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# The Institution of the Sunnah and Hadith



# Durood Ghausia

## دروود غوثیہ

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اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ السَّابِقِ  
لِلْخَلْقِ نَوْمَرًا وَمَرْحَمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ طَهِّرْهُ  
عَدَدَ مَنْ مَضَى مِنْ خَلْقِكَ وَمَنْ بَقِيَ وَمَنْ  
سَعِدَ مِنْهُمْ وَمَنْ شَقِيَ صَلِّ وَلَا تَسْتَفْرِقْ  
الْعَدَّةَ وَتَحْطِ بِالْحَدِّ صَلِّ وَلَا غَايَةَ  
لَهَا وَلَا مُنْتَهَى وَلَا أَنْقِضَاءَ صَلِّ وَلَا  
دَائِمَةً بَدْرًا وَمَكَّةَ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَ  
سَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا مِثْلَ ذَاكَ ۝

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# The Institution of the Sunnah and Hadith

It has become the common practice in modern times for western-educated people in Islamic countries to claim to be able to reinterpret Islam by reference to the Holy Qur'an only, disregarding entirely the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him!) on one pretext or another. Unwittingly or wittingly by this means they strike at the very foundation of Islam on which it has been firmly based for the last fourteen centuries. The aim of these attempts is to reduce Islam to a set of general principles, many of which are of their own conception, or derived from their study of western literature, and so enable them to live a life patterned on western Europe while fixing the label of Islam to it. This practice has become so common in its various forms that it is time that the position of the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet of Islam (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) be made clear to those Muslims, who, for lack of essential knowledge of the structure of the religion of Islam may be enticed into this misguided way of thinking. The spread of these so-called "modern" ideas would have incalculably disastrous effects on the thought and practice, and collective life of the world of Islam.

It should be well understood that the exponents of this new-fangled theory (new-fangled with relation to the original authorities of Islam, though it has been tried out on various occasions in Islamic history) are themselves entirely devoid of the essential knowledge required for expressing any opinion about Islam. The Holy Qur'an has been studied in translation without any solid grounding in the Arabic language, the books

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of Hadith and the earliest sources of Islamic Law have not been studied at all, even Islamic History is only known at third or fourth hand. How anyone, with such a hopelessly inadequate preparation can have the effrontery to pontificate about such a deep subject as Islam is one of the tragedies of the modern age. In previous, more enlightened, times he would have been dismissed as a mischievous ignoramus but today even the flimsiest superficiality passes for learning, and mere mental aberrations for thought. History is blatantly contradicted, logic is flouted, as if these two essentials of intelligent human thinking are of no value. Indeed, they are of no value to those who wish to put forward pure fictions of their imagination as truth, for history and logic are their worst enemies.

We intend to show here that the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet is an integral part of Islam in addition to the Holy Qur'an. No one denies or can deny, that the Holy Qur'an is the foundation of Islam, being the direct Word of God to man. All principles of thought and action, spirituality and morality, private and social life in Islam are ultimately derived from the Holy Book. But the Holy Book itself was sent through the Holy Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him!) in fact, the Holy Prophet is the guarantee of the Holy Book. It is necessary, in order to be a messenger of God, to be free from any possibility of error and deviation, for any possibility of error would affect the reliability of the Holy Book. This is why the profession of faith of a Muslim consists of two fundamentals only, belief in the divinity of God and the truth of the Prophethood of Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) The truth of the Holy Qur'an follows from these two basic postulates, and so it is not mentioned separately. But perhaps our present-day "reformers" do not accept the "Good Word" (Kalima Tayyiba) which has from the beginning been the mark distinguishing the believer from the unbeliever, for it is only referred to and not spelled out in the Holy Qur'an. To what depths of absurdity the misused logic of man can sink!

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A Messenger of God, being necessarily free from error, receives continuous and permanent guidance from God. This guidance has been described most meaningfully by God Himself in the Holy Qur'an:

"Thou art indeed of the envoys, on a straight path" (36, iii & iv).

