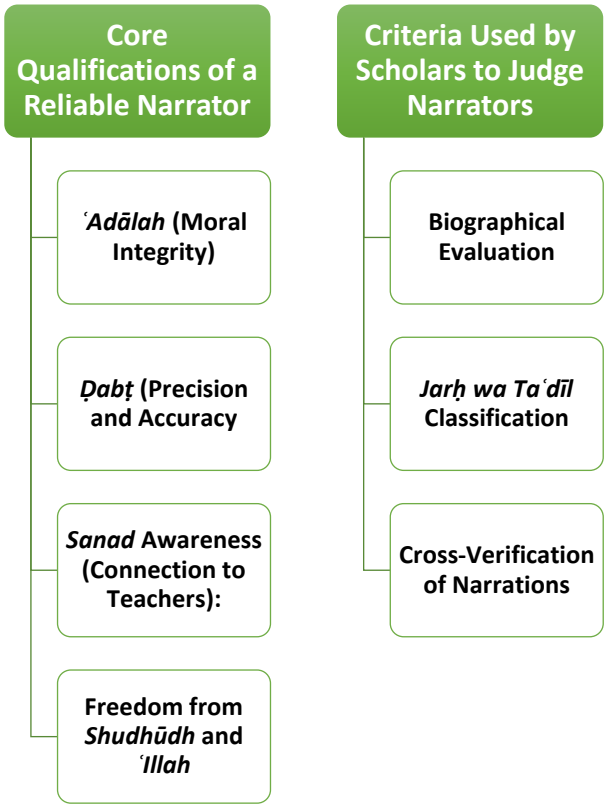


Figure 2.3 The Qualifications of a Narrator and the Criteria Used to Judge Their Reliability
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Self-Assessment Exercises 2

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. The moral integrity and upright character required of a narrator are known as _____.

2. The ability of a narrator to accurately preserve and transmit Ḥadīth is known as _____.

3. A narrator whose report contradicts stronger accounts is described as _____.

4. The science that studies narrators' biographies and reliability is called _____.

5. A narrator classified as completely abandoned due to severe weakness is called _____.

2.6 The Different Levels and Terminologies of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*

The science of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl developed a highly structured system of graded terminology used by scholars to evaluate Ḥadīth narrators. These gradations help determine a narrator's reliability or weakness and, consequently, the acceptability of their reports. Early Ḥadīth critics carefully refined these terms to ensure consistency and precision in authentication (Azami, 1992; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

By crafting a razor-sharp vocabulary that scales smoothly from absolute praise (Awthaq al-nās) to total forensic rejection (Kadhdhāb), how does this graded scale prove that early critics were operating a transparent, standardised system of peer review rather than merely throwing around loose personal opinions?

1. Levels of *Taʿdīl* (Commendation)

Taʿdīl denotes the positive evaluation of a narrator's integrity and accuracy. Scholars classified trustworthy narrators into several levels:

a. Highest Level of Reliability

- *Awthaq al-nās* (the most reliable of people)
- *Thiqa thiqa* (extremely reliable)
- *Lā yuṭālaʿ ʿalayh* (unquestionably reliable)

Narrators at this level produce *strong ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth*.

b. High Reliability

- *Thiqa* (reliable)
- *Ḥujjah* (authoritative proof)
- *Thabt* (precise and firm in narration)

Their narrations are widely accepted in legal and theological discussions.

c. Acceptable but Slightly Lower Reliability

- *Ṣadūq* (truthful but less precise)
- *Lā ba'sa bih* (no harm in him)

Their narrations are usually considered *ḥasan* (good) if supported by other chains.

2. Levels of *Jarḥ* (Criticism)

Jarḥ refers to negative evaluation due to weakness in character or memory.

a. Mild Weakness

- *Layyin al-Ḥadīth* (soft/weak in narration)
- *Yuḥtamal Ḥadīthuh* (his narration is tolerable with caution)

Such narrations may be accepted for supporting evidence only.

b. Moderate Weakness

- *Ḍaʿīf* (weak)
- *Laysa bi al-qawī* (not strong)

These narrations are generally not used in legal rulings unless supported by evidence.

c. Severe Weakness / Rejection

- *Matrūk* (abandoned)
- *Kadhdhāb* (liar)
- *Mawḍūʿ* (fabricated narrator or narration)

Such narrators are completely rejected, and their reports are not accepted under any circumstances.

3. Importance of Graded Terminology: This classification system ensures that:

- narrators are assessed objectively and consistently;
- legal rulings are based on graded levels of authenticity;
- weak reports are clearly distinguished from authentic ones; and
- the Sunnah is preserved with precision and scholarly discipline.

The structured terminology of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* reflects the sophistication of early Islamic scholarship. By categorising narrators into precise levels of reliability and weakness, scholars ensured that the transmission of *Ḥadīth* remained methodical, transparent, and scientifically verifiable.

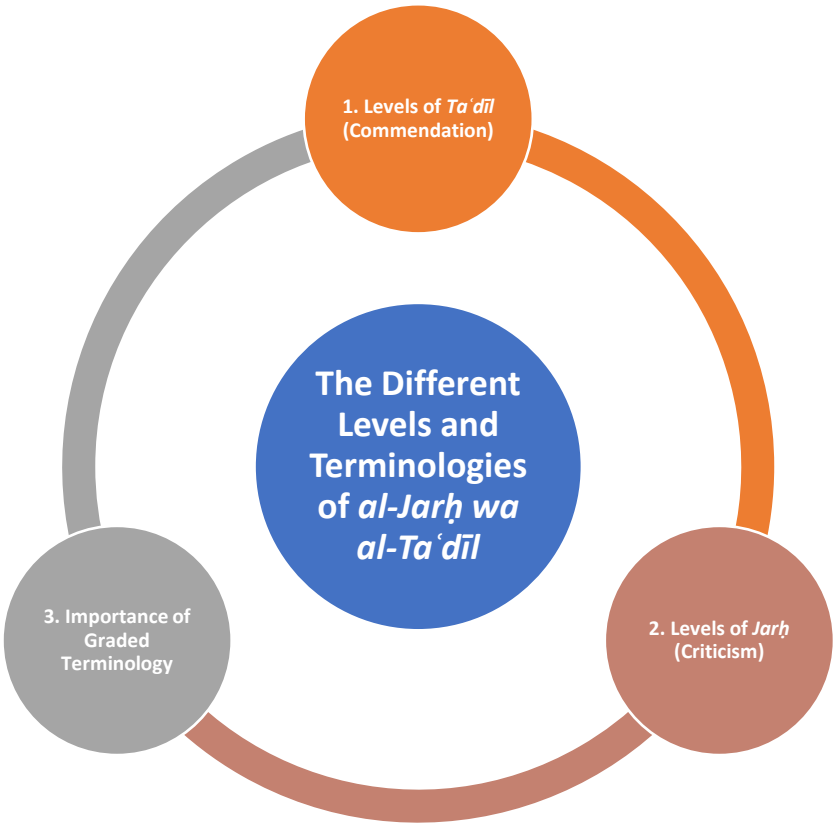


Figure 2.4 The Different Levels and Terminologies of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl
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2.7 The Importance of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* in Safeguarding the Sunnah and the Integrity of the *Ḥadīth* Corpus

The discipline of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl (criticism and commendation of narrators) is one of the most vital tools developed by Muslim scholars to safeguard the authenticity of the Sunnah and ensure the integrity of the Ḥadīth corpus. By rigorously assessing narrators' reliability, this science serves as a filter, distinguishing authentic Prophetic traditions from weak or fabricated reports (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

1. **Protection Against Fabrication and False Attribution:** As Islam spread, the emergence of fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) *Ḥadīth* posed a significant threat. *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* addressed this by:

- identifying dishonest or unreliable narrators;
- exposing fabricated chains of transmission; and
- preventing false statements from being attributed to the Prophet. This ensured that the Sunnah remained free from distortion and manipulation.

2. **Preservation of the Authentic Sunnah:** Through systematic evaluation, scholars ensured that:
   - only narrations transmitted by trustworthy (*thiqa*) narrators were accepted;
   - weak or doubtful reports were clearly classified and set aside.

   This process preserved the Sunnah as a reliable and authoritative source of Islamic guidance.

3. **Ensuring Reliability in Islamic Law (*Sharīʿah*):** *Ḥadīth* forms the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān. *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* guarantees that:
   - legal rulings are based on authentic evidence;
   - juristic reasoning (*fiqh*) is grounded in verified Prophetic teachings.

   Without this science, Islamic law would risk resting on unreliable foundations (Hallaq, 2009).

4. **Establishment of a Scientific and Objective Methodology:** *Al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* introduced a systematic and evidence-based approach to evaluating historical reports by:
   - developing detailed biographical records of narrators;
   - applying consistent criteria such as *ʿadālah* (integrity) and *ḍabṭ* (precision); and
   - cross-checking narrations across multiple chains.

   This methodology is often regarded as one of the earliest forms of critical historical analysis.

5. **Preservation of the Prophet's Legacy:** By ensuring the authenticity of *Ḥadīth*, this discipline preserves:
   - the teachings of the Prophet;
   - his character and moral example; and
   - his practical guidance in all aspects of life.

   Thus, it enables Muslims to accurately follow the Sunnah.

