

Research Paper

Analysis of Credibility of Hadiths and Its Influence among the Bangladeshi Youth

Submitted By:

Ratib Mortuza Ali

ID: 09205005

Department of Economics and Social Sciences

Submitted To:

Dr Sayeedur Rahman

Adjunct Faculty

Course Instructor: English 103: Advanced Writing

Centre for Languages

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BRAC University

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December 10, 2010

To:

Dr. Sayeedur Rahman

Adjunct Faculty

Centre for Languages

BRAC University

Dear Sir:

Subject: Letter of Forwarding

Please find my term research paper for the English 103 course titled “Analysis of Credibility of Hadiths and Its Influence Among the Bangladeshi Youth” attached to this letter of forwarding. I have maintained all academic ethics and integrity while preparing this paper. I promise that all works that I have presented are either my own or have been duly acknowledged.

I would be delighted if you accepted my term research paper.

Thanking you,

Ratib Mortuza Ali

ID: 09205005

Dept of Economics and Social Sciences

BRAC University

Abstract

The research paper strives to justify the position of hadiths in Islam. By extensive research, the author comes to the conclusion that adhering to hadiths is only a faith choice, and is not backed by any Islamic logic, contrary to what the mainstream Muslims would like to believe. The paper discusses the necessity, origin and content of the hadiths while making that judgment. The paper also includes research on the perspective of young adults in Bangladesh regarding hadiths and their importance. This component of the research compared the viewpoints of the pupils of the madrasha system with those from a non-madrasha background. In the end, the paper concludes that Bangladeshis are apathetic towards religion, and that practicing religion perhaps is a cultural emblem for the youth of this country.

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7. Baytul Aman Jame Mosque and Orphanage
8. Webs.com
9. The 29 anonymous samples

Section I

Introduction

The research paper that follows was prepared to answer some seemingly important social issue in contemporary Bangladesh – the question of hadiths. The main goal of the paper was to investigate the credibility of hadiths and the social impact of hadiths in the regular Bangladeshi society.

For quite some time the author had believed that Muslims in Bangladesh have become rather dogmatic in their ideologies for a long time, and this is largely due to the influence of hadiths in Islamic ideologies. The ongoing debate related to the authenticity of hadiths had, in fact, affected the author personally for a very long time. Exposed rather early to this debate, the author had the opportunity to read a lot of literature regarding this very issue, and spent a lot of time contemplating on it. Regular discussions were held in Physics classes back in high school, and on social networking sites like Facebook. All this provided the author with all the necessary arguments and counterarguments regarding hadiths, without the information regarding it.

At one point, the gravity of hadiths became very obscure to the author. As days went by, hadiths seemed more about superstitions and less about spirituality. Faced with this problem, many practicing Muslims pick and choose which hadiths to follow for their convenience. For a while, the author personally did the same but then, felt very guilty. There had to be a better way than declaring hadiths “authentic” as per will and advantage.

Faith is a dear and important aspect of the personal lives of billions of people around the globe. Thus, to critically analyze an aspect of a faith is very sensitive. Nevertheless, the author felt that such an academic research would help him and the society uncover some very important issues regarding the hadiths.

This is why the author felt compelled to conduct a research that involved questioning the credibility of hadiths. Before we make hadiths the basis of all our Islamic jurisprudence, it is important, from a religious perspective, to question the credibility of the hadiths itself in the light of Islam. Only after we can justify the credibility of the hadiths can we accept its social and legal implications that follow.

Therefore, one key component of the research was to understand and analyze the credibility of the hadiths. This is important from a religious perspective because it is of utmost importance for us to worship only the divine and to discard all falsehood.

From a social perspective, it is also important because of the influence of religious in our society. Hence, the other key element to the research was to understand how people received hadiths in their daily lives, so as to really understanding the influence of hadiths in their lives.

Therefore, the research paper was created to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To understand the concept of hadith
2. To understand the position of hadith in Islam
3. To analyze the authenticity of hadiths
4. To understand people's perspective regarding hadiths

At the end of the research paper, the author summarizes the findings and observations, commenting on the credibility of hadiths in the light of Islam and the public perception on hadiths. With the available information, the author may attempt to make some policy recommendations.

Section II

Literature Review

There has been much discussion made regarding the credibility of the hadiths. In general, the word sunnah means habit, practice, customary procedure, or action, norm and usage sanctioned by tradition. To be precise, any time the word sunnah is mentioned, it refers to Prophet Muhammad (Islamic Glossary Home, 2010). Here it means his sayings, practices and endorsements (Hameed, 2006). According to contemporary Muslims, all the sayings, sermons, and utterances of the Prophet were divinely inspired (Kazi, 1991).

Hadith, Hameed (2006) notes, “explains, clarifies, and paraphrases the Quran”. Rejecting the hadith may result in misinterpreting the Quran altogether. So Hameed (2006) believes that hadith is integral to a proper understanding of the Quran.

Deen (2007) noted that after the Prophet’s death, the new rightly guided rulers of the Islamic Empire required much guidance for the new situations that kept arising. Deen (2007), however, also noted that in some cases, the rulers of the Empire deviated from the way of the Prophet to attain a greater good, acknowledging the fact that as times changed, so did the laws and judgments.

In his famous *Muhammedanische Studien*, one of the first Western men to research on the hadiths, Ignaz Goldziher (1890) noted that hadiths dealt with more about

the legal debate in the eighth and ninth century than it deals with the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Goldziher (1890) even proposed the theory that hadiths were fabricated for political reasons, saying that “partisans in the early doctrinal struggles forged hadith in order to provide Prophetic confirmation for their own views”.

Some oppositions like Dr Khalifa (2001) takes it to a higher level and calls hadiths “satanic innovation”, clarifying, through thorough evidences from the Quran, the position of the Prophet in Islam. Such critics illustrate that the Prophet was just a man who conveyed the message, forbidding believers from doing anything but to obey the Word of God, and to accept his sunnah is to commit idolatry.

As Dr Khalifa notes from the Quran (6:115-116), God says, “Shall I seek other than Allah for judge, when He it is Who hath revealed unto you (this) Scripture, fully explained? Those unto whom We gave the Scripture (aforetime) know that it is revealed from thy Lord in truth. So be not thou (O Muhammad) of the waverers. Perfected is the Word of thy Lord in truth and justice. There is naught that can change His words. He is the Hearer, the Knower.” (Pickthall, 1938) Hence, accepting the hadiths is second-guessing the Quran and deviating from God’s path.

On the other hand, Dr Alvi (1977) justifies the authority of the hadiths by iterating the fact that the life of the Prophet was inspired by the Quran, and hence, hadiths are a way of comprehending the Quran. Quoting the Quran (33:21), “Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and

remembereth Allah much,” (Pickthall, 1938) Dr Alvi claims that this verse indicates that all Muslims will find the Prophet as an exemplar and guidance for an ideal life. Hameed (2006) and Alvi (1977) both observe that the Holy Book deals with a broad view about issues, whereas hadiths are specific details about certain issues, most notably the details of performing prayers and charity, two of the five pillars of Islam.

