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PAKISTANI VIEWS OF ḤADĪTH

BY

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It struck I. Goldziher that, about the turn of the century Indian Modernists, in contradistinction to their Egyptian colleagues, were taking a fully independent position towards ḥadīth¹. This and other less conspicuous differences between Modern Egypt and India he accounts for by the more direct contact the Indians had with Europeans². At the same time we do right to bear in mind that for the liberal Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent Shâh Walî Allâh is a most authoratative thinker. And this Delhi Reformer of the eighteenth century is well-known for the guarded attitude he assumed towards ḥadīth.

In the meantime the discussion on the value of ḥadīth further developed, and an important contribution to it might be credited to the Ṭulû‘-i-Islâm. This institute which has its centre in Karachi, strives for a better understanding of the Koran in the light of modern thought. Thus one of its publications *Salīm ke Nâm* (1953) contains essays in an epistolary form³, dealing with questions like ‘Why have our prayers and fasting no result’ up to the relation Islam- Communism, and such-like. Every time the problems are confronted with and explained by the wording of the Koran. When one bases oneself on the authority of the Koran alone, as a matter of course the stand one takes with respect to the ḥadīth ought to be elucidated neatly. This has been done recently by the two volume work *Maqâm-i-Ḥadīth* (1953), a collection of papers by members of the Ṭulû‘-i-Islâm. With the help of these volumes and *Salīm ke Nâm* we shall give a survey of the arguments against the

¹ *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (1920), 316.

² *id.*, 321.

³ Directed to Salīm, a fictitious young man, prototype of the Western-educated Muslim troubled by all kind of doubts and difficulties concerning Islamic belief and institutions.

application of traditions for faith and practice. After this we let follow some specimens of the debates between supporters and opponents. For this, use has been made of *Taḥhîmât* I (1940), a collection of articles which Abû'l-'Alâ Mawdûdî published in the Review *Tardjûmân al-Qur'ân*.

We distinguish objections of the Old School, considerations in line with Western Scholarship, and new arguments:

a) Objections which were also raised by Muslim anti-traditionists of former times, if often in a modern version.

In accordance with the anti-traditionists who maintained that the Koran explains everything¹, one declares: The ḥadîth is superfluous. The Koran is fully adequate; it is 'a warning, a medicine for the hearts, a guidance and a mercy' (S. 10 : 58) (*Maq.* 2, 351). Nowhere does the Koran command to put faith in the ḥadîth²; on the contrary, a caution against it is met in S. 31 : 5: 'There are people who buy idle 'ḥadîth' to mislead people without knowledge (i.e. certainty) from the way of God and to make a jest of it; these shall have a shameful punishment.' It is not right to explain here ḥadîth by 'song'³, for a song is meant for enlivenment, and not for misleading or making a jest of the way of God (*Maq.* 1, 157f.).

Frequently traditions ascribed to Mohammed with an apparently ḥadîth-combating tendency are cited as arguments by the *Maqâm*-contributors. The most quoted tradition is: 'Do not note down anything from me except the Koran'. From it Ghulâm Aḥmad Parwez, the present director of the Ṭulû'-i-Islâm, concludes that, because the Prophet did not let his sayings be written down, in his opinion they did not form part of the *dîn* (faith), and Parwez subjoins the comment: What an advantage could be taken of a non-fixed ḥadîth-text! Everyone could make a regulation to his liking and give it authority by wording it as a tradition (*Salîm*, 79).

¹ Cf. J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (1950), 40.

² In support of this contention S. 59: 7b is quoted by the orthodox. But, as is properly observed, this 'What the apostle has given you, take; what he has refused you, refuse' does not relate to the *sunna* of the Prophet: it bears merely upon a distribution of spoils. Other beloved *loci probantes* are the Koranic passages, in which *ayât* or *kitâb* are mentioned together with *ḥikma* (S. 33 : 34; 2 : 146; 4 : 113). These references are set aside on the ground that *ḥikma* cannot have the sense of 'ḥadîth' (*Maq.* 1, 151 f.).

³ The usual interpretation.

In the *Maqām* (I,116) he goes on to show that this interdiction can be evaded by making it mean a prohibition of mixing the Koran with something else; so, as soon as there was no risk of confusion, the writing of tradition was allowed¹. In the interdiction, however, there is no conditional clause to justify this supposition.

