

معنى الحديث الضعيف

**Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth:
The Meaning of Weak
Ḥadīth Reports**

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-Ulama seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, soon to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

The use of weak ḥadīth reports is one that has generated endless controversy in the history of Islam. In this monograph, Dr. Akram provides an insightful schematic for conceptually understanding, and then classifying, the broad genre of ḍaʿīf ḥadīth reports. This schematic is grounded in the trailblazing work of the two canonical Ṣaḥīḥ compilations of Imams Bukhārī and Muslim.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

معنى الحديث الضعيف

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أو كسفورد

قالوا: قد بينت لنا معنى الحديث الصحيح والحديث الحسن في مقالين لك سابقين فشفيتنا وأوفيت الموضوع حقّه، واذكر لنا الآن ما معنى الحديث الضعيف؟ قلت: قد وقع الناس في أخطاء جسيمة من جراء عدم استيعابهم لمعنى الحديث الضعيف، فمنهم من يرده مطلقاً، ومنهم من يعامله معاملة الحديث الصحيح والحسن فيقبله مطلقاً، ومنهم من يرده في المسائل والأحكام، ويقبله في الفضائل والترغيب والترهيب.

قالوا: فأبي هذه الطوائف تراها مدانية للصواب؟ قلت: كل طائفة من هذه الطوائف أصابت وأخطأت، وبلغ الشر منتهاه إذ أخذت تتراعى بعضها بعضاً بأنواع من التهم في لين ورفق أحياناً، وفي شدة وغلظة أخرى. قالوا: ما نراك إلا سائراً سيرتها في رمي غيرك بالخطأ ووصف نفسك بالانفراد بالصواب. قلت: أو لو جئتكم بشيء مبين؟ قالوا: فأنت به إن كنت من الصادقين. قلت: اسمعوا وعوا:

إن أئمة الحديث علماء حذاق ذوو إتقان وإحكام لصنعتهم، تميزوا بذلك عن غيرهم تميزا ملموسا، اتجهوا إلى الأحاديث، فلم ينسبوا إلى نبينهم صلى الله عليه وسلم منها إلا ما توثقوا من صحته متوفرة فيه الشروط التي قدمناها في بيان معنى الحديث الصحيح، وأما ما لم يتوثقوا من صحته فنظروا فيه نظرة دقيقة فما تحقق لديهم كذبه عدوه موضوعا باطلا، وبقي بين الصحيح والموضوع أحاديث كثيرة سموها ضعافا.

قالوا: فما موقفهم من الضعاف؟ قلت: إن أهل الحديث أفضل البشر عدلا وإنصافا، فلم يحكموا على الضعاف بحكم واحد فيه تعسف وتعنّت، بل أعادوا النظر فيها، ودرسوها دراسة متأنية، وصنفوها تصنيفا علميا دقيقا، قالوا: أوضح لنا تصنيفهم البديع الذي لا جور فيه ولا زيغ، ولا إفراط فيه ولا تفريط. قلت: إنهم بذلوا قصارى جهودهم في احتواء مضمون الحديث الضعيف، فقسموه طوائف، ترجع إلى اثنتين: مقبولة ومردودة.

قالوا: ما المقبول منه؟ قلت: هو أربعة أنواع:

النوع الأول: الضعيف الذي صححه الشيخان وأخرجاه في الأصول، وهو الحديث الذي توفرت فيه شروط الصحة، وله طرق كثيرة، وقد يكون في بعضها شيخ فيه شيء من الضعف ينحط به عن درجة الطبقة الأولى من الرواة، وإذا قد ثبتت صحة الحديث من طرق أخرى أخرجاه من طريق هذا الشيخ الضعيف، وهذه عادة البخاري، فإنه يستنبط من الحديث الواحد مسائل كثيرة، ويسوءه أن يخرج به بالإسناد نفسه، فقد يحتاج إلى

طريق ذلك المنعوت بشيء من الضعف، ومن أمثلة أولئك الضعفاء إسماعيل بن أبي أويس، والذي لو تفرد بحديث عد ذلك الحديث ضعيفا، ولكن إذا وافق إسماعيل الثقات من أمثال عبد الله بن يوسف التنيسي وعبد الله بن مسلمة القعنبي، فإن البخاري يخرج ذلك الحديث من طريق إسماعيل أيضاً إذا احتاج إليه.