Hameed (2006) further elaborates that we wouldn't know how to pray, fast, observe charity, or perform Hajj “without the examples given by the Prophet as recorded in the hadith”. In fact, all necessary tidbits regarding the Islamic rituals, Hameed (2006) examines, are not in the Quran, but the hadith.

While discussing the authenticity of the hadiths, Dr Bucaille (1978) questions the science of collection of the hadiths, drawing similarities between the hadiths and the Gospels, mentioning that “neither of them was compiled by an author who was an eyewitness of the events he describes”. He also notes the dubiety of the hadiths among the Muslim community themselves, since only a small fraction has been accepted to be authentic by all Islamic scholars “quasi-unanimously”. So in a “Sahih Muslim” collection, we will find hadiths that “Al Bukhari” thinks is dubious and must be rejected outright.

Four books were published within 1977 and 1978 that specifically disturbed Muslim scholars (Silverstein, 2010) because these books told that Islamic historians, the primary people responsible for the collection and authentication of hadiths, had done a

lousy job. Edward Said (1978) complained that the scholars were condescending on the Muslim societies they studied on, whereas Cook & Crone (1977), in Hagarism, alleged that historically the historians hadn't been critical enough with their research.

All this sheds much light on the criticisms regarding the authenticity of the hadiths, although explaining at the same time about the importance of hadiths in Islam.

Section III

Methodology

To analyze the authenticity and credibility of the hadith, it is perhaps best to restrict this field to reading different materials without conducting surveys. This is why to establish (or ruin) the credibility of the hadith, the author sought refuge to the numerous papers that were available on the Internet and books available in the local libraries to draw a synthesis from all the papers. This would give the author and the readers a better understanding about the scenario. Instead of passing the author's biased opinion, a synthesis would summarize well-researched information and present data from both opposing perspectives.

As far as understanding the people's perspective regarding the hadiths are concerned, the author constructed a sample survey. The sample was stratified into two strata; the first strata, Strata E, included the author's friends from his email contact list who were around 20 years of age and were born and brought up in Dhaka, Bangladesh in a non-madrasha environment. The second strata, Strata M involved senior year students of a renowned madrasha, or Islamic school, in Dhaka. All samples from both the strata had to be Muslims.

The purpose of the stratification was to understand the difference in their perspectives towards hadiths. The stratification would help pinpoint where the madrasha and non-madrasha students differ regarding hadiths and where they agree. The line of

stratification was chosen upon madrasa education system because this system comprehensively teaches hadiths and Islam in a residential campus, so these students would in theory possess the greatest knowledge and understanding about hadiths.

Both strata were offered a total of eleven questions. Strata M were also offered a few additional sensitive questions. These questions required specialized knowledge in hadiths, and hence, was not offered to Strata E, who are mostly laymen.

It was assumed that the author's friends on my email list were an accurate representation of the population of Dhaka who are about 20 years of age who haven't attended a madrasa, and the senior year students of the madrasa were an accurate representation of what the madrasa system promulgated across the country.

The following questions were offered to the two strata:

SI	Questions	Style	Strata
1	I have full faith in God	Likert	Both
2	I fulfill my duties as a Muslim	Likert	Both
3	I read the Quran with translation regularly	Likert	Both
4	I believe that hadiths are authentic sayings and deeds of the Prophet	Likert	Both
5	I believe hadiths are essential in comprehending the Quran	Likert	Both
6	Why, or why not?	Open ended	Both
7	This means that the Quran is incomprehensible without hadiths	Likert	Both

8	I believe that the authority of hadiths come from (a) Quran, (b) Prophet, or (c) history/common sense	Three options	Both
9	I believe that rejecting the authority of hadiths is a blasphemy	Likert	Both
10	I understand that some hadiths may contradict the Quran	Likert	Both
	Since I believe in hadiths, I also believe that -	Not a question	M only
11	Adultery is punishable by stoning to death	Likert	M only
12	Women aren't qualified to assume leadership roles	Likert	M only
13	Apostasy is punishable by death	Likert	M only
14	The prophet will intercede for us in Judgment Day if we live up to his traditions	Likert	M only
15	In a country full of infidels, I must run away with my faith	Likert	M only
16	All black dogs should be killed	Likert	M only
17	Do you think that we should question the Quran and hadiths, or accept them at face value?	Open ended	Both

Strata M were offered printed bilingual questionnaire forms that were delivered to their madrasha on the day of the survey. Strata E were offered a website link <http://ratib.webs.com/surveyforenglish103.htm>.

The Likert style questions were statements on which the sample had to agree on a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being the most agreeable.

Although the results were discussed in great detail in Appendix 1, the minutes of those findings are listed below:

Strata E agreed mostly that authentic hadiths can help us to better understand the Quran, since the Quran is a compressed text (Q6).

Albeit Strata E were neutral (with a high standard deviation) about whether the hadiths were necessary in understanding the Quran (Q5), they all believed that this doesn't mean that the Quran can't be understood without the hadiths (Q7).

Most samples in Strata E felt that the Quran and hadith should be questioned, and that's the only way we can learn about the truth. They all agreed that this will increase clarity, understanding and faith among the believers (Q17).

Standard deviations for all the answers given by Strata M were strikingly low.

Completely agreeing to the fact that hadiths are essential in comprehending the Quran (Q5), Strata M explained this by saying that the Quran is a compressed text, and not all decrees and commandments are fully explained in the Quran. Hence, the hadiths are necessary to further extend on the Quran (Q6).

On the sensitive specialized questions, again, variance from Strata M was negligible, and answers were highly conservative. They believe that apostasy is punishable by death and adultery is punishable by stoning to death.

However, Strata M showed considerable deviation on Q12, although more or less agreeing that women aren't fit for leadership.

Strata M believe that it is wrong to question absolute truths like the Quran and hadiths.

Two interviews were also taken for a more qualitative analysis about the importance and credibility of hadiths in Islam. The interviewees were Mr Fayzullah, the imam of the Masjid-e-Taqwa Jame Mosque, someone who is a supporter of hadiths and Mr Yamin Choudhury, a teacher of The Aga Khan School, Dhaka, who opposes hadiths. Their inclinations were known prior to the interview.

Notes were taken during the interview. After the interview, the interviews were transcribed, and are available in Appendix 2. Both interviewees were cooperative enough to extend a hand for future discussions regarding this topic.

The interview presented the interviewees an avenue to present their viewpoints and to support their ideologies. A full report about the interview is available in Appendix 3.