6. **Promotion of Unity and Consistency in Practice:** A reliable *Ḥadīth* corpus helps:
   - reduce **اختلاف** (differences) caused by weak narrations;
   - establish consistent religious practices; and
   - strengthen unity within the Muslim community.

7. **Continued Relevance in Contemporary Islamic Studies: In contemporary contexts, al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl remains important for:**
   - responding to criticisms of *Ḥadīth* authenticity;
   - supporting academic research and interdisciplinary studies; and
   - ensuring that contemporary interpretations remain **anchored in authentic sources.**

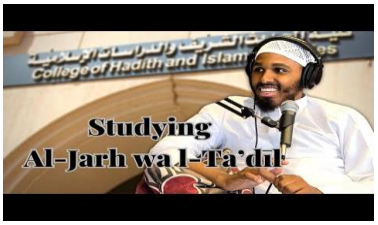


Figure 2.5 The Importance of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl in Safeguarding the Sunnah and the Integrity of the Ḥadīth Corpus
Source – created with SmartArt, (July 2026) by Fatimah

Al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl is indispensable for preserving both the Sunnah and the integrity of the Ḥadīth corpus. Through rigorous evaluation and systematic classification of narrators, it has ensured that the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) teachings are transmitted with accuracy, authenticity, and reliability. As a result, it remains a cornerstone of Islamic scholarship and a vital tool for classical and contemporary studies alike.

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/GQdBqhslg_Y?si=nIclS1CVE9uBQl51



Self-Assessment Exercise 3:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Which of the following terms denotes the highest level of reliability in al-Taʿdīl?
A. Ṣadūq
B. Thiqa thiqa
C. Ḍaʿīf
D. Layyin al-Ḥadīth

2. A narrator described as **Ṣadūq** is best understood as:
A. Completely unreliable
B. A liar
C. Truthful but less precise
D. The most reliable narrator

3. Which of the following terms indicates mild weakness in a narrator?
A. Kadhdhāb
B. Matrūk
C. Layyin al-Ḥadīth
D. Thiqa

4. A narrator classified as **Matrūk** is:
A. Fully accepted
B. Slightly weak but usable
C. Completely abandoned and rejected
D. Considered authoritative

5. What is the primary purpose of having graded terminology in al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl?
A. To memorise narrations easily
B. To translate Ḥadīth into other languages
C. To assess narrators objectively and determine the authenticity of Ḥadīth
D. To reduce the number of narrators

Scenario: Applying al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl in Ḥadīth Authentication

A student of Ḥadīth discovers two versions of the same Prophetic tradition. Both appear authentic at first glance, but each has a different chain of transmission (isnād). After consulting the works of early scholars of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, the student learns that one chain includes a narrator known for a weak memory (ḍabṭ), while the other consists entirely of narrators recognised as trustworthy (thiqa) with strong moral integrity (ʿadālah) and precise transmission. Although the narrator, with a weak memory, was respected for his piety, the scholars still classified his reports as weak because the accuracy of transmission could not be guaranteed. The student, therefore, accepts the narration transmitted by the reliable chain and rejects the weaker one, recognising that the preservation of the Prophet's teachings depends on objective evidence rather than personal reputation.

How does this scenario demonstrate that al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl prioritises the authenticity of transmitted knowledge over the personal status or reputation of individual narrators?



2.8 Summary

Finally! We have focused on the principles of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, the critical discipline in Ḥadīth studies concerned with evaluating the reliability of narrators. It explains how scholars ensured that only authentic reports of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) were accepted and transmitted. It traces the historical development of this science from the Companions' cautious verification practices, through the Successors' increasing scrutiny, to its systematic codification in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH by leading scholars.

The unit also explains the qualifications of reliable narrators, emphasising ʿadālah (moral integrity) and ḍabṭ (precision), and the necessity of a continuous chain of transmission and the absence of hidden defects. Furthermore, it outlines the graded levels and terminology used to evaluate narrators, ranging from highly reliable (thiqa) to completely rejected (matrūk or kadhdhāb), ensuring objective classification. Finally, the unit highlights the significance of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, noting its role in preventing fabrication, preserving the Sunnah, strengthening Islamic law, and providing a scientific method for historical verification.

In summary, Unit 2 shows that al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl is a sophisticated and indispensable system that safeguards the authenticity, integrity, and continuity of the Ḥadīth and Islamic teachings.



2.9 References/Further Readings

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Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, ʿU. ibn ʿA. (2002). *Maʿrifat anwāʿ ʿilm al-Ḥadīth*. Dār al-Fikr.

Kamali, M. H. (2003). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence* (3rd ed.). Islamic Texts Society.



2.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises:

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. C
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. C
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. E

Unit 3 Conditions for Accepting a *Ḥadīth*

Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Learning Outcomes
3.3 Primary conditions of accepting a *Ḥadīth* as authentic.
3.4 Condition of *isnād*, reliability of narrators, and soundness of *matn*.
3.5 Differences between the conditions for *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan Ḥadīth*.
3.6 Examples of accepted and rejected *aḥādīth*.
3.7 The role of these conditions in preserving the integrity of the Sunnah and guiding Islamic legal rulings.
3.8 Summary
3.9 References/Further Readings
3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



3.1 Introduction

Ready for another exciting step in your learning journey? This unit takes you through the essential conditions scholars use to determine whether a Ḥadīth can be accepted as authentic and authoritative. As you study the unit, you will gain valuable insight into the rigorous standards that have preserved the reliability of Ḥadīth throughout Islamic scholarship. Unit 3 focuses on the conditions required for accepting a Ḥadīth as authentic and authoritative within Islamic scholarship. Building on earlier discussions of narrator evaluation and the science of al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, this unit explores the specific criteria developed by scholars to determine whether a Ḥadīth can be reliably attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

The acceptance of a *Ḥadīth* depends on a systematic assessment of its chain of transmission and text, emphasising the importance of these conditions for authenticating Hadith and ensuring their reliability.

Understanding how these conditions guide Ḥadīth evaluation helps you appreciate the careful efforts that safeguard the authenticity of the Sunnah, thereby fostering confidence in Islamic scholarship.



3.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- list the primary conditions required for a *Ḥadīth* to be accepted as authentic;
- explain each condition of *isnād*, reliability of narrators, and soundness of matn;
- differentiate between the conditions for *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan Ḥadīth*;
- analyse examples of accepted and rejected *aḥādīth* to illustrate the application of these conditions; and
- evaluate the role of these conditions in preserving the integrity of the Sunnah and guiding Islamic legal and theological rulings.



3.3 Primary conditions of accepting a *Ḥadīth* as authentic

A Ḥadīth must satisfy all five conditions, where a single broken link, a memory slip, or a hidden internal contradiction can completely demote it. How does this strict verification framework show that early scholars treated scriptural preservation as an objective, forensic engineering process rather than an exercise in blind trust?

In the science of *Ḥadīth*, scholars established strict and systematic conditions to determine whether a report can be classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic). These conditions ensure that only reliable narrations are attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Classical scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Imām al-Bukhārī articulated five universally accepted criteria for authentic *Ḥadīth* (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

1. *Ittiṣāl al-Sanad* (Continuity of the Chain)
The chain of transmission (*isnād*) must be uninterrupted, meaning every narrator directly received the *Ḥadīth* from their teacher. Any break in the chain weakens the report (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

2. *ʿAdālah* (Integrity of Narrators)
All narrators must possess upright moral character, including honesty, piety, and avoidance of major sins. This ensures the trustworthiness of transmission (Azami, 1992).

3. *Ḍabṭ* (Accuracy and Precision)
Narrators must demonstrate strong memory or precise documentation to ensure accurate transmission without distortion (Brown, 2009).

4. Absence of *Shudhūdh* (Irregularity)
The *Ḥadīth* must not contradict stronger or more reliable narrations. Any such contradiction renders the report irregular (*shādh*) (Kamali, 2003).

5. Absence of *ʿIllah* (Hidden Defects)
The report must be free from subtle, hidden defects in the chain or text that may compromise authenticity. Identifying such defects requires expert analysis (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

Summary Table

Condition	**Meaning**	**Impact on Ḥadīth**
Ittiṣāl al-Sanad	Continuous chain	Ensures direct transmission
ʿAdālah	Moral integrity of narrators	Guarantees honesty
Ḍabṭ	Accuracy and precision	Prevents distortion
Absence of *Shudhūdh*	No contradiction with stronger reports	Maintains consistency
Absence of *ʿIllah*	No hidden defects	Ensures technical soundness

When a Ḥadīth meets all five conditions, it becomes a reliable source, reinforcing your confidence in the integrity of Islamic law and in scholars' dedication to preserving the Prophet's teachings.