وقد يكون الحديث من صحيحة لها أسانيد صحيحة ثابتة، ورواها شيخ ضعيف عالما، فمثلا تلقى مسلم صحيفة حفص بن ميسرة بأسانيد من الطبقة الأولى، ولكنها نازلة، ورواها سويد بن سعيد الهروي بعلو، فأخرجها مسلم من طريقه مع ما فيه من الضعف المجمع عليه، والذي سَوَّغَ لمسلم إتيان ذلك أن الحديث صحيح ثابت من طرق الثقات المتقين.

وقد يكون ذلك الضعيف ممن يحتمل حديثه في أمور غير دقيقة كفليح بن سليمان.

واعلموا أن الشيخين إنما أخرجوا أحاديث الضعفاء في الأصول بشرطين: الأول أن لا يكون الضعف كبيرا، والثاني أن يكون ذلك الراوي الضعيف من شيوخهم، فإنهم أخبر بشيوخهم.

والنوع الثاني: أن يكون للحديث إسناد أو أكثر تتوفر فيها شروط الصحة، فيعتمدان عليها في الأصول، ثم يأتیان إلى أسانيد لتلك الأحاديث، فيها بعض

من خف في الضبط، فيخرجها متابعة، وهذا قليل في صحيح البخاري، وكثير في صحيح مسلم.

والنوع الثالث: أن لا يكون للحديث إسناد صحيح، ولكن له إسناد فيه بعض من خف فيه الضبط، فهذا الذي يسمى الحسن، وإذا تعددت طرقه ترقى إلى درجة الصحيح إلى غيره، وإذا كان الضبط أقل من الحسن وتعددت الطرق ترقى إلى درجة الحسن لغيره، ولا يوجد شيء من الصحيح لغيره، والحسن لذاته، والحسن لغيره في الصحيحين، وأخطأ من قال ذلك، ولعل الذي أوقعه في هذا الوهم هو خلطه للنوعين الأول والثاني بالنوع الثالث.

والنوع الرابع: مراسيل كبار التابعين من أمثال سعيد بن المسيب، فقد عدها جماعة من الفقهاء كمالك وأبي حنيفة وغيرهما صحيحة، وهو المذهب الوجيه.

قالوا: وما المرود من الضعيف؟ قلت: هو أربعة أنواع كذلك:

النوع الأول: الذي في إسناده انقطاع، أو مما رواه الثقات المدلسون معنعنا، فهذا ضعفه مقارب، ويستعمله كثير من الناس في الفضائل والترغيب والترهيب.

والنوع الثاني: الحديث الذي رواه بعض الناس مرفوعاً، ولكن ترجح لدى أصحاب الحديث كونه موقوفاً، ويحتمل في الفضائل.

والنوع الثالث: الحديث الشاذ، وهو الذي يرويه الثقة مخالفا للثقات، والحديث الشاذ من أخطاء الثقات وأوهامهم، فهذا الحديث لا يجوز العمل به في شيء من الدين، ولا يعتبر به في المتابعات والشواهد، وقد أخطأ بعض الناس إذ استعملوه في المتابعات والشواهد، وهو جهل بصنيع المحدثين، لأن الأخطاء والأوهام وإن كانت من الثقات لا تعاضد شيئاً.

والنوع الرابع: المنكر: وهو الحديث الذي رواه الضعيف مخالفاً للجماعة أو ثق منه، وكذلك الحديث الذي في متنه مخالفة لمعاني القرآن أو السنن الثابتة أو المعلوم بالبداهة أو العقل، وكذلك الحديث الذي يرويه المغفلون. فهذا كله منكر، وهذا النوع شر أنواع الضعاف، وهو قريب من الموضوع لدى أئمة هذا الشأن.