Section IV

Limitations

The sample work and the expert interview were both hampered greatly by the author's health condition – the dengue, which he still suffers from. As a result of the dengue, the second interview taken from Mr Fayzullah of the Masjid-e-Taqwa Jame Mosque was a poor one compared to the first interview, because the illness impeded my free thinking.

The sample questions could've been improvised by including non-religious questions that involved lifestyle. This would help us understand the perspectives of the madrasha students better.

The author fallaciously assumed that the senior year students from one madrasha would be an accurate representation of all senior year madrasha students in Dhaka. To begin with, there are different types or mediums or streams of madrasha system that exist within the country. Because different sects/streams will hold different opinions, responses from students under other streams would be different. Hence, the Strata M should've been expanded further to include multiple madrashas to overcome the political and ideological bias that exists from institution to institution. Furthermore, madrashas always entertain male students. Female madrashas are rare to find. Hence, this sample only reflects the viewpoint of the male madrasha students. Female students may possess different viewpoints regarding different issues, especially on issues such as women's rights.

Although the author assumed Strata E to be a representation of all those students outside the madrasha medium, looking back, the strata basically consisted of students who came from the British curriculum. These samples form an elite class of the society. Their society is much more liberal. Hence, to consider this group as the average Joe non-madrasha medium was a grave error. Perhaps the mainstream non-madrasha students, those who came from the regular national curriculum would've been more conservative in their responses.

While reading up about the credibility and the authenticity of the hadiths, there were too many childish sources with name-calling. These sources offered little information. Moreover, there was a lot of repetition of information from multiple sources. Siphoning information from all the sources was an immense challenge.

Section V

Discussion

From a deep religious perspective, the necessity of hadith seems questionable in the first place. Fayzullah (2010) and Alvi (1977) both duly note that the Quran is a compressed text, only containing the main gist of the message of God. Hence, the secondary scriptures of Islam, the hadiths are of utmost necessity because the hadiths are so well-detailed. The hadiths describe all rituals and actions of the Prophet meticulously, which means that the hadiths are necessary in interpreting the Quran (Fayzullah [2010], Naseem [2007], Hameed [2006], Kazi [1991], Alvi [1977]). Moreover, the Quran (53:3) states that Prophet never spoke out of his own desire (Pickthall, 1938), and hence, whatever the Prophet did or said must've been divinely inspired (Fayzullah, 2010).

Hadiths are extremely important for Muslims, because its position is only second to the Quran (Fayzullah, 2010). The main job of hadiths is to show us the sunnah of the Prophet, who was sent to guide us to a better way of life (Alvi, 1977). And the Quran (33:21) declares the Prophet as an example for the believers (Pickthall, 1938). Hence, by living the sunnah of the Prophet, and by adhering to the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, and by reading about his teachings found in the hadiths, we can live the Islamic life and understand the Quran better (Alvi, 1977).

Speaking of how to lead an Islamic life, Mr Choudhury (2010) suggested the Muslims to go back and study the Quran itself instead of looking for answers elsewhere.

Khalifa (2001) points out from the Quran (44:58) that it is made in an easy language for the believers (Pickthall, 1938). Hence, the Quran itself is a complete source of guidance, which is comprehensible and doesn't need anything else for explanation. As the Quran (2:2) declares itself, "This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off evil," (Pickthall, 1938).

By providing evidence from the Quran (75:18-19), Malek (1997) observes that, "And when We read it, follow thou the reading; Then lo! upon Us (resteth) the explanation thereof," (Pickthall, 1938), and hence, God has promised to explain the Quran Himself and so believers don't need hadiths to explain the Quran. In addition, Khalifa (2001) mentions that in the Quran (6:19) God forbids us from "upholding or following any other source beside Quran, and that doing so is equivalent to the setting up of other gods beside God."

Hence, to postulate that the Quran needs another book to translate it is considered blasphemous by many (Choudhury [2010], Khalifa [2001]).

Moreover, the origin of hadith itself is a much disputed issue. There is, however, considerable evidence in favor of the fact that hadiths were compiled during the lifetime of the Prophet, as opposed to after his death (Fayzullah [2010], Phillips [2009]). The evidences include the fact that the Prophet had ordained Abu Amr to write down his sermon during the farewell pilgrimage to a Yemeni man named Abu Shah (Fayzullah [2010], Phillips [2009]). Coupled with the fact that the Prophet needed to send letters to

the governors of other provinces in the peninsula after he established a political center in Mecca (Fayzullah, 2010), manuscripts of which still stand today (Khan, 1998), there is sound evidence that there were written records of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet during the lifetime of the Prophet.

Whether all the hadiths were written down during the time of the Prophet or whether only a hand-few were is another question that needs to be answered. Dr Bucaille (1978) and Malek (1997) notes that most hadiths came down from oral narrations compiled in the second and third century of the Prophet's death, as opposed to writing everything down since the Prophet's time. Hadith collection was severely impeded by the order of the Prophet himself, who ordained that no other texts be written accept the Quran, lest it get mixed up with the Word of God (Phillips, 2009). Malek (1997) also emphasized on the fact that no later-day historians could establish the chain of narration of the hadiths back to even the first century of the death of the Prophet, showing that none of the hadiths are authentic.

Mr Choudhury (2010) stressed on the point brought up by Drs Phillips (2009), Malek (1997) and Bucaille (1978) by saying that since the Prophet had ordered not to write any hadiths down, there possibly cannot be any written record of hadiths during the Prophetic era, until at least two centuries later, when Bukhari and Muslim first started compiling them.

While discussing the authenticity of the hadiths, Dr Bucaille (1978) questions the science of collection of the hadiths, drawing similarities between the hadiths and the Gospels, mentioning that “neither of them was compiled by an author who was an eyewitness of the events he describes”. He also notes the dubiousness of the hadiths among the Muslim community themselves, since only a small fraction has been accepted to be authentic by all Islamic scholars “quasi-unanimously”. So in a “Sahih Muslim” collection, we will find hadiths that “Al Bukhari” thinks is dubious and must be rejected outright.

Moreover, this hadiths would have to be accepted on the accounts of the companions of the Prophet, who according to Choudhury (2010), weren’t the most righteous. Drawing the instance of the slander of Aisha, the wife of Muhammad, where the companions slandered her for coming home late at night with a handsome stranger, Choudhury (2010) questioned whether these companions are trustworthy. God Himself rebuked these companions in the Quran (24:11) (Pickthall, 1938), asking the companions why could they not think better of the Prophet’s family, and calling them liars because they slandered without witnesses. Choudhury (2010) reminds us that we cannot accept hadiths on the record of people whom God has called liars.

