

Chapter Twenty-One

The Differences in Ahadith

Tradition 21.1 H 188, Ch. 21, h 1

Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Hishim has narrated from his father from Hammad ibn 'Isa from Ibrahim ibn 'Umar al-Yamani from Aban ibn abu 'Ayyash from Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali who has said the following:

"I said to Imam Ali ^{a.s}, 'I have heard from Salman, al-Miqdad and abu Dhar certain interpretations of the holy Quran and certain Ahadith of the holy Prophet^{a.s} which I find completely different from what I hear from other sources. They (Salman et al) also believe that those people have the false believes and are on the wrong path. Do you disagree with what I have heard from other people and consider their interpretations as misleading? Do you think other people, intentionally, ascribe lies to the holy Prophet^{saww} and interpret Quran according to their own personal opinions?" Amir-al-Momaneen^{a.s} then responded, "You have posed a question now listen to me very carefully.

"People had, with them, both the 'Haq' (Divine path) and the 'Batil' (falsehood); the truth and the slur; what is abrogating and what has already been abrogated; the general and the specific issues; the unmistakable commands and intricate Verses; along with the properly memorized facts and those quotations which were based on mere speculations. People had forged certain narrations calling them as Ahadith of the holy Prophet^{saww}. The condition was such that once the holy Prophet^{saww} addressed the people from the pulpit saying, "O people! Many lies have been propagated and are referred to as my Ahadith. Whoever forges lies and calls them my Hadith, has ensured his place in the hell fire. But people did not stop and even after the holy Prophet^{saw} they continued to fabricate false Ahadith. You have received Ahadith through four channels; besides these there is no fifth group (of Ahadith narrators).

"One of the narrators of Ahadith is a hypocrite who only pretends to be a Muslim. He does not consider it a sin and immoral to deliberately ascribe lies to holy Prophet^{saww} through fabrication of false Ahadith. If people know that he is a hypocrite and a liar then they will not believe in what he narrates but people say, 'He lived at the time of the holy

Prophet^{saww}, he has seen him, has heard Hadith from Prophet^{saww} and has preserved those Ahadith. In fact they do not know about his intentions and therefore have taken Ahadith from him. It is certain that Allah^{swt} has spoken about the hypocrites the way He has spoken about them and has described them the way He has describe them:

"Their (huge) physical appearance make you amazed when you see them and when they speak, you carefully listen to them . . ." 63:4.

The hypocrites, after Prophet^{saww}, then sought closeness to the misguided leaders as well as adhered to those who called others to the hell fire through disguise, lies and false accusations. The misguided rulers, as a reward, appointed them to certain offices and gave them authorities to dominate people. They, with the help of corrupt rulers, devoured the world. Generally, people follow only the kings and the worldly gains except for those who have been protected by Allah^{swt}. This is the one type among the four kinds.

"The second type (of hadith narrator) is that, who has heard Hadith from the holy Prophet^{saww} but could not remember it fully and ended up diffusing some of his own uncertainties while narrating and preserving it. He has not fabricated anything on purpose and keeps the Hadith with him. He speaks about it, practices it himself and narrates it to other while saying; " I heard it from the holy Prophet^{saww}. If the Muslims would learn that he is uncertain about it they would not accept the Hadith from him, and if he, himself, would recognise that he is narrating an incorrect hadith and there exists an element of uncertainty, he would stop narrating it.

"The third kind is the one who has heard something form the holy Prophet^{saww} that contained a command about a matter but, latter on, it was prohibited by the holy Prophet^{saww}, through another Hadith but the man did not have any knowledge of such prohibition. Or, he heard a prohibition from the holy Prophet^{saww} and then the holy Prophet^{saww} made it lawful but the man did not know of such commandment. In this way, he preserved the abrogated (Hadith) but not the abrogating (Hadith). However, if he knew the abrogating, he would have stopped narrating it and similarly, if Muslims realised that they have heard an abrogated Hadith from him they would also have rejected it.

"The last and forth kind (Hadith narrator) is the one who has not ascribed a lie to the holy Prophet^{saww} who hates lies, has fear of Allah^{swt} and has tremendous respect of the holy Prophet^{saww}. He has not forgotten anything and he has preserved it, the way it should have been preserved. He speaks it just the way he has heard it, without any additions or omissions. He knows which is abrogating and which has been abrogated. He, thus, has practiced according to the abrogating and has rejected the abrogated.