قالوا: قد وعينا ما قلت مقتنعين به، قلت: فاحمدوا الله الذي لا إله هو، وهو الملمهم للصواب.

Ḍa'īf Ḥadīth: The Meaning of Weak Ḥadīth Reports

By Dr. Mohammed Akram Nadwi
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They asked: You have explained the meaning of ṣaḥīḥ (sound) and ḥasan (fair) ḥadīth in two previous articles that provided ample justice to the topic.¹ Can you please explain to us now the meaning of a ḍa'īf (weak) ḥadīth?

I replied: People in fact have fallen into great errors as a result of not fully comprehending the notion of ḍa'īf ḥadīth. There are some who categorically reject all such reports and others who embrace them fully treating them like ṣaḥīḥ and ḥasan reports. Yet others adopted a middle course, rejecting them in matters of legal rulings while accepting them in non-legal matters that had to do with the virtues of deeds or general exhortations.

They asked: Which of these groups do you feel is inclined to the truth on the matter? I replied: Each of these approaches is partially correct and partially mistaken. The matter, however, has reached such bad proportions that these groups have gone on to pit themselves against one other and hurl all sorts of accusations, ranging from more benign varieties to harsher ones.

They replied: But we always find you following this course of accusing others of mistakes while considering yourself alone as correct. I asked: Even if I bring you clear evidences? They replied: Bring them if you are indeed truthful. I replied: Listen to me carefully then:

The ḥadīth experts were clever scholars, highly proficient, and accurate in their craft. In that, they were qualitatively distinct from others. They chose to devote themselves to ḥadīth and never attributed to their Prophet, peace

¹ Nadwī, Dr. Mohammad Akram. "The True Meaning of Ṣaḥīḥ: An Examination of the Sound Ḥadīth." Imlā al-Khāṭir Series. UK: Al-Salam Institute, 2017.; Nadwī, Dr. Mohammad Akram. "The True Meaning of Ḥasan: An Examination of the Fair Ḥadīth Report." Imlā al-Khāṭir Series. UK: Al-Salam Institute, 2017.

be upon him, any report unless they verified its soundness and found in it the preconditions for authenticity (which were previously presented in our article on *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*).² In the event that they could not verify the soundness of a report, they then treated it a delicate and nuanced manner. If the report was ascertained to be a lie, for instance, they deemed it fabricated and false (*mawḍūʿ*). However, between sound and fabricated reports existed a vast arena which they termed *daʿīf*.

They asked: What was their stance concerning these *daʿīf* reports? I replied: The *ḥadīth* experts were the fairest and most just of people. Rather than treating these reports in a singular manner, they in fact turned to each individual report to study it carefully in order to classify it in a precise and academic manner.

They asked: Explain to us their unique classification that was fair and balanced, and free of extremes. I replied: They exerted their best efforts to studying the contents of the *daʿīf* reports and dividing them into various groups which ultimately fall under two broad categories: accepted (*maqḅūl*) or rejected (*mardūd*).

Acceptable *Daʿīf* Reports

They asked: What were the accepted types of *daʿīf* reports? I replied: There are four categories:

The first are those *daʿīf* reports which were part of the *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* reports authenticated by Bukhārī and Muslim³ and incorporated into their primary corpus.⁴ These reports fulfilled the preconditions for being *ṣaḥīḥ* and also possessed many alternate routes of transmission, some of whose chains contained individuals who possessed an element of weakness which

² Ibid.

³ Of course, these are not really *daʿīf* reports but *ṣaḥīḥ*, and they are classified here as the first category of *daʿīf* only as a matter of principle since their *isnāds* included weaker transmitters. See subsequent text for more elaboration.