In olden times it was also sufficiently known that provisions of the law, occurring in the ḥadīth, were often contradictory to the contents of the Koran. As an instance of it Parwez gives the punishment of fornication. The Koran ordains that it should be a hundred lashes, the ḥadīth states that the married adulterer must be stoned to death (*Salīm*, 80)².

Anti-traditionists in former days declared already that 'no individual authority for the traditions is quite reliable'³. In *Maq.* I,52 this is made clear as follows: 'An experience from daily life is that if you tell a story to one of ten persons assembled in your room, how great the differences are becoming when after it the same story is passed on to each of the others and at last is repeated to you by number ten'.

In a like manner as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi⁴ one attacks the tradition about the three lies of Abraham, and it is asked disapprovingly: Can such a denunciation of a prophet form part of our *dīn*? (*Maq.* I,63).

b) Considerations in line with Western Scholarship

Parwez attributes the origin of traditions to the need in the Umayyad period of fixing details of the *Shari'a*, lest anarchy would arise in the extending state. The details, like the *uṣūl* (fundamentals), had to become immutable. And this could be done properly by contending that the Prophet had fixed them by means of revelation (*Salīm*, 84)⁵.

¹ al-Nawawī (at Mu. 53, 72) adds to it as a second explanation that here only the recording of ḥadīth and Koran in one volume is prohibited. A. Guillaume remarks that *written* ḥadīth were taboo for many 'old-fashioned and orthodox traditionists, who preserved in their memories an enormous number of traditions and enjoyed no small reputation on that account' (*The Traditions of Islam*, 1924, 18).

² Cf. J. Schacht, *Origins*, 73.

³ *id.*, 40.

⁴ Cf. I. Goldziher in *Islam* III (1912), 242.

⁵ Cf. I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (1925), 35: 'Es musste... das gesetzliche Leben im Islam, sowohl nach seiner religiösen als auch nach seiner bürgerlichen Seite, einer Regelung unterworfen werden'.

In *Maq.* 1, 137 it is set forth that there was a lot of subjectivity in judging the reliability of the traditioners. For a good deal it depended on the existence of congeniality between reviewer and reviewed. So Ḥārith Hamdānī was by everyone acknowledged reliable, but whereas he appeared to be a friend of ‘Alī, he was called an imposter by Sha‘bī¹.

Every European critic will support Muḥammad Aslam Djai-rādjipūrī when he enumerates fourteen instances where the text of the Koran is interpreted wrongly by means of tradition (*Maq.* 2, 11-36); e.g. it is said in the *Djāmi‘* of al-Tirmidhī that the nine clear sings of S. 17 : 103 refer to the Decalogue with the exception of the typically Jewish observation of the sabbath. This, however, is an obvious anachronism, as the passage relates to the encounters of Moses and the Pharaoh, and at that moment the Tora was not yet revealed (*Maq.* 2, 14f.).

An interesting parallel is drawn between the ḥadīth and the gospels². This corresponds more or less with the conviction of the New Testament scholars to-day that the gospels present to a greater extent the theological ideas of the early Christian Church than the *verba ipsissima* of Jesus. A point of comparison with Judaism is found in the Talmud³. The Jews put it on a level with the Tora, and define the Tora as the written (*maktûb*), the Talmud as the not written revelation⁴. In a similar way the Muslims attach as much value to the Koran as to the ḥadīth, and describe the former as the recited (*matlû*), the latter as the not recited revelation (*Maq.* 1, 98f.).

¹ Cf. Th. W. Juynboll in *E.I.* 2, 191: 'Now opinions on the reliability of the authorities might differ very considerably. The same person, whose communications might be implicitly trusted in the view of the one party, was sometimes considered by others exceedingly 'weak' in transmission, or even as a liar'.

² By which, however,—as is further noticed—the comparison is to the disadvantage of the ḥadīth in so far as that the writings of the Companions of Jesus date from the first century after his death, whereas the *Ṣaḥīḥain* were composed only in the third century A.M. And 'while we believe in the falsification of the gospels, the *umma* is told that it should put an equally firm belief in Koran and ḥadīth!'

³ Cf. A. Guillaume who speaks of "the intimate relationship between the Talmud and some parts of the ḥadīth literature" (*Traditions*, 54); see also I. Goldziher in *ZDMG*, LXI, 865.