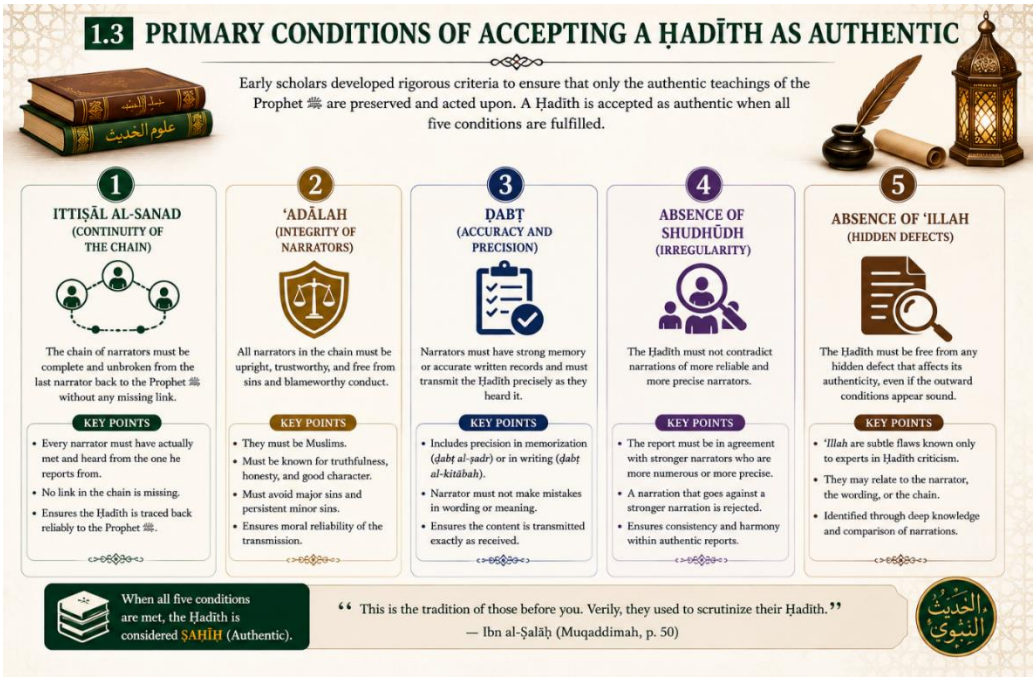


Figure 3.1 Primary Conditions of Accepting a Hadith as Authentic Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

3.4 Condition of *isnād*, reliability of narrators, and soundness of *matn*.

Since a report can only be accepted if its transmission line, human character scores, and text logic all perfectly align under independent audits, how does this tri-part system prove that early scholars treated Ḥadīth verification like a multi-layered forensic science where a good chain could never protect a broken message?

The acceptance of a *Ḥadīth* in Islamic scholarship is fundamentally based on three interrelated components: the *isnād* (chain of transmission), the reliability of narrators, and the soundness of the *matn* (text). These elements collectively ensure the authenticity and credibility of *Ḥadīth* as a source of Islamic guidance. Classical scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Imām al-Bukhārī emphasised these criteria as essential in *Ḥadīth* authentication (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

1. Condition of Isnād (Chain of Transmission)

The *isnād* must be continuous and unbroken (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), meaning each narrator has directly received the *Ḥadīth* from their predecessor. Any discontinuity, such as missing links, renders the *Ḥadīth* weak (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002). Additionally, scholars verify the historical possibility of transmission by confirming that narrators lived in the same period and had opportunities to meet.

2. Reliability of Narrators

The reliability of narrators is assessed through two primary criteria:

- ***ʿAdālah* (Integrity):** Narrators must be morally upright, truthful, and free from major sins.
- ***Ḍabṭ* (Precision):** Narrators must possess strong memory or accurate documentation skills to preserve the *Ḥadīth* without distortion.

Scholars developed the science of *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl* to evaluate narrators, classifying them as *thiqa* (trustworthy) and *ḍaʿīf* (weak) (Azami, 1992; Kamali, 2003).

3. Soundness of *Matn* (Text)

The *matn* of a *Ḥadīth* must be free from defects and inconsistencies. Its soundness is determined by:

- Absence of contradiction with the Qurʾān or more authentic *Ḥadīth*
- Consistency with established Islamic principles
- Freedom from hidden defects (*ʿilal*)
- Clarity and coherence of meaning

A narration that contradicts stronger evidence is considered *shādh* (irregular) and is rejected (Brown, 2009).

Summary Table

Component	Condition	Purpose
Isnād	Continuous and connected chain	Ensures reliable transmission
Narrator Reliability	*ʿAdālah* and *Ḍabṭ*	Guarantees trustworthiness
Matn	Free from contradiction and defects	Ensures the correctness of content

The combined evaluation of *isnād*, narrators, and *matn* reflects the comprehensive methodology of *Ḥadīth* criticism. These conditions ensure that only authentic traditions are accepted, thereby preserving the Sunnah and safeguarding Islamic teachings.

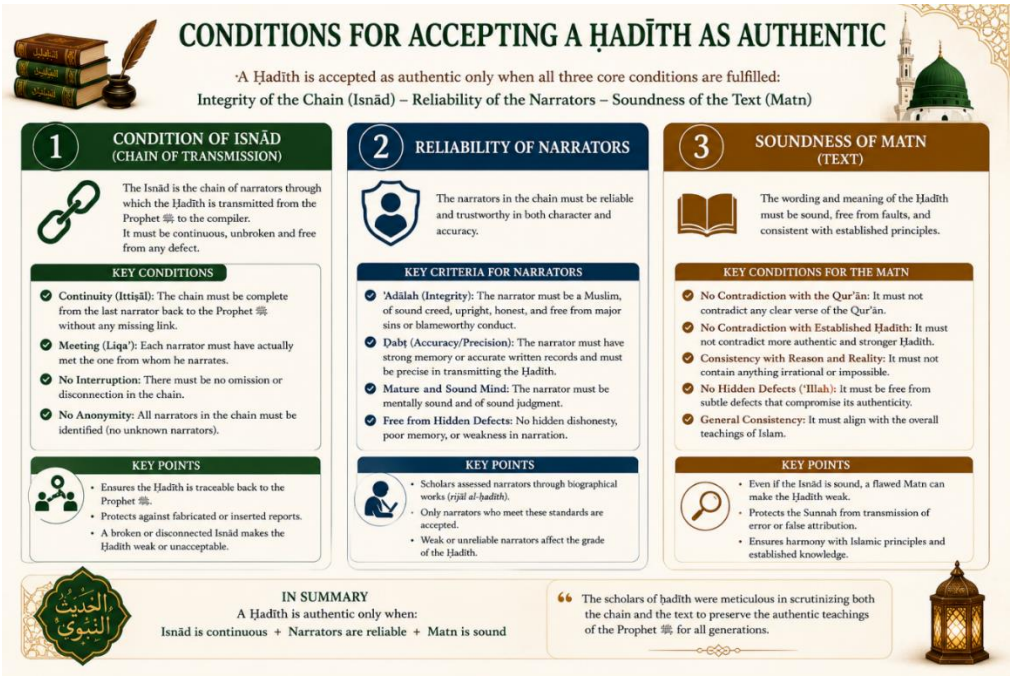


Figure 3.2 Conditions for Accepting a Hadith as Authentic
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026) adopted by Fatimah

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. What is the primary requirement for a valid *isnād*?
A. It must be short
B. It must be continuous
C. It must be written
D. It must be widely known

2. Which term refers to the moral integrity of a narrator?
A. *Ḍabṭ*
B. *Isnād*
C. *ʿAdālah*
D. *Matn*

3. A *Ḥadīth* that contradicts a stronger narration is described as:
A. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
B. *Ḥasan*
C. *Shādh*
D. *Mutawātir*

4. Which of the following is NOT a condition of authentic *Ḥadīth*?
A. Continuity of chain
B. Narrator integrity
C. Popularity of narration
D. Absence of hidden defects

5. The term *ḍabṭ* refers to:
A. Chain of narration
B. Precision and accuracy of a narrator

C. Hidden defect D. Contradiction

3.5 Differences between the conditions for *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan Ḥadīth*

Saḥīḥ and ḥasan reports share the same rigid baseline for morals and logic, but differ slightly in human memory scores. How does this highly nuanced grading scale prove that early scholars built a flexible, realistic data filter that could safely adapt to slight human flaws without ever compromising the integrity of religious law?

In the science of *Ḥadīth*, both *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) and *ḥasan* (good) narrations are considered acceptable for use in Islamic law and practice. However, they differ in the degree of reliability, particularly regarding the precision (*ḍabṭ*) of the narrators. Classical scholars such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and al-Tirmidhī clarified these distinctions within the broader framework of *Ḥadīth* classification (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002; Brown, 2009).

1. Similarities Between *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Ḥasan Ḥadīth*

Both categories share the same core conditions:

- Continuity of the *isnād* (chain)
- Integrity (*ʿadālah*) of narrators
- Absence of *shudhūdh* (contradictions)
- Absence of *ʿillah* (hidden defects)

These shared criteria mean that both *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan Ḥadīth* are fundamentally reliable and acceptable.

2. Key Difference: Level of Precision (*Ḍabṭ*)

The primary distinction lies in the strength of the narrators' memory and accuracy:

- *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth*: Narrators possess strong and precise memory (*complete ḍabṭ*).
- *Ḥasan Ḥadīth*: Narrators are truthful but have slightly lesser precision (*moderate ḍabṭ*).

Thus, a *ḥasan Ḥadīth* meets all conditions of authenticity but falls slightly below ṣaḥīḥ in terms of precision.

3. Strength and Ranking

- *Ṣaḥīḥ* → Highest level of authenticity
- *Ḥasan* → Acceptable but lower than *ṣaḥīḥ*
- A *ḥasan Ḥadīth* can sometimes be elevated to *ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrih* (authentic due to supporting chains).