Indeed, the commands of the holy Prophet^{saww} are like the verses of holy Quran, these have abrogating Hadith as well as those which have been abrogated, including, general nature and of specific types, explicit rules and implicit commands. Some time, the statements of the holy Prophet^{saww} may have two aspects: Like a broader implication and an order pointing out to a specific situation, just like the holy Quran as the Most Majestic, the Most Glorious, has said, " Take only what the Messenger gives to you and abstain from what he withhold from you (59:7)" It may become confusing for those who did not know and comprehend what was the exactly purpose of this message by Allah^{swt} and His messenger^{saww}. All the companions of the holy Prophet^{saww} were not as such that would clearly understand the answer to their questions. There were some among those who would ask a question but would not try to understand the holy Prophet^{saww}'s reply and would rather wait until a Bedouin or a stranger would come and ask the same question again from holy Prophet^{saww}, and he would be able to listen the explicit reply.

"I (Amir-ul-Momaneen^{as} would go in the presence of the holy Prophet^{saww} once every day and once every night, whenever I wanted to, the holy Prophet^{saww} would talk to me in privacy and I would remember all by heart. The Sahabah, (companions of the holy Prophet^{saww}) knew that the holy Prophet^{saww} would not deal with others the way he would communicate with me. Also the Prophet^{saw} would come to my house most of the time but when I would go to any one of his houses, holy Prophet^{saww} would admit me and ask his wife to leave us alone and then we would talk to each other in private.

When holy Prophet^{saww} came to my house, neither Fatimah^{sa} nor any of my children were asked to leave, (and rather join us) and then whatever was asked, holy Prophet^{saww} would answer me and when I would have exhausted all of my questions, holy Prophet^{saww} would begin from his side. Thus, there is not a single Verse of the holy Quran, which had not been read out and dictated to me, upon its revelation, by the holy Prophet^{saww}, and I wrote it down by myself. He taught me the interpretations of that verse

and its explanations, its abrogating or that which was abrogated, its explicit and implicit meanings. He would pray to Allah^{swt} to give me understanding and ability to memorise it. Thus, from the time he prayed to Allah^{swt} for me, I did not forget any of the verses of the book of Allah^{swt} or any of the knowledge that was dictated to me and I wrote it down. He did not leave any thing of the lawful and unlawful, commands or prohibitions that were there or that would become applicable in the future or any book that were revealed to anyone before him about the matters of obedience or disobedience that he had not completely taught me and I had not memorised them all. I have not forgotten even a single letter from them. The holy Prophet^{saww} once placed his hand on my chest and prayed to Allah^{swt} to fill my heart, with knowledge, proper understanding, wisdom and light. I then said, "O messenger of Allah^{saww}, may Allah^{swt} take the soul of my mother and father in service for your cause, from the time you prayed for me I have not forgotten a single matter or missed to write down anything. Do you fear that I might forget them in the future? "I do not fear for you to make any mistake, i.e., forgetfulness or ignorance." The holy Prophet^{saww} replied."

Tradition 21.2 H 189, Ch. 21, h 2

A number of our people has narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from 'Uthman ibn 'Isa from abu Ayyub al-Khazzaz from Muhammad ibn Muslim who has said the following:

"I asked from Imam Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s} ' please explain, some people would narrate Ahadith from the companions of the Prophet^{saww}, which come from uninterrupted sources and are reliably linked to the Prophet^{saww}, which cannot be denied, however, the same is contradictory to what is narrated from yourself? The Imam^{as} replied, " Some Ahadith are abrogated, just as it happens with the verses of Quran."

Tradition 21.3 H 190, Ch. 21, h 3

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from ibn abu Najran from 'Asim ibn Humayd from Mansur ibn Hazim who has said the following:

"I said to (Imam) Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s}, 'It, sometimes, confuses me when I ask you a question and you give me an answer and then another person comes and receives a different answer for the same question (from yourself). The Imam^{a.s} replied, "We answer people

in a detailed manner and in a summarised form." I then asked, "Did the Sahabah, (companions of the holy Prophet^{saww}) speak the truth or lies when narrating his^{saww} Hadith?" The Imam^{a.s} replied, "They spoke the truth." I then asked, "Why do they differ in Ahadith?" Imam^{a.s} replied, Have you not considered the fact that a man would visit the holy Prophet^{saww} and ask a question and would get an answer (according to a Hadith) but latter on someone else would get a different answer due to an abrogated command? Thus, Ahadith abrogated other Ahadith."