⁴ Probably this refers to the distinction, made in the Talmud, between a written Tora and a oral Tora.

c) New arguments

There is first of all the evidence derived from the Holy Book. One demonstrates how in several places it underlines that Mohammed was merely an ordinary man (i.a. in S. 18 : 110). He was not able to determine what was useful or harmful for himself (S. 7 : 188), he was obliged to submit to the Koran (S. 27 : 93), to follow its rules (S. 6 : 50), and it can even be assumed that he might be disobedient and might undergo punishment like other people (S. 17 : 76f.) (*Maq.* 1, 12f.).

From S. 6 : 112ff. appears that in the *dīn* (religion) of every prophet forgers and deceivers circulate traditions (*Maq.* 1, 186), and from S. 9 : 102 it is justifiable to conclude that among the Medinese who gave 'Umar c.s. information about the Prophet, there must have been unreliable persons who spread false rumours (*Maq.* 1, 102).

Then there are objections of an ethical and doctrinal nature. Repugnant to the modern Muslim urge to action and effort is the view, also occurring in the ḥadīth, that Paradise is an easily attainable good. On the tradition, to be found in Muslim (2 : 32, 33; 6 : 294), which tells that with the water all sins drip down from them who perform the *wuḍū'*-ablution, the sarcastical comment is made: 'Walk into a mosque, perform the *wuḍū'*, and Paradise lies in front of you' (*Maq.* 2 : 97). But the most fundamental and frequent objection in this category is the reproach that ḥadīth does not offer *yaqīn* (certainty), required for the foundation of faith on it. It belongs to the domain of the history of the *dīn*. Consequently, it cannot constitute *dīn*, since history as such remains always an object of discussion. Criticism of traditions is a possibility never to get quit of (*Maq.* 1, 69). Ḥadīth does not procure *'ilm*¹, and is based on *ẓann* (conjecture). *Dīn* asks for *yaqīn* (*Maq.* 1, 163).

The second most serious and also much repeated objection is connected with the fierce resistance of the progressive Muslim to the static structure of his society. Ḥadīth — that is the charge — has fixed numerous details of social life which do not occur in the Koran; nevertheless it makes them obligatory for all times. This

¹ Here the axiom of faith emerges that in the end only revelation deserves to be considered as knowledge in the true sense of the word.

runs counter to the proper purport of the Koran which does not fix such particulars on purpose, that there should be left room for a flexible adaptation of its principles to the requirements of the age (*Salīm* 81f.; *Maq.* 2, 291ff.). Parwez illustrates this taking the *zakât* as an example, and he says: 'Hundred times the Koran repeats: Give the *zakât* (the principle). But can one passage in it explained in this way that the rate of it is $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ (a further particular)? (Certainly not!)... If it had been the will of God that its rate had to be $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ until the Day of Resurrection, He would have stated it in the Koran. From it we are allowed to conclude that it is not the divine will that the *zakât*-rate must remain the same at all times' (*Maq.* 2, 292f.). Whereas the *zakât* is reckoned to the five *ʿibādât*, the standpoint of the Muslim critics nowadays turns out to have become more radical than that of Aḥmad Khân (1817-98), the founder of Indian Modernism. For, this reformer is still willing to acknowledge the authority of ḥadīth-rules regarding religious life, and his maxim reads: 'We are obliged to follow the *sunna* of the Prophet in religious matters and we are permitted to do it in worldly affairs' ¹.

The most capable opponent of the Pakistani ḥadīth-critics is undoubtedly Abūʿl-ʿAlā Mawdūdī ²). He is the champion of a more typically Islamic polity than that existing, and on that account he collides from time to time with the Pakistani Government. His program runs as follows: 'Islam is in need of a renaissance. The instruments of the ancient Islamic thinkers and investigators are no more of any avail... If Islam wants to take again the lead in the world, then among the Muslims a thinker should appear who by virtue of his brain-power and research breaks the foundation on which the edifice of Western civilisation has been built... An edifice of a new Natural Science, founded on the Koran, ought to be established' ³. As for himself, the effectuation of this endea-

¹ *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, ed. Faḍl al-Dīn, 2, 532. This refers to the distinction of *ʿibādāt* and *muʿāmalāt*. In a discussion with a certain Djaʿfar Shāh who puts the case that the details of the *muʿāmalāt*-unlike those of the *ʿibādāt*-may be fixed according to one's personal opinion, Parwez protests against such a sharp differentiation which he considers a fatal result of the divorce of *dīn* from *dunyā* (world). He points out how in the Koran both of them are interlocking, e.g. in S. 23: 2 ff. (*Maq.* 1: 415 ff.).