Furthermore, some even believe that the hadiths were corrupted intentionally with ill plots in mind. Goldziher (1890), in his famous *Muhammedanische Studien* pointed out that hadiths were fabricated and manipulated for largely political gains, saying that “partisans in the early doctrinal struggles forged hadith in order to provide Prophetic

confirmation for their own views.” Goldziher’s (1890) observations included the political bias of particular hadith narrators. Malek (1997) postulated that politicians chose to fabricate hadiths to spread their political propaganda because they realized invoking the Prophet’s name after anything would validate that statement without question. Choudhury (2010) and Khalifa (2001) agreed with Goldziher, further stating that hadiths are satanic innovation made by the devil to derail the Muslims from the path of God.

Having discussed the necessity and origin of the hadiths, let us discuss about the content of the hadiths. Goldziher (1890) interestingly points out that hadiths discuss more about the legal debate that took place in the eighth and ninth century as opposed to the life of the Prophet. Dr Bucaille (1978) also pointed out the startling literary differences between the Quran and the hadiths. According to him, the quality and style of the two literatures are so alien, any comparison is “unthinkable”. Whereas the Quran possesses great literary qualities, full of rhymes and allegories, the hadiths are plain laymen texts. According to Bucaille (1978), therefore, these two Scriptures could not have possibly come from the same source.

Talking about the content, Bucaille (1978) notes the hadiths are just a reiteration of the scientific norms that were perfectly agreeable in those days, but absolutely invalid today. Examples include drinking camel urine for therapeutic purposes, and that an embryo develops in three strange stages, “a forty-day period for the grouping of the elements which are to constitute a human being, another forty days during which the embryo is represented as ‘something which clings’, and a third forty-day period when the

embryo is designated by the term ‘chewed flesh’.” There are hadiths that call for burning a jute-bag and using the ashes to stop bleeding wounds (Sohrab, 2006). The collections of hadiths are filled with such unscientific prescriptions.

Dr Bucaille (1978) concluded his famous “La Bible, le Coran et la Science” by saying that while comparing the Quran and the hadith in terms of content and literary style, “the disparity becomes so obvious that any notion of a common origin is ruled out.”

Choudhury (2010) observed that hadiths allow the Prophet to intercede for the Muslims on Judgment Day, that the Prophet will redeem us. He notes that this concept of redemption is in fact originally a Christian concept, which has been molded into Islam.

Dr Khalifa (2001) interestingly points out that, in a hadith, the Prophet asks us to follow the sunnah of himself and the rightly guided caliphs that follow him. The Prophet used the phrase “al khulafa ar rashideen” in his saying, which is the exact phrase to refer to the four rightly guided caliphs in Islam. Dr Khalifa (2001) questions, how did the Prophet know that four rightly guided caliphs would follow him, and how did the Prophet use this exact phrase? Either, this hadith is fabricated, or the Prophet knew the future. But the Quran (72:26) clearly mentions that nobody but God knows the future (Pickthall, 1938).

There can be much more examples produced where hadiths defy common sense or science. But one may say that whatever the hadith says is common sense, and anything

contradictory is the alien culture. To counter this argument, Malek (1997) exhibits a number of hadiths that clearly contradict the Quran. He points out that the punishment for adultery has been exacted at a hundred lashes by God in the Quran (24:2) on both parties (Pickthall, 1938), but the hadiths call for death by stoning of the adulteress. The madrasha students who were surveyed also had agreed, by answering Question 11 that adultery is punishable by stoning to death. By exhibiting this contrast, Malek (1997) demonstrates that Quran and hadiths do contradict, and in places where they do, the hadiths almost always gets to supercede the Quran. By this example, Malek (1997) also shows that whereas the Quran is equal towards both sexes, the hadiths are condescending towards women.

Malek (1997) and Choudhury (2010) both point out that God has promised no intercession except Himself on the Day of Judgment. This is reiterated in a multiple places in the Quran (Pickthall, 1938). However, hadiths of the Bukhari and Muslim narrates that the Prophet has been given the power to intercede (Choudhury [2010], Malek [1997]). Therefore, there is a clear overplaying of the power and prowess of the Prophet in the hadiths, whereas the Quran only exemplifies the Prowess of God. Therefore it can be concluded that the hadiths do contradict the Quran.

We have seen that hadiths are not really necessary when it comes to interpreting the Quran. We have observed that the origin of the hadiths is highly questionable. Although there are some evidences that hadiths were written during the Prophetic era, there is overwhelming evidence that the majority of the hadiths were recorded in the

second and third century after the Prophet's death on oral traditions. Moreover, there are doubts about the political motivation in which the hadith narrators wrote the hadiths. We have seen that hadiths contradict with common sense, and some even contradict with the Quran.

With such grave allegations against the hadiths, accepting the hadiths is a highly uncertain issue, and one doing so would be doing it on a strictly faith-based ground, and not on logical grounds.

It is interesting to note that the contemporary Muslim world wants very little to do with the debate. The survey clearly showed most regular Muslims to be apathetic. They are a community where they have full faith in God, but aren't much concerned about the do's and don't's of Islam. This population, the large majority, doesn't really care about hadiths or the petty issues that the clerics bicker about, but accept that anything and everything can hold true, as long as there has been fair amount of research and questioning.

So although believing in hadiths can be a very uncertain issue, the layman Muslim will show some adherence to it, perhaps more because of the cultural implications than the religious ones. Indeed, if religious propaganda doesn't increase piety and obedience towards the hadiths, anti-propaganda against the hadiths will not make the Muslims any less obedient towards them. Obedience towards hadith, and to a larger extent, adherence

towards a religion has become an object of culture, although faith does remain near and dear to many.

This is so because the survey results showed that the laymen Muslims did spend a lot of time on thinking about Islam and contemplating about contemporary Islamic issues. They did have mediocre knowledge about the faith, and were able to make valuable input towards the survey. However, their apathy towards observing Islam in their daily lives has given the idea that following a religion is a culture more than a choice of faith for many.

As a result, it can be concluded that the contemporary Muslim society doesn't care about the hadiths. Any effect of hadiths in their daily lives doesn't come from religious observance, but from a cultural habit. Being a Muslim today is a cultural identity more than a religious one.

As for the Muslims in the madrasha, the next generation clerics, they are receiving daily doses of disputed facts and falsehoods. They are seldom encouraged to research on the Quran, but prompted to do so on hadiths. The survey clearly showed that on the scale of 1 to 5, when asked whether they regularly recite the Quran with its translation, the mean response was 3.8, with a standard deviation of 1. This has been the largest standard deviation in the entire survey after the question regarding female leadership. So we can see that even the madrashas are not encouraging their students to understand, ponder and research on the Quran. This certainly is a bad omen for Islam in

Bangladesh. It is more likely that this next generation of clerics will be even more conservative and deviated from the Word of God when they assume office.