4. Use in Islamic Law

Both *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan Ḥadīth*:

- Are used as evidence in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*)
- Guide beliefs, worship, and ethics

However, when there is a conflict:

- *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth* is given priority over *ḥasan*.

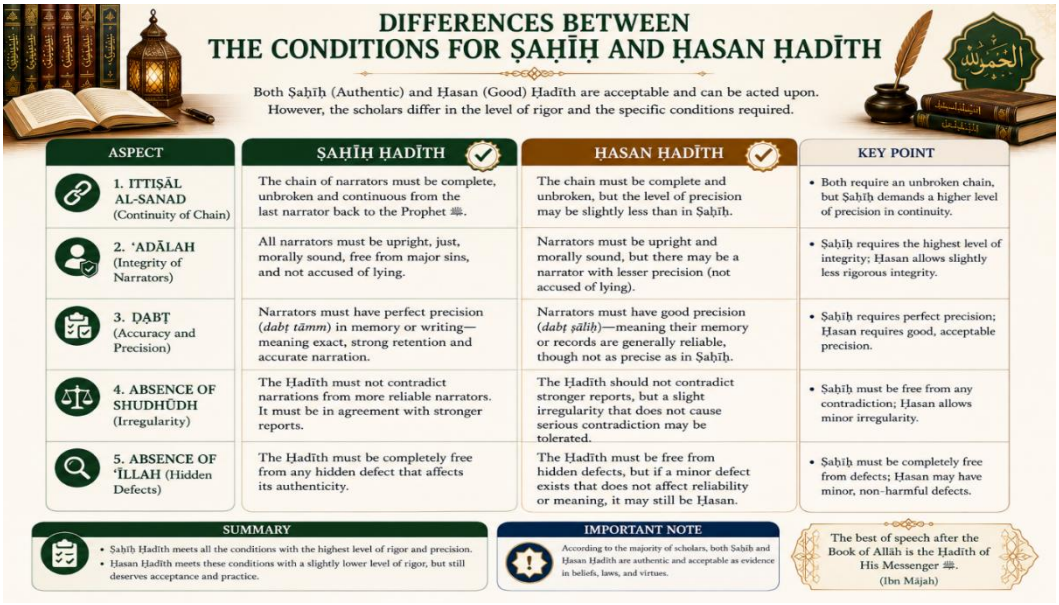


Figure 3.3 Difference Between the Conditions for Sahih and Hasan Hadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

5. Summary Table

Criterion	***Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth***	***Ḥasan Ḥadīth***
Chain (*Isnād*)	Fully continuous	Fully continuous
Integrity (*ʿAdālah*)	Required	Required
Precision (*Ḍabṭ*)	Strong and exact	Moderate (slightly less precise)
Shudhūdh	Absent	Absent
ʿIllah	Absent	Absent
Ranking	Highest	Lower than ṣaḥīḥ
Legal Use	Fully authoritative	Authoritative (with slightly lesser weight)

In a nutshell, the distinction between ṣaḥīḥ and ḥasan Ḥadīth reflects the refined grading system of Ḥadīth scholarship. While both are accepted, the narrators' precision determines their rank. This nuanced classification

ensures that Islamic teachings are based on carefully evaluated, hierarchically organised sources.

3.6 Examples of accepted and rejected *Aḥādīth*

When you consider how strictly a Ḥadīth is filtered—where a beautiful, morally positive statement is instantly rejected (mardūd) if the chain of custody breaks—how does this prove that early scholars valued raw historical accuracy far above personal emotion when establishing religious truths?

The science of Ḥadīth distinguishes between accepted (maqbūl) and rejected (mardūd) narrations using rigorous criteria that assess the isnād (chain), narrator reliability, and the matn (text). Scholars such as Imām al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ developed systematic methods for classifying narrations (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

1. Examples of Accepted *Aḥādīth (Maqbūl*)
Accepted *Aḥādīth* include *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* narrations that meet the required conditions of authenticity.
a. *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth* (Authentic)
Example:
إِنَّمَا الأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى…

"Intentions judge actions…"

- Reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim
- Meets all five conditions: continuous chain, reliable narrators, strong precision, no contradiction, and no hidden defect

Reason for Acceptance:

- High level of narrator accuracy (*ḍabṭ*)
- Strong and uninterrupted isnād

b. *Ḥasan Ḥadīth* (Good)
Example:
A narration reported by al-Tirmidhī is graded as *ḥasan*:
لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي يَشْبَعُ وَجَارُهُ جَائِعٌ إِلَى جَنْبِهِ

"The believer does not eat his fill while his neighbour is hungry."
Reason for Acceptance:

- Narrators are trustworthy but with slightly lesser precision
- Supported by other narrations

2. Examples of Rejected *Aḥādīt*h (*Mardūd*)
Rejected *Aḥādīth* fail to meet one or more conditions of authenticity.

مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

a. *Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth* (Weak)

Example:

A narration with a broken chain **(***munqaṭiʿ***)** or a narrator known for weak memory.

Reason for Rejection:

- Lack of continuity in *isnād*
- Weak narrator (*ḍaʿīf*)

b. *Mawḍūʿ Ḥadīth* (Fabricated)

Example:

Statements falsely attributed to the Prophet for political or sectarian purposes.

Reason for Rejection:

- Presence of a liar (*kadhdhāb*) in the chain
- Contradiction with Qurʾān or established Sunnah

c. *Shādh* (Irregular) *Ḥadīth*

Example:

A narration that contradicts a stronger, more authentic report.

Reason for Rejection:

- Conflict with more reliable narrations

3. Summary Table

Category	**Type of *Ḥadīth***	**Status**	**Reason**
Accepted	*Ṣaḥīḥ*	Strongest	Meets all conditions
Accepted	*Ḥasan*	Acceptable	Slightly lower precision
Rejected	*Ḍaʿīf*	Weak	Broken chain or weak narrator
Rejected	*Mawḍūʿ*	Fabricated	False attribution
Rejected	*Shādh*	Irregular	Contradicts stronger narration

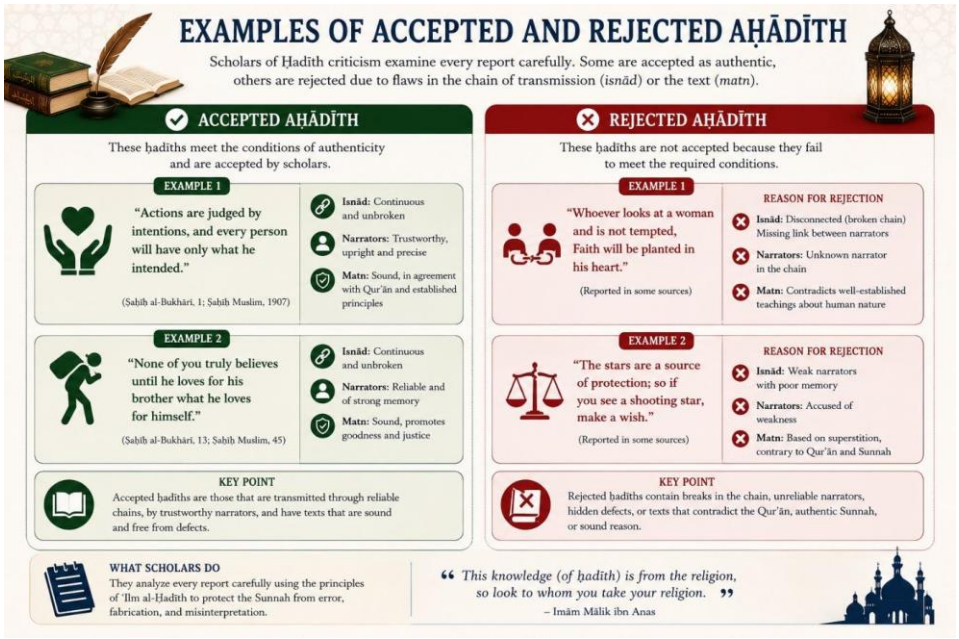


Figure 3.4 Examples of Accepted and Rejected Ahadith
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

The classification of Aḥādīth into accepted and rejected categories demonstrates the precision of Ḥadīth methodology. Through careful evaluation of isnād, narrators, and matn, scholars ensured that only authentic teachings are preserved and applied within Islam.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. What is the key difference between ṣaḥīḥ and ḥasan Ḥadīth?
A. Chain continuity
B. Narrator integrity
C. Level of precision (ḍabṭ)
D. Presence of isnād

2. Which condition requires that narrators must be morally upright?
A. *Isnād*
B. *Ḍabṭ*
C. *ʿAdālah*
D. *Matn*

3. A *Ḥadīth* with a broken chain is classified as:
A. *Ṣaḥīḥ*
B. *Ḥasan*
C. *Ḍaʿīf*
D. *Mutawātir*

4. Which of the following is common to both Ṣaḥīḥ and *ḥasan Ḥadīth*?
A. Weak narrators
B. Continuous chain
C. Fabrication
D. Contradiction
5. What is the meaning of *matn* in *Ḥadīth* studies?
A. Chain of narrators
B. Classification system
C. Text/content of the *Ḥadīth*
D. Narrator biography

3.7 The role of these conditions in preserving the integrity of the Sunnah and guiding Islamic legal rulings.

The rigorous conditions for accepting Aḥādīth, namely the continuity of the isnād, the reliability of narrators (ʿadālah and ḍabṭ), and the soundness of the matn, are central to preserving the integrity of the Sunnah and ensuring its authoritative use in Islamic law. Classical scholars such as Imām al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ systematised these principles to safeguard the Prophetic tradition against distortion and fabrication (Azami, 1992; Brown, 2009).