Tradition 21.4 H 191, Ch. 21, h 4

Ali ibn Muhammad has narrated from Sahl ibn Ziyad from ibn Mahbub from Ali ibn Ri'ab from abu 'Ubayda who has said the following:

"Abu Ja'far^{a.s} has said, 'O Ziyad, What would you say if we give a Fatwa to one of our followers to observe it under 'Taqqiya'¹ (under treacherous conditions)?" I replied, "You know it better, may Allah^{swt} take my soul in your service.'" The Imam^{a.s} said, "If he would follow such Fatwa it would be better for him and of an extraordinary reward." In another Hadith it is narrated, "If he follows it, he will be rewarded but if he disregards it he will be punished."

Tradition 21.5 H 192, Ch. 21, h 5

Ahmad ibn Idris has narrated from Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar from al-Hassan ibn Ali from Al-Thaqafi'laba ibn Maymun from Zurara ibn 'A'yan who has said the following:

"I asked a question from Imam Abu Ja'far^{a.s} and he answered me. Then another man came and asked the same question but the Imam^{a.s} gave a different answer. Then a third man came and asked the same question but the Imam^{a.s} gave him an answer that was different from both of the previous answers. When the other the two went away, I asked the Imam^{a.s}, "Two of your followers from Iraq asked you the same question, how is it that each of them got a different answer? The Imam^{a.s} replied, "O Zurarah, it is better for you as well as for us. If all of you agree on all matters then our enemies would expel you from their gatherings and you will come to us with the request of wagging a war (against those enemies) and as a result, many among us will have reduced life span in this world.

¹ To conceal truth under life threatening conditions.

Latter on, Zurarah has said, "I then asked Imam-e-Jafar-e-Sadiq^{a.s}, 'If you ask your followers to fight, they would walk on spears and fire and will not turn their backs on your commands. Then why do they deserve to observe 'Taqiya', Imam^{a.s} replied with the same answer as his father had given earlier on."

Tradition 21.6 H 193, Ch. 21, h 6

Muhammad ibn Yahya has narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Isa from Muhammad ibn Sinan from Nasr al-Kath'ami who has said the following:

"Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s} has said, 'those, who know that we say nothing but the truth should remain content with whatever they have learnt from us. However, if they hear from us which differs from 'our established Ahadith' then they should note that it is our way of defending them (from enemies).'"

Tradition 21.7 H 194, Ch. 21, h 7

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from 'Uthman ibn 'Isa and al-Hassan ibn Mahbub both from Sama' from 'Abdallah who has said the following:

"I asked (Imam) Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s} about a man who has heard two conflicting Ahadith related to a single issue, from two of his brothers-in-faith (same beliefs). One of them would make an act obligatory while the other one would classify it as unlawful. What shall he do under those conditions?" The Imam^{a.s} replied, "He must wait until he finds someone who would inform him about the correct hadith and until that time, he is under no obligation to act on that issue."

In another Hadith, from Imam-e-Zaman^{a.s}, says, "He may act on anyone of them with the intention that he has acted upon the instructions of a 'Divine' Imam but without an intention of preferring one hadith over the other one (using his own perception)."

Tradition 21.8 H 195, Ch. 21, h 8

Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated from his father from 'Uthman ibn 'Isa from al-Husayn ibn al-Mukhtar who has narrated from Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s} who has said the following:

"If you would come to me for an answer to a question and I give you an answer of a general nature and then you come again next year and I give you a different answer which one would you follow?" I replied, "I would follow the latter one." The Imam^{a.s} said, "May Allah grant you with His blessings."

Tradition 21.9 H 196, Ch. 21, h 9

It is narrated from him from his father from Isma'il ibn Marrar from Yunus from Dawud ibn Farqad from Mu'alla ibn Khunays who has said the following:

"I asked Imam Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s}, 'if we receive a Hadith from one of our earlier Imams^{a.s} (e.g., Imam Zain-ul-Abadeen^{a.s}) and a Hadith referring to one of our latter Imams^{a.s} (e.g., Imam Mohammed Baqir^{a.s}), which one should we follow?' The Imam^{a.s} replied, "Follow the later hadith until you receive clear instructions (Hadith) from the living Imam^{a.s}. When it comes from a living Imam^{a.s} then act upon his words." The Imam^{as} explained, "We^{a.s}, by Allah^{swt}, want to protect you and that's why instruct you to follow the later one, but if there is no risk of any harm then follow anyone of them, as you like." In another Hadith it is said, "Follow whichever is the nearest to your time."