Tell me that I'm making a mountain out of a molehill, but I think Bangladesh is slowly heading towards Europe – the conservative clerics practicing a perverted faith with the mainstream turning even more apathetic towards Islam.

Section VI

Recommendation

Future research conducted in this field should try to encapsulate the opinion of the masses of Bangladesh when trying to understand the perspective of the people towards the hadiths. The samples must include people from the national curriculum, British curriculum and madrasha curriculum. These stratified samples must be unbiased when it comes to gender and geographic location.

Moreover, future research must focus on the cultural aspect of religion to really understand the impact of religion as a faith on the people of Bangladesh.

Section VII

Conclusion

When I began this research paper, I gave myself four objectives to meet. The first objective was to understand the concept of hadith. As far as that goes, we have met the definition of hadiths over and over again, and the concept has been well understood.

The next two objectives posed a much harder task – understanding the position of hadiths in Islam and to question its credibility. By doing extensive reading on the issue I believe I was able to explain the position given to hadiths by the traditional Islam. Following that, I discussed some very sensitive yet important issues regarding hadiths, including its necessity, origin and contents.

After this discussion I related my findings with how the people viewed the concept of hadiths. Before I began this research, I always thought that deep down people did care about their faith. After the research, I realized that, although most people do ponder about Godly issues, very few make practical applications or practice their faiths publicly. So for the mainstream Muslims in Bangladesh, religion is something divorced from faith, deeply immersed in culture and family.

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Appendix 1

Survey Results

To further aid the research, a stratified survey was taken. The survey was offered to selective friends on my email list, who are all Bengalis who were brought up in Bangladesh in a non-madrasha education system, henceforth Strata E; the other strata was 18 young men studying *dawra*, or senior year, in a madrasha, aged roughly 18, henceforth Strata M.

The survey offered to Strata E posed eight questions with a Likert scale of 1 to 5, one question that had three options and two open-ended questions. The survey offered to Strata M had the same questions as Strata E, but six additional questions with a Likert scale of 1 to 5, because of their expertise and knowledge about hadith.

Results

The results of the survey are as follows (the questions available in Section III):

Strata E

Likert Scale Results, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree

Sl. No.	Questions	Mean	St Dev
1	I have full faith in God	4.82	0.5750
2	I fulfill my duties as a Muslim	3.09	0.9959
3	I read the Quran with translation regularly	2.36	0.8814
4	I believe that hadiths are authentic sayings and deeds of the Prophet	3.36	1.3667

5	I believe hadiths are essential in comprehending the Quran	2.82	0.8332
7	This means that the Quran is incomprehensible without hadiths	1.91	0.7925
9	I believe that rejecting the authority of hadiths is a blasphemy	2.55	1.0757
10	I understand that some hadiths may contradict the Quran	3.18	0.9360

For Question 8, most samples answered (c).

Strata M

Likert Scale Results, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree

Sl. No.	Questions	Mean	St Dev
1	I have full faith in God	5.00	0
2	I fulfill my duties as a Muslim	4.22	0.5329
3	I read the Quran with translation regularly	3.83	1.0672
4	I believe that hadiths are authentic sayings and deeds of the Prophet	5.00	0
5	I believe hadiths are essential in comprehending the Quran	5.00	0
7	This means that the Quran is incomprehensible without hadiths	5.00	0
9	I believe that rejecting the authority of hadiths is a blasphemy	5.00	0
10	I understand that some hadiths may contradict the Quran	1.17	0.5000
11	Adultery is punishable by stoning to death	5.00	0
12	Women aren't qualified to assume leadership roles	4.33	1.2910

13	Apostasy is punishable by death	5.00	0
14	The prophet will intercede for us in Judgment Day if we live up to his traditions	5.00	0
15	In a country full of infidels, I must run away with my faith	4.28	1.0438
16	All black dogs should be killed	1.83	0.7638

For Question 8, most samples answered (a).

Inferences

Most samples of Strata E expressed their full faith in God, although admitting that they aren't very practicing. An interesting observation is that, albeit they were neutral (with a high standard deviation) about whether the hadiths were necessary in understanding the Quran (Q5), they all believed that this doesn't mean that the Quran can't be understood without the hadiths (Q7).

The open ended questions answered by the Strata E showed varied results. The Strata E was confused as to whether hadiths are essential in interpreting the Quran. Although the mean answer was neutral, the explanation ranged from the Quran being self-sustainable to the hadiths being absolutely necessary to understand the Quran. However, most explanations centered on the point that authentic hadiths can help us to better understand the Quran, since the Quran is a compressed text.

Samples also pointed out the times have changed, and hadiths, and even the Quran, were revealed for 7th century Arabs. Circumstances were different. As a sample points out, “A 7th century man didn't have porn or the Beatles - two fewer sacrifices to make.”

However, most samples in the Strata felt that the Quran and hadith should be questioned, and that's the only way we can learn about the truth. They all agreed that this will increase clarity, understanding and faith among the believers.

Strata M responded like 18 identical robots programmed specifically. This is noted by the very low standard deviation. In fact, for many answers, all samples replied the same. Some samples were humble enough to mention that they are not fully practicing Muslims. They all believed that the hadiths were essential in understanding the Quran, and without the hadiths, the Quran would be impossible to comprehend. They explained this by saying that the Quran is a compressed text, and not all decrees and commandments are fully explained in the Quran. Hence, the hadiths are necessary to further extend on the Quran.

Most samples mentioned that they do read the Quran with translation fairly regularly; some replied negative, one even saying that reciting the Quran with translation isn't necessary! They all agreed the rejecting hadiths is blasphemy, and mentioned that the authority of the hadiths came from the Quran.

On the more specialized questions, their opinion was something that the mainstream might label as extremist. For instance, they believe that adultery is punishable by stoning to death, and that apostasy is punishable by death as well. However, on the issue of women and whether they are fit for leadership, there was considerable deviation from the mean. On the point of intercession, however, despite the fact that the Quran says that there shall be no intercession on Judgment Day, all the samples agreed that the Prophet would intercede for them if they obey the way of the Prophet.

While answering the open-ended questions, all samples were highly conservative. All the samples declared that questioning the absolute truth – the Quran and authentic hadiths is out of question. They also mentioned that the hadiths are the explanation of the Quran, and hence hadiths is of absolute necessity while understanding the Quran. One sample even mentioned that it might be inappropriate asking such provocative questions for the survey.

Interestingly enough, our current generation of imams and Muslim clerics have not all come from the madrashas, but many have come from conventional education systems. While surveying at the madrasha, I overheard a cleric discussing the flaws of the Marxian theory with his colleague; the Madrasha Committee member who approved my survey request spoke to me in half Bengali and half English. The Committee member was elated at the effort I had put up, stressing on the fact that only through questioning can the truth be achieved.