A jurist's legal verdict (ijtihād) on modern issues depends entirely on the technical grade of a narration; how does this rigid authentication system protect Islamic courtroom law from corruption by human guesswork or unverified local customs?

1. Preservation of the Integrity of the Sunnah

a. Protection Against Fabrication

The strict requirement for a continuous isnād and reliable narrators serves as a filter against fabricated reports. By scrutinising each transmitter, scholars ensured that only trustworthy narrations were accepted. This prevented false statements from being attributed to the Prophet (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 2002).

b. Establishment of a Scientific Verification System

The development of isnād criticism and matn analysis represents one of the earliest forms of systematic historical verification. Scholars critically examined both the chain and the content, ensuring consistency with the Qurʾān and established teachings (Brown, 2009).

c. Preservation of Authentic Knowledge

Under these conditions, the Sunnah was preserved as a reliable and structured body of knowledge, enabling its accurate transmission across generations. This continuity ensures that the Prophet's teachings remain accessible and authentic.

2. Role in Guiding Islamic Legal Rulings (*Fiqh*)

a. Foundation of *Sharīʿah*

Ḥadīth is the second primary source of Islamic law after the Qurʾān. Strict conditions ensure that legal rulings are grounded in authentic, verified evidence (Hallaq, 2009).

b. Ensuring Accuracy in Legal Judgments

Jurists rely on authenticated aḥādīth to derive rulings on worship, transactions, family law, and ethics. Without these conditions, legal conclusions could rest on unreliable reports.

c. Supporting Legal Methodologies

The classification of *Ḥadīth* (*ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍaʿīf*) directly influences:

- *Qiyās* (analogical reasoning)
- *Ijmāʿ* (consensus)
- *Ijtihād* (independent reasoning)

Thus, *Ḥadīth* authenticity is foundational to the entire structure of Islamic jurisprudence (Kamali, 2003).

3. Promoting Unity and Consistency

By distinguishing authentic from weak narrations, these conditions:

- reduce **اختلاف** (scholarly **اختلاف** based on weak reports);
- promote uniformity in religious practice; and
- strengthen confidence in Islamic teachings.

4. Continued Relevance

Even in contemporary Islamic studies, these principles:

- provide a framework for academic research;
- help address modern critiques of *Ḥadīth* authenticity; and
- ensure that new interpretations remain rooted in authentic sources.

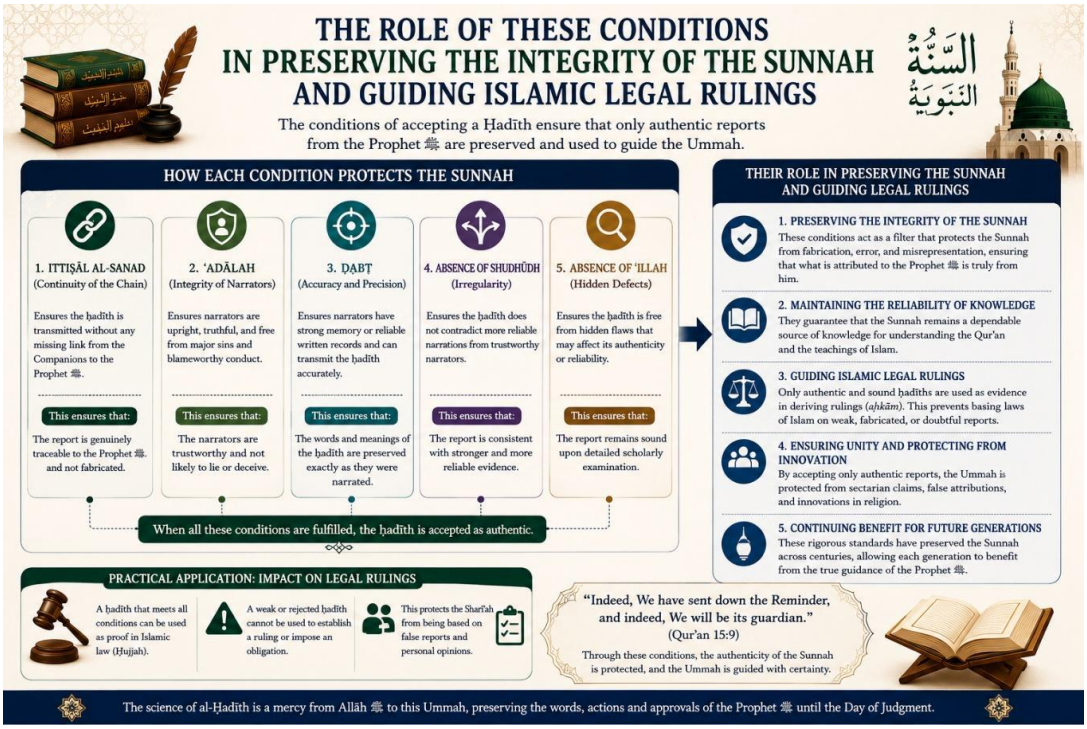


Figure 3.5 The Role of these Conditions in Preserving the Integrity of the Sunnah
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

In conclusion, the conditions for Ḥadīth authentication are not merely technical requirements but essential safeguards for preserving the Sunnah and guiding Islamic law. By ensuring accuracy, reliability, and consistency, they uphold the integrity of Islamic teachings and enable their application across generations.

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:
Match Column A with Column B

Column A	**Column B**
1. *Isnād*	A. Content of the *Ḥadīth*
2. *ʿAdālah*	B. Moral integrity of narrator
3. *Ḍabṭ*	C. Chain of transmission
4. *Matn*	D. Precision and accuracy
5. *Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth*	E. Fully authentic narration

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/QtKeCWeTsSY?si=802gzIjcGJzrBcX4



Scenario: Evaluating the Authenticity of a Ḥadīth
A student of Islamic Studies is researching a Ḥadīth frequently cited in a community lecture. Before using it in an assignment, the student consults recognised Ḥadīth references and discovers that the report has two chains of transmission. One chain is continuous and includes narrators known for their integrity (ʿadālah) and precision (ḍabṭ). The other has a missing link and includes a narrator whose memory was considered weak. The student also compares the wording (matn) of the narration with other authentic reports and finds that one version contains an unusual addition absent from stronger narrations. Applying the principles of Ḥadīth criticism, the student accepts the narration that fulfils all five conditions of authenticity and rejects the weaker version, even though both convey a positive religious message.

Why is it important to examine the isnād, the reliability of narrators, and the soundness of the matn before accepting a Ḥadīth as authentic, rather than relying solely on the text's apparent meaning?

3.8 Summary

You have just concluded Unit 3, which focuses on the criteria established by Ḥadīth scholars for determining whether a narration can be accepted as authentic and authoritative. These conditions were developed within the discipline of ʿulūm al-Ḥadīth to safeguard the integrity of the Prophet's teachings against error, fabrication, and distortion. At the core of this unit is the principle that a Ḥadīth must meet rigorous methodological standards before it can be used as a source of Islamic belief or law.

Scholars do not accept narrations at face value; rather, they subject them to detailed scrutiny of both the chain of transmission (isnād) and the text (matn). A Ḥadīth is generally classified as ṣaḥīḥ (authentic) if it fulfils the following five essential conditions: continuity of the chain (Ittiṣālal-Isnād), integrity of narrators (ʿAdālah), accuracy of narrators (Ḍabṭ), absence of irregularity (Shudhūdh) and absence of hidden defects (ʿIllah).

The unit also highlights the roles of isnād and matn and emphasises that both are equally important. A sound chain does not guarantee acceptance if the content contradicts established principles, and a sound text is not sufficient without a reliable chain. It also explains the classification of Ḥadīth, based on these conditions, by categorising it into Ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), Ḥasan (good) and Ḍaʿīf (weak) to determine the level of reliability and whether a Ḥadīth can be used as evidence in legal or theological matters.



3.9 References/Further Readings

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3.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises:

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. C
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:
1. C
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:
1. C
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. E

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. What is the correct definition of *al-Mawḍū*ʿ (the fabricated *Ḥadīth*)?