² Born in the same year as Parwez: 1903.

³ *Tardjumān al-Qurʾān*, Sept. 1934.

your comes to be the mere vindication of the classical creed by means of the notions of the (semi-)intelligentsia of his days. He uses the same terminology as the Modernists, but defends quite different positions!

Now we like to reproduce the principal parts of the polemics on the significance of the traditions between Djairâdjpurî and his pupil Parwez on the one side and Mawdûdî on the other side ¹:

Djair.: The task of the prophets was merely to deliver the divine message: 'The Apostle has only to preach the message' (S. 5: 99; see also S. 42: 47).

Mawd.: Here this author concludes from the meaning and context of some Koranverses that the function of the prophet was, so to say, only that of a courier or (God forbid!) a postman. But if one reads those passages according to their meaning and context, it will become obvious that, whatever might be stated actually, this bears no connection with people who put faith in the Prophet, but with people who do not. For people who do believe in him, verses count as S. 33: 21: 'Certainly you have in the Apostle of God a good example'. If one argues like Djairâdjpurî, one will have to conclude that with the exception of his quality as bearer of messages (*muballigh*), all the remaining respects of the Prophet's life are to be considered as his private business.

Djair.: There is a difference between obedience to the Prophet in his quality of prophet and obedience to him in his quality of *amîr*. In his quality of prophet he is to be obeyed until the Resurrection, since the Koran is for all times. But in his quality of *amîr* he was only obeyed during his life-time: 'O you who believe! Obey God and His Apostle, and turn not back from him *while you hear*' (S. 8: 20). Instructions resulting from his *amîr*-ship, will always remain temporary, because circumstances change. So it is evident that he who at present has to be a leader of a Holy War, will not use spear and sword, in imitation of the battles of Badr and Uhud; he will use the arms of these days.

Mawd.: In his quality as God's Apostle Mohammed was an *amîr*. With a prophet it is not the case that, apart from his duty of delivering a Holy Book, he is an *amîr* or *qâdî*, as others may be; the prophet cannot be separated from the man. And when I look at the stories of the prophets in the Koran, I do not get the impression that they are, as it were, part-time workers who receive orders occasionally, and having done their duty would be free to do what they like. On the contrary, I see that when God wants to send a prophet to a people, He equips him in a special way so that he is a whole-time servant who never enjoys a holiday. See S. 3: 174 where a clear distinction is made between the prophet and the ordinary man.

And as for that use of a sword: relevant is not the weapon the Prophet used, but the question to which end he used his arms. By setting the example of his life it is not meant that everything he did and the manner in which he acted, ought to be imitated slavishly. That is not and cannot be the purpose of the Koran. When he married Arab women, should we also marry such women? When he wore a special dress, are we to wear the same? ²

Mawd. (when polemizing with Parwez): Besides the Koran the ḥadīth is a separate source for our knowledge of God's revelation. For, from the moment God honoured Mohammed with the prophet's mantle until the last of his life, he was always and in every situation the prophet of God. And that the Prophet received also revelations beyond the Koranic, we can

¹ For the sake of clarity we make so bold as to deviate now and then from the sequence of the argumentation, which one can find in the *Tardjuman al-Qur'ân*'s issues of Oct. 1934 and July 1935 and in *Maq.* 1, 309 ff.

² A like argumentation induced Parwez to make the sour comment that when Mawdûdî wishes to brand his opponent as 'denier of ḥadīth', he refuses to distinguish between Mohammed's quality of prophet and that of private person; but as soon as he himself is twitted with having a beard which is not the prescribed length, he at once 'denies' tradition (*Maq.* 1, 378).

gather from S. 2: 138; hence it follows that to him the *qibla* of the *bait al-muqaddas* (the temple of Jerusalem) had been indicated before by a divine revelation.

Parw.: The Koran was revealed to the Prophet in parts, and that occurred at moments when he was in a peculiar state, which ceased immediately after the delivery of a revelation. In other words, there existed a sharp distinction between these short periods and the rest of his life. Moreover, it is nonsensical to claim that, for instance, all that the Prophet talked about with his wives and other people would be revelation. Then, in three passages of the Koran the Prophet gets a scolding in the name of God. Was the act on which a divine correction followed a revelation too?