We are building a new generation of clerics that are conservative and have poor knowledge in English, science or other contemporary subjects. This new generation will further cause problems within the Muslim community, and will cause, in the long run as the next generation of laymen Muslims and clerics differ vastly, a divide between the Church and its followers.

As Strata E and the population it represents grow up, there will be Muslim community where they have full faith in God, but aren't much concerned about the do's and don't's of Islam. This population, the large majority, doesn't really care about hadiths or the petty issues that the clerics bicker about, but accept that anything and everything can hold true, as long as there has been fair amount of research and questioning.

Some blame should be imposed on these Muslims who do not adhere to the basic tenants of Islam and yet call themselves Muslims. As time will go on, the Muslims will start to grow even larger in size, and hence risks the chance of corrupting the faith altogether. Indeed, for people who are so apathetic about their faith, is a cause of concern.

Although it's alarming to notice that the next generation clerics become more conservative, it's pleasing, or equally alarming to learn that the next generation of the average Joe Muslim community will be even more liberal, willing to embrace anything, as long as it is in the Name of God.

Appendix 2

Transcript of Interviews

Transcript

English 103 Interview

Interviewee: Mr Yamin Choudhury, Physics Teacher, The Aga Khan School, Dhaka

Date and Time: November 8, 2010 at 11:15am

Venue: The Aga Khan School, Dhaka

The interviewee has waived all his rights

Please tell me about the position of Prophet Muhammad pbuh in Islam.

Muhammad was a prophet. That's how the Quran puts it. He was nothing extra special. But being a prophet is special enough.

If you look into Islam, God mentions Islam as a religion of Abraham. God says in the Quran, "Who forsakes the religion of Abraham except the fool?" God tell Muhammad that you too come to the path.

Muhammad was more of a teacher. The religion was already there, established by Abraham. Muhammad reinterpreted it, and reestablished it. He has a high status as a teacher, but he was not the founder. The religion existed, but in ruins. Plus, there was the problem of information transmission in earlier times, which led to the corruption of other faiths. Muhammad was the reviver of Islam. One of his titles is Mohiuddin – one who revives the faith.

So does this mean that there is no need of following the lifestyle of the Prophet?

How you follow the lifestyle of the prophet? The only way to do so is by believing in others – our forefathers, the companions of the prophet. If we must seek knowledge from our forefathers to know the lifestyle of the prophet, then it means that only a Muslim's son can be a Muslim, which isn't fair!

Moreover, Allah has mentioned in the Quran that do not blindly follow the ways of your forefathers. So following our fathers to live out the prophet's lifestyle is wrong!

The question then is, how do I learn about the lifestyle of the prophet? Not from the companions, because God calls them liars! Like in the Quran, consider the time when the companions spread slander about Aisha (the wife of the Prophet). God rebukes the

companions for that; not the kafirs. God asks them, why could they not think good of the prophet and his family, but spread slander? God rebukes the companions for that, calling them a bunch of liars in Surah Nur. Then how I trust the companions of the Prophet from transmitting information to us? They may be considered saints, but God Himself calls them liars, and never retracted that Decree. God says He forgives them, because His Mercy is Great, but doesn't say they're good human beings now. To follow the companions for guidance, therefore, is opposition to the Quran and ridiculous!

Are the hadiths in circulation today are authentic? Do you think hadiths are not divinely inspired? What does the Quran say about hadiths?

Personally, not at all! Human hands have been playing into it.

There are so many rulers in the world today, each pretending to be their own spirit of Islam. Politicians manipulate the religion. Yazid ruled the Muslims for quite a while! Mahabiya retracted Muhammad Bin Qasim from Karachi and had him killed because he was becoming very popular. This guy killed his own goodwill ambassador! And they were the third generation of the prophet! If the third generation had decayed so much, who rectified it?

God tells us, we don't know what will happen to us afterwards. In hadiths, it is said that the prophet knows everything, and we will know everything through the prophet. The prophet will redeem for us. Redemption isn't an Islamic concept; this is Christianity! God always talks about Sunatallah – His Sunnah (way), but never about Sunnatarasool (sunnah of the prophet)! How can the prophet intervene or redeem when he had nothing original of his own! He was a teacher who carried the message of Allah!

God says in the Quran that even the bee follows His Sunnah – His Way. Life is all about understanding the Way of Allah. This needs to be understood. This objective has been deviously sabotaged by the devil. For instance, for a person who can sing, that's natural; that's the Way of Allah for him. You can use singing for good or for evil, but singing is a neutral thing and there's nothing wrong with that!

The concept about you cannot build a statue? Bullshit! Solomon was praised in the Quran for building statues and beautifying the city. God asked the Kingdom of David to be thankful for it, "for verily, only a few of My bondmen are thankful".

If statues and pictures were banned because people worship them, then go and destroy the sun, the moon and the mountains! Because people worship them as well, and even today they do! And talk about astrology! That's wholly planet worship! Then go and destroy them as well.

You are the maker of the statue. You are above it. You don't worship it, because you made it yourself! You have ability, a skill, because God made us in His Nature. Not in His Image, that's Christianity, but in His Nature – fitratallah, as said in Surah 30. That's (Chapter) Rome, verse 30. Yes, 30:30.

Quran rejected by an abnormal weirdness. Nobody bothered to publicly study the Quran. Quran was never officially an object of study. The Quran declares God's Kingdom as "lahoo maa fissaamaawaati wamaa fil ardi wa maa bainahuma" – "whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and everything in between". The Shariah, all the Islamic studies, they don't deal with God's Kingdom! What worldly law does that?

Nothing but science deals with heavens and earth and whatsoever is in between. So the devil realized that the best way to get back at the Muslims is by taking science away from them. The devil, hence, was able to put the Muslims in a position against Islam.

And once the Muslims had deviated from true Islam, people started going haywire. They started innovating things alien to Islam, like the concept of pirs, when the Quran clearly declares that there will be no intercession on Judgment Day. These pirs talk about the extinction of self – that's a Buddhist concept! Talk about innovation!

See, think about the concept of submission and prostration. Science is the submission of self to the truth. For instance, an electric shock is absolute. If you place your hand on an electrocuted wire, you will feel the shock; no doubt about it.

What is science? Laws of nature! And these laws are words in our language. And these words are not our words. These words are made by One Man because everyone understands the same thing, i.e. everybody has the same interpretation of these words. The Quran says, "Read in the name of Your Lord, who created." Note the choice of words – Your Lord, not The Lord! That's because we understand God according to our own interpretation.

Science is Islam in disguise. But today, the traditional Islam has become very similar to any other religion. It has priests, monks, everything just like any other religion. But this isn't how Islam was supposed to be. It was supposed to be a radically different approach to one's life.