⁴ It is crucial to understand the content structure of *ḥadīth* works like *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, which were composed of primary corpus material, termed *al-uṣūl*, along with secondary material intended to augment and support the primary corpus. In general, the primary corpus of *Bukhārī* and *Muslim* consists of highest-grade *ṣaḥīḥ* reports only, while the supporting material does not necessarily meet that criteria.

lowered their rank below that of primary-tier narrators. In other words, if a ḥadīth report was determined to be sound from other isnāds, then Bukhārī or Muslim would sometimes relate the same report through an isnād which contained a weak transmitter. This is the practice of Bukhārī in particular, who, being extremely keen to derive many rulings from a single ḥadīth, on occasion feels the need to relate the weaker isnād for additional benefits.⁵

Examples of such narrators are Ismā'īl b. Abī Uways (d. 226)⁶, who, were he to be alone in reporting a ḥadīth would render the report weak. However, when Ismā'īl relates a ḥadīth which is also reported by reliable narrators such as 'Abdullah b. Yūsuf al-Tinnīsī (d. 218)⁷ or 'Abdullah b. Maslamah al-Qa'nabī (d. 221)⁸, then Bukhārī occasionally utilizes Ismā'īl's reports when the need arises.

Sometimes a ḥadīth is found in a well-known personal collection (ṣaḥīfah) of an author with sound verified isnāds, while a weaker transmitter may happen to relate the same reports with a higher isnād. As an example, Muslim received the entire personal collection of Ḥafṣ b. Maysarah (d. 181)⁹ with isnāds from primary-tier reporters. However, this transmission happened to represent a low isnād (i.e. larger number of intermediary links). On the other hand, Suwayd b. Sa'īd al-Harawī (d. 240),¹⁰ who was unanimously considered a weak reporter, related these with a higher isnād. Thus, Muslim sometimes relates these ḥadīth reports through Suwayd's isnād despite his status as a weak narrator. What justified this for Muslim was the fact that the ḥadīth was already deemed to be sound and pre-existed with isnād from reliable and proficient reporters.

⁵ In effect, this category refers to the use of isnāds of weaker transmitters for preexisting sound ḥadīth.

⁶ Student and nephew of Imām Mālik who was a well-known ḥadīth scholar of Madīnah known to have issues with his accuracy.

⁷ Great Syrian ḥadīth expert who settled in Egypt and was among the top students of Imām Mālik.

⁸ One of the most renowned students of Mālik, known for his piety and worship. Both Tinnīsī and Qa'abī were top narrators of Mālik's Muwaṭṭa', and Bukhārī always prefers their reports over others.

⁹ Reliable ḥadīth expert from Yemen who settled in Achelon in the Levant.

¹⁰ Ḥadīth expert of Herat who settled in northern Iraq and related from Mālik and others.

Sometimes the weak reporter is one whose reports could be used in less-complex matters, like the case of Fulayḥ b. Sulaymān (d. 168),¹¹ from whom Bukhārī relates occasionally in non-sophisticated issues that require less precision.¹²

In the end, you should know that Bukhārī and Muslim relate ḥadīth from weak reporters in their primary corpus only with two preconditions: that the weakness in the reporter be of a mild degree, and that the weak reporter be from their own teachers, about whom they were well-aware (and could scrutinize properly).

The second category of accepted da'īf reports are those which are related as supporting reports, i.e. secondary material. These represent reports that have one or more isnāds that fulfill the conditions of ṣaḥīḥ—which are used by Bukhārī and Muslim in their primary corpus—but then these ḥadīth are related through additional isnāds some of which contain reporters with a lower degree of accuracy (ḍabt).¹³ This is rare in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī but far more common in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.

The third type is the ḥadīth report that possesses an isnād which is not ṣaḥīḥ but contains reporters with lower degrees of accuracy. This is the ḥadīth known as ḥasan (fair). When these ḥasan reports possess multiple similar isnads, they are then collectively raised to the level of ṣaḥīḥ (known in ḥadīth terminology as 'ṣaḥīḥ li ghayriḥī'). Similarly, if the precision is even lower on the part of some reporters and there exist multiple corroborating isnads, then they can be collectively raised to the level of ḥasan ('ḥasan li ghayriḥī'). The fact is that the Ṣaḥīḥ collections of Bukhārī and Muslim do not contain any such reports, and anyone who claims otherwise is simply mistaken.