A. A *Ḥadīth* with a weak narrator
B. A *Ḥadīth* with minor defects
C. A *Ḥadīth* falsely attributed to the Prophet ﷺ
D. A *Ḥadīth* with multiple chains

2. During which historical period did the fabrication of Ḥadīth first become significant?

A. During the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ
B. During the era of the Companions, with no conflict
C. During the period of civil strife (al-Fitnah)
D. During the Ottoman Empire

3. Which of the following is NOT a common cause of fabricated *Ḥadīth*?

A. Political motivations
B. Sectarian disputes
C. Strong memory of narrators
D. Personal or financial gain

4. What was the major scholarly response to the spread of fabricated *Ḥadīth*?

A. Ignoring weak narrations
B. Development of *isnād* verification and *Ḥadīth* sciences
C. Accepting all narrations equally
D. Limiting transmission to written texts only

5. Which of the following best describes the significance of studying *al-Mawḍūʿāt*?

A. It increases the number of *Ḥadīth*
B. It helps preserve the authenticity of the Sunnah
C. It replaces the Qurʾān as a source of law
D. It eliminates the need for scholars

4.10. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:
1. C
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. B

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:
1. political
2. *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*
3. *matn*
4. *al-Quṣṣāṣ*
5. *isnad*

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:
1. B
2. D
3. E
4. C
5. A

Unit 4 Modern Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Criticism

Unit Structure

4.1 Introduction
4.2 Learning Outcomes
4.3 Contributions of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars to Modern scholarly perspectives on *Ḥadīth* criticism.
4.4 Classical methodologies of *Ḥadīth* authentication: Comparison with modern academic approaches.
4.5 The challenges and opportunities posed by modern textual, historical, and contextual analysis of *Ḥadīth*.
4.6 The relevance of modern approaches in contemporary Islamic legal, theological, and ethical discussions.
4.7 Balance between hadith preservation sciences and modern critical scholarship.
4.8 Summary
4.9 References/Further Readings
4.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



4.1 Introduction

Have you ever wondered how the study of Ḥadīth has continued to evolve and adapt over time? In this unit, you will discover how modern scholars build on the rich legacy of classical Ḥadīth studies while addressing the opportunities and challenges of today's world. Get ready to explore fresh perspectives and deepen your understanding of this fascinating field. Building on earlier units that focused on traditional methodologies such as isnād analysis, matn criticism, and al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, this unit shifts attention to how these principles are reinterpreted, refined, and sometimes contested in modern scholarship. The modern period has seen significant transformations in the study of Ḥadīth, driven by Western academic methods, historical criticism, and interdisciplinary approaches. Scholars such as Jonathan A. C. Brown have highlighted how contemporary research combines classical verification techniques with modern tools of textual analysis, historiography, and digital databases. This integration has sparked renewed discussions on authenticity, transmission, and the role of Ḥadīth in shaping Islamic law and thought.

A central theme of this unit is the interaction between classical and modern methodologies. While traditional scholars emphasise continuity with established principles, such as strict narrator evaluation and chain verification, modern researchers often adopt broader analytical

frameworks, including sociological, linguistic, and comparative approaches. This has produced diverse perspectives, ranging from reaffirmation of classical standards to critical reassessment of the historical reliability of certain narratives.

The unit also addresses contemporary challenges, including questions about the historical development of Ḥadīth literature, critiques from Orientalist and revisionist scholarship, the spread of weak or fabricated Ḥadīth in digital media, and the need for contextual interpretation in modern societies. In response, contemporary Muslim scholars have developed strategies to defend the authenticity of the Sunnah while making it relevant to present-day contexts. These include the use of digital Ḥadīth databases, a renewed emphasis on maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (the higher objectives of Islamic law), and efforts to harmonise classical scholarship with modern academic standards. Ultimately, the unit demonstrates that Ḥadīth criticism is not a static discipline but a dynamic and evolving field. By engaging both classical heritage and modern intellectual tools, contemporary scholarship continues to preserve the integrity of the Sunnah while ensuring its meaningful application in an ever-changing world.



4.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- describe key modern scholarly perspectives on *Ḥadīth* criticism, including both Muslim and non-Muslim contributions;
- compare classical methodologies of *Ḥadīth* authentication with modern academic approaches;
- analyse the challenges and opportunities posed by modern textual, historical, and contextual analysis of *Ḥadīth*;
- evaluate the relevance of modern approaches in contemporary Islamic legal, theological, and ethical discussions; and
- assess the balance between preserving traditional *Ḥadīth* sciences and engaging with modern critical scholarship.



4.3 Contributions of Muslim and Non-Muslim scholars to Modern scholarly perspectives on *Ḥadīth* criticism.

Modern scholarship on Ḥadīth criticism reflects a dynamic interplay between classical Islamic methodologies and contemporary academic approaches. Both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have made significant contributions to new perspectives in Ḥadīth studies, shaping debates about authenticity, transmission, and the historical reliability of Ḥadīth literature. Although their approaches differ in assumptions and objectives, their combined contributions have enriched the field and broadened its methodological scope.

A. Contributions of Muslim Scholars

1. (Defence) of Classical Methodologies
Modern Muslim scholars have played a crucial role in defending the reliability of traditional Ḥadīth sciences. Scholars such as Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami emphasised the robustness of isnād criticism and rejected claims that Ḥadīth were largely fabricated. His works demonstrated that early Muslim scholars developed sophisticated methods of verification (Azami, 1992).

2. Integration of Classical and Modern Methods
Contemporary Muslim thinkers have sought to harmonise classical principles with modern academic tools, including historical analysis, textual criticism and digital databases. Scholars such as Jonathan A. C. Brown highlight how traditional methodologies can be situated within broader frameworks of historical inquiry (Brown, 2009).

3. Contextual Interpretation (*Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*)
Modern Muslim scholars emphasise contextual understanding of Ḥadīth, taking into account historical circumstances, linguistic nuances and the objectives of Sharīʿah (maqāṣid). This approach ensures that Ḥadīth remains relevant to contemporary issues.

4. Response to Orientalist Critiques
Muslim scholars have actively responded to critiques raised by Western academics by re-examining early sources, providing evidence for early documentation, and clarifying misunderstandings about transmission.

5. Revival of *Ḥadīth* Studies
There has been renewed interest in editing classical manuscripts, teaching Ḥadīth sciences at universities, and developing online Ḥadīth resources.

Muslim scholars rely on tradition-anchored verification sciences such as Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl to defend the Sunnah. At the same time, Western academics often apply historical-critical tools to question the origins of texts. How does this ongoing debate prove that the field of Ḥadīth criticism has transformed into a sophisticated, global dialogue in which faith-based rigour directly meets secular historical critique?



Figure 5.1 Contributions of Muslims and Non-Muslims to Modern Scholarly Perspectives on Hadith Criticism

Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

B. Contributions of Non-Muslim (Western/Orientalist) Scholars

1. Historical-Critical Approach

Western scholars introduced critical historical methods, questioning the dating of Ḥadīth collections, the authenticity of isnād systems, and the role of later political and social influences. Notably, Ignaz Goldziher argued that many Ḥadīth reflect later developments rather than Prophetic origins.

2. *Isnād*-Cum-*Matn* Analysis

Scholars such as Joseph Schacht developed analytical methods that combined chain and text analysis to trace the evolution of legal traditions.

3. Source Criticism and Dating
Non-Muslim scholars applied philological and historiographical methods to determine the origins of narrations, analyse patterns of transmission, and identify layers of development in Ḥadīth literature.

4. Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies
Modern Western research often integrates sociology, anthropology and literary criticism. This broadens the study of *Ḥadīth* beyond traditional frameworks.

5. Digital and Academic Contributions
Non-Muslim scholars have contributed to academic publications, critical editions of texts, databases, and research tools.

C. Comparative Analysis

Aspect	**Muslim Scholars**	**Non-Muslim Scholars**
Approach	Faith-based and tradition-oriented	Historical-critical and analytical.
Focus	دفاع of authenticity and preservation	Reassessment and critique.
Methodology	*Isnād, matn, jarḥ wa taʿdīl*	Philology, historiography, comparative analysis.
Objective	Preservation of Sunnah	Academic inquiry and reconstruction.
Outcome	Strengthening the classical framework	Expanding critical perspectives.

D. Evaluation of Their Contributions
The interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship has produced a more nuanced understanding of Ḥadīth studies, with Muslim scholars preserving and defending the integrity of the Sunnah. By contrast, non-Muslim scholars have introduced critical tools that challenge assumptions and encourage deeper analysis. Together, these perspectives have contributed to a more comprehensive and intellectually rigorous field. However, it is important to assess both approaches critically: some Western critiques are considered overly sceptical by Muslim scholars, and some traditional approaches may require contextual reinterpretation in modern settings.

In conclusion, modern perspectives on Ḥadīth criticism are shaped by the combined contributions of Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Although their methodologies and assumptions differ, both have significantly influenced the development of Ḥadīth studies. The ongoing dialogue between these traditions continues to enrich the field, ensuring that the

study of Ḥadīth remains authentic and intellectually relevant in the contemporary world.

4.4 Classical Methodologies of *Ḥadīth* Authentication: Comparison with Modern Academic Approaches

The science of Ḥadīth authentication is among the most sophisticated intellectual achievements in Ḥadīth studies. Classical Muslim scholars developed rigorous methodologies to preserve the Sunnah, focusing on verifying the chain of transmission and textual integrity. In the modern era, these traditional approaches are often compared with contemporary academic methods, which emphasise historical criticism, interdisciplinary analysis, and textual reconstruction. This section examines both approaches, highlighting their similarities, differences, and areas of convergence.

Classical scholars used isnād audits to safeguard the moral integrity of a report, while modern academics apply digital and philological tools to trace its socio-political evolution. How does this methodological contrast demonstrate that the two systems are not necessarily at odds but are mapping the same historical text from two distinct vantage points?