Mawd.: Without a break the Prophet was depending on a revelation so that even if he only seemed likely to stray from the right path, he received already an exhortation and a reprimand for matters to which no weight is attached in ordinary men, like the question whether one is allowed to eat honey, or not ¹.

Parw.: If everything concerning the Prophet took place by means of revelation, what could be the sense of consulting other people as is ordered in S. 3: 153?

Mawd.: S. 3: 153 was revealed in order that the Prophet would give the *umma* an example of consultation so that the foundations of a right form of republic would be laid.

Parw.: Hence it follows that the Prophet was not in need of a consultation, but that he did it merely (God forbid!) for the show.

Mawd.: It speaks well for divine wisdom that revelation has come down to us in two forms: as Koran with the principles and as *ḥadīth* with the elaboration of the principles. Had it so turned out that the 'darkened revelation' (*waḥy khaṭī*) with all the details of *ṣalāt*, etc. had been inserted in the Koran, it would have been as big as the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Parw.: This difficulty of a too bulky book could have been removed, if two volumes of one work had been appeared: Part one with the *uṣūl* and Part two with the details of the *uṣūl*. But the trouble is a different one! All kind of contradictions would prove to exist between what is stated in the Koran and what in the *ḥadīth*. So in the 'clear revelation' (*waḥy djalī*) is written that prisoners of war ought to be ransomed. But the 'darkened revelation' says: No. Make slaves of the prisoners of war. The 'clear revelation' declares that man is free in essence and can choose between belief and unbelief. The 'darkened revelation' says: No. A Muslim who apostatizes deserves the capital punishment; and so on.

Mawd.: Through a good deal of study and exercise the gift in man might be developed by which he becomes familiar with the disposition of the Apostle of God and the true spirit of Islam. If then he views a tradition, he perceives immediately whether the Prophet could have said so, or not ².

Parw.: A similar pretension had Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad ³ who asserted: 'I am obedient to the Apostle of God to such a degree that in me a knowledge has grown, in virtue whereof I am able to test the traditions without the aid of an *isnād* (chain of witnesses); and this is called prophetic endowment'.

¹ According to some commentators the back-ground of the divine rebuke in S. 66: 1-As for the rest, Parwez tries just as well to excuse Mohammed's behaviour in this honey-eating story. It should be taken for a tactical mistake, not for a moral fault. See J. M. S. Baljon jr. in *Nederl. Theol. Tijdsch.* X (1956), 424 f.

² In the *Tarjūmān al-Qur'ān* of May 1937 Mawdūdī admits that a somewhat critical attitude towards the traditions is still desirable: one should keep in mind that even the excellent work of the *muḥaddithūn* has been work of man, and thus not faultless. Consequently, in the end also Mawdūdī has not escaped from the 'Ulamā's anathema. On the 29th of March 1953 a *fatwa* was launched against him by a certain Mawlānā Zafar Aḥmad 'Uthmānī, declaring that he was unmistakably a 'denier of *ḥadīth*', to be shunned by the Muslims.

³ This bracketing of Mawdūdī with the founder of the Aḥmadiyya-movement must be exceedingly offending, since Mawdūdī belonged to the agitators who urged the Pakistani Government to class the Aḥmadī's under the non-Muslim minorities. Cf. Wilfred C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (1957), p. 233.

In conclusion two closing remarks:

1) As compared with the Western criticism of ḥadīth, it appears that in the discussions on the value of the traditions the attention of the Pakistani is not first of all drawn on to the question of their historical trustworthiness, but to problems of a theological import: the nature of Mohammed's prophethood, the relation of the Koran to the ḥadīth. What an object of research is for us, is after all for them a matter of belief. Though the impact of Western knowledge may have given the impulse to reconsider challenged articles of faith like the authority of ḥadīth, and even at times debaters may not shrink from the use of historical arguments derogatory to the prestige of the traditions, on the whole the way in which the ḥadīth are criticized and revalued is decidedly typically Muslim.

2) Comparing the motives of the anti-traditionists of about the third century A.H. with those of the Ṭulū'-i-Islām-adherents, one will find the paradox, that while in former days it was conservatism which made people averse from the introduction of such a new element in religion, it is nowadays on account of liberal views that the traditions are rejected. Related to this is the other noteworthy fact, that while in olden times the tradition-wording offered the possibility of absorbing non-Islamic ingredients into Muslim belief, it is at present exactly the existence of the ḥadīth which hinders the Muslim from keeping pace with the times.