¹¹ Early generation ḥadīth reporter of Madīnah who was deemed weak by most experts but considered acceptable by a few.

¹² Ibn Ḥajar responds to the question why Bukhārī relies on Fulayḥ the weak reporter: 'Bukhārī does not relate from him in the way that he relates from the likes of Mālik or Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah, but rather, he utilizes his reports mostly in the realm of virtues and heart-softeners.' See pg. 435, volume 1, *Fath al-Bārī*.

¹³ In essence, these represent weaker versions—that is, weaker ḥadīth transmissions—of sound ḥadīth reports. The difference from the first category is that these reports were not considered ṣaḥīḥ by Bukhārī or Muslim and only used in a supporting capacity and not in the primary corpus. This understanding was directly confirmed from the author.

Perhaps this resulted from confusing the first two types of weak reports with the third.

The fourth type of potentially acceptable weak reports are the disconnected (mursal)¹⁴ reports of senior Followers¹⁵ like Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/715).¹⁶ A number of jurists including Imām Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfah deemed these reports ṣaḥīḥ. This is a respectable view.¹⁷

Unacceptable Daʿīf Reports

They asked: What then are the rejected daʿīf reports? I replied: They are also four types.

The first type of rejected weak reports are those with disconnected isnāds or those reported in an ambiguous manner (tadlīs)¹⁸ by otherwise reliable reporters known for this practice. These reports are not considered extremely weak. Many people, therefore, have utilized them in non-legal matters relating to virtues and exhortations.

The second type are those reports mistakenly narrated by some as originating from the Prophet (known as ‘marfūʿ’) where in fact, ḥadīth experts have determined that they are reports of Companions (known as ‘mawqūf’). These are potentially used in virtue.

The third type of rejected weak reports are the anomalous (shādh) ḥadīth, which consist of ḥadīth of reliable reporters that conflict with reports of more reliable reporters or a larger group of such reporters.¹⁹ These simply

¹⁴ Mursal refers to a ḥadīth that is reported by a Follower directly from the Prophet without mention of the intermediaries.

¹⁵ The Tābiʿūn, ‘Followers’ or ‘Successors,’ are the generation of Muslims that learned from the Companions.

¹⁶ Son-in-law of Abū Hurayrah who was deemed by Imām Aḥmad and others as the single greatest figure among the generation of the Followers.

¹⁷ For more details, refer to the following article: Nadwī, Dr. Mohammad Akram. “Principles of Ḥadīth in the Ḥanafī School.” Imlā al-Khāṭir Series. UK: Al-Salam Institute, 2018.

¹⁸ Tadlīs is a term used for a range of practices in ḥadīth transmission in which one either conceals his teachers or relates from them with ambiguous references. This can occur deliberately or mistakenly.

¹⁹ A shādh narration is basically one that appears otherwise sound but conflicts with stronger narrations.

represent mistakes on the part of these narrators and are hence not allowed to be used in any way, not even as supporting evidences. Unfortunately, many have erroneously used them in such a fashion, conveying an ignorance of the science of ḥadīth. Mistakes and errors can never be used to support anything at all.

The fourth category of rejected weak ḥadīth are the munkar reports,²⁰ which are ḥadīth of weak reporters than conflict with those of more reliable ones, or whose contents conflict with the meanings of the Qur'ān, the established sunnah, self-evident realities or clear reason. This category also includes ḥadīth reports of those who made frequent mistakes. This is the worst classification of da'īf ḥadīth reports and is extremely close to fabricated reports.

They replied: We have grasped what you have said and are fully convinced. I replied: Praise God besides whom there is no other being worthy of worship, for He is the One who inspires the truth.

²⁰ A munkar narration, like the anomalous one, conflicts with stronger evidences, but contains deeper, less benign, contradictions with often negative connotations or meanings.