A. Classical Methodologies of *Ḥadīth* Authentication

Classical scholars established a comprehensive system for determining the authenticity of Ḥadīth, grounded in strict criteria and ethical evaluation of (1) isnād (chain) analysis, i.e. verification of uninterrupted transmission (ittiṣāl al-sanad), identification of each narrator in the chain, and ensuring the chronological possibility of transmission; (2) al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl (criticism and accreditation), i.e. evaluation of narrators' ʿadālah (moral integrity), assessment of ḍabṭ (accuracy and memory), and classification of narrators (thiqa, ḍaʿīf, etc.); (3) matn (text) criticism, i.e. examination of content for contradictions with the Qurʾān, the established Sunnah, عقل (reason), and known facts; (4) Cross-Verification (Turuq al-Ḥadīth), i.e. comparison of multiple chains and versions and detection of anomalies (shudhūdh) and hidden defects (ʿilal); (5) Classification System, i.e. Ṣaḥīḥ (authentic), Ḥasan (good), Ḍaʿīf (weak), and Mawḍūʿ (fabricated). Major contributors included scholars such as Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, who established the highest standards of authentication through their canonical collections.

B. Modern Academic Approaches to *Ḥadīth* Criticism

Modern approaches, especially in Western academia, apply broader critical frameworks to the study of Ḥadīth. These include (1) the Historical-Critical Method, i.e. the examination of the socio-political context of narrations, questioning the dating and origins of Ḥadīth, and analysing their development over time; (2) Isnād-Cum-Matn Analysis,

i.e. the combination of chain and textual analysis and the tracing of the evolution of narrations across generations; (3) Source and Redaction Criticism, i.e. the study of editorial processes in Ḥadīth collections and the identification of layers of transmission and compilation; (4) Interdisciplinary Approaches, i.e. the utilisation of tools from sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism; (5) Digital Humanities, such as the use of databases and computational tools, mapping transmission networks, and statistical analysis of narrations. Scholars such as Joseph Schacht are associated with these approaches.

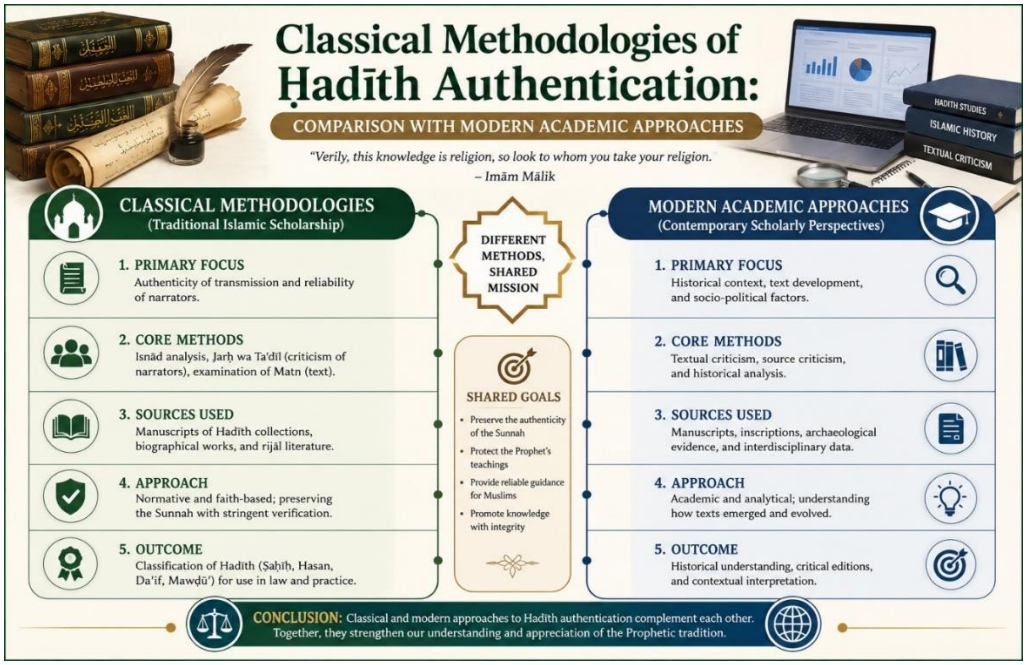


Figure 5.2 Classical Methodologies of Hadith Authentication
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

C. Comparative Analysis

Table: Classical vs Modern Approaches

Aspect	**Classical Methodology**	**Modern Academic Approach**
Foundation	Religious and preservation-focused	Historical and analytical.
Primary Focus	Authenticity of transmission	Historical development.
Key Tools	*Isnād, jarḥ wa taʿdīl, matn* criticism	Historical criticism, philology
Evaluation Criteria	Moral integrity and precision	Contextual and textual evolution.
Objective	Safeguard the Sunnah	Reconstruct historical origins.
Authority	Based on scholarly consensus	Based on academic inquiry.

D. Points of Convergence

Despite differences, both approaches share certain common elements, such as recognition of the importance of transmission chains, concern for authenticity and accuracy, and the use of critical analysis to evaluate reports. Modern scholars, including Jonathan A. C. Brown, argue that classical methodologies themselves represent an early form of historical criticism.

E. Critical Evaluation

Strengths of Classical Methodology include its high degree of systematisation and detail, a focus on moral accountability, and proven effectiveness in preserving the Sunnah. In contrast, the strengths of Modern Approaches include a broader contextual understanding, the integration of interdisciplinary tools, and the ability to address contemporary academic questions. Limitations include classical methods not always addressing the broader historical context, and modern approaches sometimes overlooking the internal rigour of traditional systems.

In conclusion, the comparison between classical and modern methodologies shows that both contribute valuable insights to Ḥadīth studies. While classical scholars ensured the preservation and authenticity of the Sunnah, modern academic approaches offer additional tools for contextual and historical analysis. A balanced integration of both perspectives offers the most comprehensive understanding of Ḥadīth criticism today.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

Answer the following questions by choosing the most suitable option:

1. Which Muslim scholar is well known for defending the authenticity of the Ḥadīth against modern critiques?

A. Joseph Schacht
B. Ignaz Goldziher
C. Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami
D. Edward Said

2. The historical-critical method is primarily associated with which group of scholars?

A. Early Companions
B. Classical Muslim scholars
C. Non-Muslim/Western scholars
D. Medieval jurists

3. What is the primary focus of classical *Ḥadīth* methodology?

A. Literary style of the text
B. Authenticity of transmission through *isnād* and narrators
C. Political context of narrations
D. Philosophical interpretation

4. Which method integrates both chain (isnād) and textual (matn) analysis in modern studies?

A. *Jarḥ wa Taʿdīl*
B. *Qiyās*
C. *Isnād*-cum-*matn* analysis
D. *Ijmāʿ*

5. One major difference between classical and modern approaches to *Ḥadīth* criticism is that:

A. Classical scholars ignore narrators
B. Modern scholars rely only on faith
C. Classical methods focus on preservation, while modern approaches emphasise historical reconstruction
D. Both approaches completely reject the isnād.

4.5 The Challenges and Opportunities Posed by Modern Textual, Historical, and Contextual Analysis of *Ḥadīth*

Modern approaches to Ḥadīth criticism have introduced new analytical tools drawn from textual studies, historiography, and the social sciences. These approaches have broadened the scope of Ḥadīth studies, enabling scholars to revisit classical sources with fresh perspectives. However, they also pose significant challenges to authenticity, interpretation, and authority. This section evaluates both the opportunities and the tensions these modern methods create.

A. Challenges of Modern Approaches

1. Questioning of Authenticity

Modern historical-critical methods often reassess the reliability of Ḥadīth by examining the socio-political context of the narrations, questioning the dating of collections, and suggesting that certain traditions developed later. Scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht argued that some Ḥadīth reflect later legal and theological developments rather than direct Prophetic teachings. This has generated significant debate within Muslim scholarship.

2. Tension with Classical Methodologies

Modern approaches sometimes appear to conflict with traditional isnād-verification methods, namely al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl and classical classification systems. This tension raises questions about the adequacy of classical methods and the legitimacy of modern reinterpretations.

3. Risk of Over-Scepticism
Some modern critiques adopt a highly sceptical stance, which may undermine confidence in the Ḥadīth corpus, dismiss established scholarly consensus, and overlook the rigour of classical methodologies.

4. Misinterpretation Through Contextualisation
While contextual analysis is valuable, excessive emphasis on context may lead to relativistic interpretations, reduce universal teachings to historical circumstances, and create inconsistencies in their application.

5. Digital Misinformation
The widespread availability of Ḥadīth online has led to the circulation of weak or fabricated narrations, a lack of proper verification by non-specialists, and misuse of Ḥadīth in public discourse.

Modern text analytics can uncover subtle linguistic patterns and digitally map vast transmission networks. However, it risks sliding into hyper-sceptical relativism, reducing universal prophetic truths to mere historical relics. How can an independent learner utilise these advanced academic tools without eroding the foundational critical rigour of classical isnād scholarship?

B. Opportunities of Modern Approaches

1. Enhanced Textual Analysis
Modern tools enable linguistic and stylistic analysis, identification of textual variations, and a better understanding of transmission patterns.

2. Historical Contextualisation
Historical analysis helps to situate Ḥadīth within specific socio-political contexts, clarify the circumstances of narration (asbāb al-wurūd), and enhance interpretation and application.

3. Interdisciplinary Research
Integration with other disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology and legal theory, broadens understanding of Ḥadīth and its role in society.

4. Digital Humanities and Databases
Modern technology has revolutionised Ḥadīth studies through searchable databases, mapping of isnād networks, and comparative analyses of large datasets. Scholars such as Jonathan A. C. Brown highlight how digital tools enhance both traditional and contemporary research.