The hadiths in circulation goes against the very Commandment of God. When the Quran says you may marry four times, although one is better, the hadiths contradict the Quran by saying four wives is better. There are hadiths where this man came up to the Prophet telling him that he was financially insecure, and needed a solution. The prophet asked him to marry again. The man came back to the prophet telling him that his condition hadn't changed. The prophet asked him to marry again. In this way, when the man had married four women, he became wealthy. What kind of a shallow prophet would ask a man to marry four times just to become rich?

Four wives is a restriction – a limiting number, because back then Arabs used to marry in dozens. Whoever gave birth to a son became the favorite wife, and the rest were sold in the market, for other men to purchase them. Islam came to eliminate this situation. None of the near companions had more than one wife! Abu Bakr had one wife. So did Uthman and Umar. Ali had two wives, but one at a time. He remarried only after Fatima's death. So none of the near companions had more than one!

One funny thing to note is that, nobody calls the Quran as Sahih Quran. Because the Quran is the Quran! It's authenticity is beyond question. Why are sahih hadiths called sahih? The addition of this very word sahih shows that hadiths are unauthentic.

God protected the Quran – He didn't say anything about protecting the hadiths.

Is this why you chose a career in science?

I like science because I think this is the way of God. In religion, there is worship and reward. Science has both these aspects as well. The worship part is studying the theory for knowledge, knowledge for the sake of knowledge. And then there's application – benefits, rewards of science.

Some people worship for the reward, yes, but some people worship for the sake of worshipping God. Yes, some scientists stick to only the application part, just like in religion, where some worship for the rewards. Deep thinkers are the ones who like science itself for the sake of science – worship for the sake of worship.

This anti-science attitude that we see among Muslims today, this came from Christianity, not Islam! The Church realized that science was the byproduct of Islam. So they took it away from them. The Crusades provided the Christians with a hundred years of intense interaction with the Muslims. There was huge amount of cultural interaction. That's how Europe understood Islam, science, many things. Later the Christians went back to work on science.

Why did the Christians build so many monasteries? They put their priests in there and made them study science! Most great scientists after Galileo's death came from the Church. Pascal, Newton, although he was only slightly inclined, and Huygens! Huygens, the man who discovered the wave theory of light, was a priest! These people made the Middle East appear like idiots. This is how they stopped Islamization; now even if science spread, it would not be associated with Islam. But in the end, this very science kicked the Church out!

Science has been abused and misunderstood by the Muslims. We lost our only weapon to Satan. Where do the Taliban's get their weapons? Which Muslims makes them? If we don't understand this simple math, about who finances them, who funds them, who supplies them with arms and who organizes them, then we're a bunch of fools! Did Al Qaida talk to us before starting their operation? But the future generation will start to think that this is part of contemporary Islam. That's just another Western propaganda we've failed to uncover.

To conclude, how exactly do you think Muslims should value the sunnah of the Prophet? Where should Muslims turn to for guidance to lead a life in the way of Allah?

Muslims should first switch back to the Quran. They should read it. Not everybody understands science. That doesn't mean they won't study science. Similarly, not everybody will understand the Quran, but they all should read it. In turn, the Quran will be understood.

God say, read that which is easy for you. We should study sections of the Quran by themes. No, we don't need to study everything. That's for a special class of people. Muslim intellectuals should be given a free chance. This is how 10 intellectuals will have 10 different opinions. The right extreme opinions will be balanced out by the left liberals – there will be balance. People will then have the option of choosing what's true. People aren't that dumb!

The Quran isn't confusing. It's well matched with reality.

Transcript

English 103 Interview

Interviewee: Mr Fayzullah, Imam, Masjid-e-Taqwa Jame Masjid, Sector 3, Uttara

Date and Time: December 2, 2010 at 5:50pm

Venue: Masjid-e-Taqwa Jame Masjid, Sector 3, Uttara

The interviewee has waived all his rights. This interview was conducted in Bangla and translated into English by the author.

What are hadiths?

Hadith has a dictionary meaning, and a circumstantial meaning. The dictionary meaning is modern, or saying. But circumstantially, it is the sayings, deeds and endorsements of the Messenger of Allah.

There are three types of hadiths – saheeh or authentic, zayef or weak, and mauzoo or fake.

Why are hadiths important for Muslims?

The main source for the Islamic legal system, or the Islamic way of life, for instance, how to pray, or fast, i.e. the basis of the Islamic Shariah is based on 4 fundamentals – the Quran, the sunnah, unity or ijma, and qiyas. So we see that the sunnah comes right after the Quran. That's number one.

The second point is the concept of wahi or revelation. According to the ulama-e-qeram or the Islamic scholars, revelations are of two types – the recited wahi, and the unrecited wahi. The recited wahi is the Quran, and the unrecited wahi is the hadith. Interestingly,

the Quran mentions that the Prophet doesn't speak from his own desire. So whatever he has said or done, which are the hadiths, must be inspired by Allah.

Now the third thing is, hadiths are the explanation of the Quran. Now, everybody cannot understand all parts of the Quran completely. So we need something to help us understand the Quran. Hadiths are like the tafseer of the Quran, an interpretation. So hadiths are a very important and integral part of a Muslim's life.

Where does the authority of the hadiths come from?

Now, Allah says in the Quran, "Atee'ullaah, wa atee'urrasool", which means "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger". This is a clear message from Allah. Moreover, Allah also asks us in other places in the Quran to follow the Prophet. Following the Prophet, once again, is impossible without following the hadiths.

So when we talk about following the sunnah of the Prophet, it is a command from Allah.

Furthermore, the Quran talks about the Messenger being sent to all of mankind to cleanse us and redeems us and to teach us the Quran with the truth. Now, the only way that the Prophet could've taught us the Quran was through hadiths, his authentic sayings, deeds and endorsements. Without the hadiths, you cannot learn the Quran.

Are the hadiths in circulation authentic? How has this authenticity been maintained throughout generations?

Hadiths were compiled ever since the time of the Prophet, contrary to what some believe. Compilation took place in three forms. The first method was aml, or action. Whenever a companion saw the Prophet do or say something, they immediately acted upon it. By acting upon a hadith, the hadith became preserved.

The second method was by memorizing. The companions used to memorize the sayings and deeds of the Prophet as hadiths. The third method was a more long lasting method; it was writing it down. So we can see that the sahabas or the companions recorded hadiths ever since the times of the Prophet.

There are numerous examples to back this statement that hadiths were written down during the Prophet's era. For instance, in a hadith from Abu Hurayra, he claims that he knew most of the hadiths, except Umr Bin Abdul Aziz, because Abdul Aziz could write and record, whereas Abu Hurayra couldn't.

Also, after the farewell pilgrimage where the Prophet gave his last sermon, a man by the name Abu Shah came up to the Prophet and asked for a transcript for the speech. The Prophet replied by asking one of his companions to write the speech down and give it to Abu Shah.