Tradition 21.10 H 196, Ch. 21, h 10

Muhammad ibn Yahya has narrated from Muhammad ibn al-Husayn from Muhammad ibn 'Isa from Safwan ibn Yahya from Dawud ibn al-Husayn from 'Umar ibn Hanzala who has said the following:

"I asked Imam Abu 'Abdallah^{a.s} about those two who had a dispute between them on an issue related to debt or inheritance and they went to a devious king or an unjust judge (appointed by the king) in order to obtain a settlement. Is it permissible to seek such a verdict?" The Imam^{a.s} replied, "Whoever would go to them for a judgement, in a right or wrongful matter, is like seeking a judgment from the devil. Anything received through such a judgment would like consuming filth even if it would to establish one's right. And Allah^{swt} has commanded to reject the devil, "yet choose to take their affairs to Satan for judgment even though they are commanded to deny him. Satan wants to lead them far away from the right path. (4:60)"

I said, "What should then they do?" The Imam^{a.s} replied, "They must take their matter to the one who narrates our Ahadith and knows about our 'halal and haram' (lawful and unlawful) and knows about our just rules. These two should agree to a judgement based on this criteria, if they do not, then they have ignored the commands of Allah^{swt} and it is like rejecting us and be aware, who rejects us-he rejects Allah^{swt} and it is the act of 'Shrik' (preferring someone decision over rules set by Allah^{swt})."

I said, "What if each one of such disputing parties would chose a man, from among our people and agree to accept their judgment but these two men would come up with different judgments and they would have differences in the interpretation of your Hadith?"

The Imam^{as} replied, "The decision of that judge should be accepted who is considered to be more just, have better understanding of the law and is more trustworthy in the narration of our Ahdith and is more pious as compared to the other. The judgment of the other one should be disregarded."

I said, "What if both (of such judges) would be equally just and accepted among our people and none of them could be given any preference, in regard to the above criteria, over the other?"

The Imam^{as} replied, "One must consider and study the hadith that each one of them would narrate from us as to which has received the acceptance of all of your people. Such Hadith must be followed and the one, which rarely accepted and is not popular in your people, must be disregarded because the one popularly accepted is free of doubts. There are three kinds of religious issues: (a) A case that is well-known and explained in the Book and Ahadith and therefore should be followed; (b) A case that is well-known to be false (from the Book and Ahadith) and should be abandoned; (c) the third case is that one which difficult and confusing, and the knowledge of which must be left to Allah^{swt} and His Prophet^{saww} for an answer. The holy Prophet^{saww} has said, 'There are clearly lawful, clearly unlawful and the perplexing cases. One who stays away from the perplexing ones he has protected himself against the unlawful ones. Those who follow the confusing matters they end up indulging themselves in the unlawful matters and are destroyed due to their stubbornness.'

I said, "What if both Hadith from you would be popular and narrated by the trustworthy people from your followers?"

The Imam^{as} replied, "One must study to find out which Hadith agrees with the laws of the Quran and the Sunnah and it does not agree with the laws of the those who oppose us. Such Hadith must be accepted and the one that disagree with the laws of the Quran and the Sunnah and coincides the masses must be disregarded."

I said, "May Allah^{swt} take my soul in the service of your cause, What if both scholars of the law would have deduced and learned their judgment from the book and the Sunnah and found that one of the Hadith agrees with the masses and the other disagrees with the masses which one must be followed?"

The Imam^{as} replied, "The one which disagrees with the masses must be followed because there is guidance in it."

I said, "May Allah take my soul in the service of your cause, what if both Hadith would agree with the masses?"

The Imam^{as} replied, "One must try to find out that Hadith which is favoured by the rulers and judges, this hadith must be disregarded and the other one must be followed."

I said, "What if both Hadith would agree with their rulers?"

The Imam replied, "If such would be the case you must wait, as restraint from the unclear acts is much better than forcing yourself into total destruction."

All praise belongs to Allah^{swt} May Allah^{swt} send peace and blessings upon Hazrat Muhammad^{saww} and his holy progeny.