5. Relevance to Contemporary Issues

Modern approaches enable scholars to apply Ḥadīth to new ethical challenges (e.g., bioethics, finance), to reinterpret texts in light of maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, and to address global and multicultural contexts.



Figure 5.3 The Challenges and Opportunities Posed by Modern Textual, Historical, and Contextual Analysis of Ḥadīth
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

C. Comparative Overview

Table: Challenges vs Opportunities

Challenges	Opportunities
Questioning authenticity	Deeper textual analysis.
Tension with tradition	Historical contextualisation.
Over-scepticism	Interdisciplinary insights.
Misinterpretation risks	Technological advancements.
Spread of misinformation	Greater accessibility of sources.

D. Critical Evaluation

Modern approaches should not be seen as replacements for classical methodologies but as complementary tools. A balanced approach entails maintaining the rigour of classical authentication methods, utilising modern analytical tools responsibly, and avoiding extremes of blind

acceptance or total scepticism. This integrated framework ensures authenticity and relevance in Ḥadīth studies.

In summary, modern textual, historical, and contextual analysis of Ḥadīth poses significant challenges and offers valuable opportunities. While it raises important questions about authenticity and interpretation, it also enriches the field with new tools and perspectives. By combining classical rigour with modern insight, scholars can preserve the integrity of the Sunnah while ensuring its continued relevance in contemporary society.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2

Match items in **Column A** with the correct answers in **Column B**

Column A	**Column B**
1. Historical-critical method	A. Use of technology to anal databases.
2. Digital misinformation	B. Re-examining authenticit historical context.
3. Interdisciplinary research	C. Spread of weak or fabrica online.
4. Digital humanities	D. Integration of sociology a anthropology.
5. Contextual analysis	E. Understanding circumstar narration.

4.6 The Relevance of Modern Approaches in Contemporary Islamic Legal, Theological, and Ethical Discussions

Modern approaches to Ḥadīth criticism have become increasingly important for addressing contemporary issues in Islamic law, theology, and ethics. By combining classical principles with new analytical tools, scholars in Ḥadīth studies can apply the Sunnah to modern realities while preserving its authenticity.

1. Relevance in Islamic Law (*Fiqh*)
Modern methodologies assist jurists in re-evaluating evidence in light of contemporary contexts, addressing emerging issues in finance, medicine, and technology, and applying maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (the higher objectives of Islamic law). Through contextual and historical analysis, scholars ensure that legal rulings remain both authentic and adaptable.

2. Relevance in Theology (*ʿAqīdah*)
Modern approaches help clarify theological concepts using authentic and critically verified Ḥadīth, address contemporary doubts and criticisms, and distinguish authentic teachings from weak or fabricated narrations. This strengthens doctrinal clarity and intellectual confidence.

3. Relevance in Ethics and Social Issues
In ethical discussions, modern Ḥadīth analysis guides on human rights, justice, and social responsibility, supports the contextual application of Prophetic teachings, and addresses global challenges, including environmental ethics and social justice.

4. Addressing Contemporary Challenges
Modern approaches enable scholars to counter misinformation and misuse of Ḥadīth online, engage with global academic discourse, and provide evidence-based responses to criticism. Scholars such as Jonathan A. C. Brown emphasise the importance of integrating classical authenticity with contemporary intellectual engagement.

5. Enhancing Accessibility and Education
Digital tools and modern research methods make Ḥadīth collections widely accessible, support academic study and teaching, and encourage critical thinking among students.

Maintaining a perfect balance between classical isnād preservation and modern contextual criticism keeps the Sunnah both strictly authentic and functionally alive. How does this integration demonstrate that Ḥadīth scholarship is not a stagnant historical relic but a highly dynamic framework that actively guides human ethics amid changing global realities?



Figure 5.4 The Relevance of Modern Approaches in Contemporary Islamic Legal, Theological, and Ethical Discussions
Source – AI-generated image (July 2026), adopted by Fatimah

4.7 Balance Between *Ḥadīth* Preservation Sciences and Modern Critical Scholarship

A key challenge in contemporary Ḥadīth studies is striking a balance between classical preservation sciences and modern critical approaches. This balance ensures that the Sunnah remains both authentic and relevant.

1. Importance of Classical Preservation Sciences
Traditional methodologies such as isnād verification, al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, and matn criticism remain essential for safeguarding authenticity. Scholars such as Muhammad Mustafa al-Azami have demonstrated the reliability and depth of these classical systems.

2. Role of Modern Critical Scholarship
Modern approaches contribute by providing historical and contextual insights, introducing interdisciplinary tools, and enhancing analytical depth. These methods help address questions that classical works have not fully explored.

3. Need for Integration
A balanced approach involves preserving the authority of classical methods, utilising modern tools without undermining tradition, and avoiding extremes of blind acceptance or excessive scepticism.

4. Benefits of Balance
Achieving this balance leads to authentic yet contextually relevant interpretations, stronger academic credibility and greater unity in understanding Islamic teaching

5. Contemporary Implications
Balanced scholarship ensures that Islamic teachings remain applicable in modern societies, the Sunnah continues to guide evolving human conditions, and academic and religious discourses are harmonised.

In conclusion, modern approaches to Ḥadīth criticism play a vital role in contemporary Islamic discourse, offering tools for relevance and engagement. However, their effectiveness depends on maintaining a careful balance with classical preservation sciences. Together, these approaches ensure that the Sunnah remains both authentic and applicable in the modern world within Ḥadīth studies.

You can click the link, scan the QR code or click the video to learn more about the topic:

https://youtu.be/Susl-QCNCjA?si=1BNbwh3_nd-8V9_l



Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the most suitable words:

1. Modern approaches help jurists address new legal issues by applying the objectives of Islamic law, known as _____.

2. The traditional science for evaluating narrators' reliability is called _____.

3. A balanced approach to Ḥadīth studies requires avoiding both blind acceptance and excessive _____.

4. Modern tools such as databases and digital platforms enhance the _____ of Ḥadīth collections.

5. Classical preservation sciences primarily focus on ensuring the _____ of Ḥadīth.

Scenario: Integrating Classical and Modern Approaches to Ḥadīth Studies

A postgraduate student is preparing a research paper on the authenticity of a Ḥadīth addressing a contemporary ethical issue. The student begins by applying classical methods of Ḥadīth authentication, examining the continuity of the isnād, the reliability of the narrators through al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl, and the soundness of the matn. To deepen the analysis, the student also consults historical studies, digital Ḥadīth databases, and contemporary academic research to understand the narration's historical context and transmission. After comparing the findings, the student concludes that the classical methods establish the authenticity of the Ḥadīth. At the same time, modern approaches provide valuable historical and contextual insights that support their appropriate application to present-day issues. The research demonstrates that combining both perspectives can enrich understanding without compromising the principles of classical Ḥadīth scholarship.

How does this scenario demonstrate that modern analytical tools can complement, rather than replace, the classical sciences of Ḥadīth authentication in preserving the Sunnah and in addressing contemporary challenges?



4.8 Summary

You have explored how the discipline of criticism has evolved in the modern period through the interplay between classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary academic approaches within Ḥadīth studies. This highlights the field's dynamism, showing that Ḥadīth studies continue to evolve in response to new intellectual challenges and global contexts. The unit begins by examining the contributions of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Muslim scholars have largely focused on defending and refining classical methodologies, demonstrating the reliability of traditional systems such as isnād verification and al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl. In contrast, non-Muslim scholars have introduced historical-critical methods to question the origins and development of Ḥadīth literature. Although these perspectives differ, their interaction has enriched scholarly discourse and encouraged deeper analysis.

A major theme of the unit is the comparison of classical and modern methodologies. Classical scholars emphasised authenticity through rigorous evaluation of narrators and chains of transmission, whereas modern approaches often focus on historical context, textual analysis, and interdisciplinary research. Despite their differences, both approaches share a concern for accuracy and critical evaluation, and many contemporary scholars advocate a balanced integration of the two.

The unit also examines the challenges and opportunities of modern approaches. Challenges include scepticism about authenticity, tension with traditional scholarship, and the spread of misinformation in digital spaces. However, opportunities include enhanced textual analysis, historical contextualisation, interdisciplinary insights, and digital tools that improve accessibility and research efficiency. Furthermore, the unit highlights the relevance of modern Ḥadīth studies to contemporary issues, including Islamic law, theology, and ethics. Modern methodologies help scholars address new questions in areas such as finance, medicine, and social justice while ensuring that interpretations remain grounded in authentic sources. Finally, the unit emphasises the importance of balancing classical preservation sciences with modern critical scholarship. Such a balance ensures that the Sunnah is both authentically preserved and meaningfully applied in contemporary contexts.
Conclusively, Unit 5 demonstrates that modern approaches to *Ḥadīth* criticism are not a replacement for classical methods but a continuation and expansion of them. By integrating traditional rigour with contemporary analytical tools, scholars can preserve the integrity of the Sunnah while ensuring its relevance in the modern world within *Ḥadīth* studies.

4.9 References/Further Readings

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4.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs):

Self-Assessment Exercises 1:

1. C
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. C

Self-Assessment Exercises 2:

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. E

Self-Assessment Exercises 3:

1. *maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*
2. *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*
3. scepticism
4. accessibility
5. authenticity