Another evidence would be the letters that were written in the name of the Prophet. We know, after the Muslims took over Mecca, the Muslim empire spread through much of the Arab peninsula. During those times, the Prophet appointed his companions as Governors of different provinces in Arabia. The Prophet was in regular contact to his Governors through writing letters. Thus, there were letters written by the Prophet that still exist today.

Thus we can see that the saheeh hadiths that exist today are indeed saheeh. There are a lot of other evidences that are available for further reading; I can arrange for books for advanced reading if you want to.

To conclude, how should a Muslim lead a life?

A Muslim's life should be led based on the principles of Allah and the Prophet. He must obey the commandments ordained unto him by the Quran and the sunnah of the Prophet. This will help him lead the perfect life.

Before you leave, since you are a student of economics, I would like to offer you a few resources regarding Islamic economy. And I have a website address, should you want to read further. It's by a Pakistani person; the site is called www.darsequran.com.

And if you need any further material, please let me know.

Appendix 3

Report on the Interviews

To enhance the research for my paper I decided to interview two people. Their similarity – they're both pretty well-versed in the Quran and hadiths; their difference – Mr Fayzullah, the Imam of Masjid-e Taqwa believes in the hadiths profoundly whereas the other, Mr Yamin Choudhury, a physics teacher, rejects them vehemently.

They both agree on the definition of hadiths – them being recorded sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam. Mr Fayzullah went on further to categorize the hadiths into three levels – *saheeh* or authentic, *zayef* or weak, and *mauzoo* or fake. Under the Islamic jurisprudence system, the basis of the Shariah is formed by four parts: the Quran, the *Sunnah*, *ijma* and *qiyas*, noted Mr Fayzullah. Hence, the *Sunnah* or way of the Prophet, which is based upon the hadiths, are very important for Islam.

Mr Fayzullah mentioned that according to the scholars, revelations are of two types. The first type is the one that is recited regularly – the Quran, and the other one isn't – the hadith. And hadiths are revelations as well because according to the Quran, the Prophet doesn't speak of his own desire. So whatever he said or did must've been God-sent.

Mr Choudhury, however, found this ideology to be blasphemous. He believes that the Prophet was sent as a simple Messenger and teacher for the people of the world, to

reinterpret and reestablish the religion of Abraham. He said, the Prophet has no *sunnah* of his own! The Quran never mentions about the *sunnah* of the Prophet, but mentions the *sunnah* of Allah, and hence, the Prophet himself followed Allah's *sunnah*. The Quran says in Surah Nahl that even the bee follows the way of Allah. In addition, the Prophet cannot have any way of his own, because he didn't have anything original – he was only promoting Abraham's faith.

While discussing the interpretation of the Quran, Mr Fayzullah notes that understanding the Quran can sometimes be difficult for people, and hence a *tafseer-e* Quran, or interpretation of the Quran is necessary. He finds this interpretation from the hadiths. Mr Fayzullah mentioned that the Prophet was sent to cleanse us and to teach us the Quran. And how else could he have taught us the Quran except through hadiths? While speaking of the Prophet cleansing us, it felt as if Mr Fayzullah was speaking of the Christian philosophy of Jesus redeeming us from our sins! Furthermore, it did seem like he was overplaying the role of the hadith compared to the Quran.

Mr Choudhury, on the other hand, quotes the Quran and says the Quran has been revealed in easy Arabic for better understanding. If that is the case, then the Quran requires no additional literature to comprehend it. Someone with limited knowledge will only study the absolutely easy parts; someone with interest in astronomy will study those parts that speak of the planets. For one to ask for additional literature, according to Mr Choudhury, is undermining and challenging the authority of the Quran, which is the Word of God.

Mr Choudhury further continued by expressing his utmost disappointment at the fact that nobody bothered to publicly study the Quran. There have been extensive studies on hadiths and Shariah Laws and all other things, but never officially on the Quran.

Mr Choudhury mentioned that many *saheeh* hadiths are highly corrupted in their meaning. Mr Choudhury observes how ridiculous it is that the hadiths have banned statues and pictures because people worship them. He challenged the hadith-believers to destroy the sun, the moon, the mountains and the planets, for people worship them too, and as a matter of fact, people still worship them in this era. Moreover, Mr Choudhury mentions that the Prophet Solomon was praised by God for building statues and beautifying the city, and God asked his bondmen to be thankful for that.

Mr Choudhury also cast doubts about the character of the Prophet's companions, on whose records we follow the hadiths. These were the same companions who slandered about Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, when she returned home one night with a handsome stranger. He says, God asks them, why could they not think good of the Prophet and his family, but spread slander? God rebukes the companions for that, calling them untruthful in Surah Nur. He then questions, how do we believe in the hadiths transmitted by these companions?

One of Mr Choudhury's biggest accusations against the hadiths was the fact that the first hadiths were recorded some 250 years after the death of the Prophet, and hence,

none of the hadiths in circulation today are authentic, but man-made. This was readily rebutted by Mr Fayzullah. He pointed out that there were three main ways of compiling hadiths. The first way was following it – by following the word of the Prophet, one has already preserved the hadith. The second method is by memorizing, and the third, by writing it down.

He gave evidences about where hadiths had been written down during the time of the Prophet, contrary to what some believe. He quoted a hadith by Abu Hurayra, where he proudly averred that he knows the most hadiths among all companions except Umr Bin Abdul Aziz, because Abdul Aziz used to write them down, but he (Abu Hurayra) was illiterate and thus couldn't. Furthermore, after the last pilgrimage of the Prophet, where he delivered a famous sermon, a man named Abu Shah came up to the Prophet and asked for a transcript of the speech for his collection. The Prophet then asked one of his companions to write it down for Abu Shah and to give it to him.

These evidences show that the Prophet had approved of the writing and preserving of the hadiths, which means that hadiths are authentic. Moreover, since God asked us to “Obey Allah and obey the Messenger”, it only adds up that obeying the Prophet is God's commandment.

This sounded like some pretty solid evidence regarding the authenticity of the hadith, but then again, if hadiths are a bunch of lies invented to deviate the Muslims, as

Mr Choudhury and a lot of other conspiracy theorists believe, then these evidences too must've been planted in the hadiths.

Perhaps for the first time, I learnt the true viewpoint of the majority of the hadith-believing scholars. They consider the hadiths to be the Word of God as well! They say that since the Prophet never spoke without God's inspiration, whatever the Prophet did or said was in fact a message from God. Moreover, they believe that the Quran and hadiths have equal authority. To draw an analogy, they believe that the Prophet works in the Spirit of God, and is created as His Image – which is exactly the Christian message about Jesus. This given me a lot to think about.

To conclude, these two interviews gave me a widespread understanding about the position of hadiths and the Prophet in Islam, as considered by Muslims from contradictory schools of thought.