The Holy Prophet cannot take any step but that it will be on the straight path; it is impossible for him to deviate from this path even an inch onto a crooked one. God had elucidated the meaning of this straight path on another occasion:

"Indeed, my Lord is on a straight path" (II, lvi)

It is the path to God, the path of truth and guidance, and the Holy Prophet has been assured by God that he is without question and without intermission on this path. Not only this, God also states of Himself that:

"He guides whom He wills to a straight path" (2 cxlii).

and then again assures the Holy Prophet that:

"Thou indeed guidest to a straight path" (42, lii).

i.e., not only the Holy Prophet himself is on the straight path, but his guidance too has been confirmed by God as leading to this path, and his guidance is, as it were, God's guidance. The Holy Prophet, like all Muslims, used to pray:

"Guide us to the straight path"

in the **Surah Al-Fatiha**, for the continuous guidance he received was not of himself, but of God, and as a servant of God he was continually in need of it, but God has in his case permanently granted this prayer in the Qur'an itself:

"Thou art indeed of the envoys, on a straight path" (36, iii & iv).

It is established by these verses of God's Word that the Holy

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Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) is guided permanently and absolutely by God, and this guidance is not merely confined to the receiving and transmitting of the Holy Qur'an. God's assurance in this regard is without any provisions or limitations. But the "modernists" not only claim that the guidance given to the Holy Prophet is confined to the Qur'an, but also that his function as a Prophet is confined to the delivering of that Holy Qur'an that the rest of his activities were only carried on in the capacity of the leader of the community, and consequently have no permanent significance. But God has given us a Book "in which there is no doubt", and the Prophet's functions have been enumerated in detail:

"Allah has indeed shown grace to the believers in sending them a messenger from among themselves who reciteth unto them His revelations, and purifieth them and teacheth them the Book and Wisdom" (3, clxiv).

Here God has told us of the four functions of the Holy Prophet, of which only the first refers to the Holy Qur'an, "reciting His revelations"; the other three are besides this, of purifying" "teaching the Book", and "teaching Wisdom". These four functions have been described as the purpose for which God has sent the Messenger, and God's guidance to man will be fulfilled and completed by all and not by one only. All these functions are therefore part of God's guidance through the person of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!). The purpose of sending the Messenger is, apart from "reciting His revelations", firstly to "purify" them, for the proper understanding of the Book and "wisdom", and the ability to put them into practice, is unattainable unless a purification of the heart, the centre of the will and intentions, has not been already achieved. This purification consists of the spiritual influence of the Holy Prophet's personality, and his continual exhortations to the believers by word and example in the light of the Qur'an to purify their thoughts and deeds. The next stage after this purification is the "teaching of the Book",

that is, to explain and demonstrate the implications of the Book, and to apply it to the circumstances of human life in the most excellent way. Finally, the "teaching of wisdom" refers to the development into a science of certain subjects treated in general in the Holy Qur'an, such as spiritual science, moral science, the science of the Shariat, of Government etc., regarding all of which we can find valuable guidance both theoretical and practical from the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!). These four main functions of the Holy Prophet have been instituted and carried out by the command under the guidance of God Himself, and constitute an integral part of God's message to mankind. To state that only the first function is of permanent significance is simply to flout the Word of God.

The Holy Qur'an is not only "without any doubt" but it is also a (**kitab-e-mubeen**) "clear Book," and the basic principles of the Islamic faith have been stated by God in the most unmistakable terms. The status and importance of the Sunnah have been decisively asserted in the following verse:

"You have indeed in the Messenger of God a good example for him who looks forward to God and the Last Day and remembers God much" (33, xxi).

By the use of this expression "a good example" (**Uswa-i-Hasana**) God has given the Sunnah and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) a permanent and vital position in the religion of Islam, and further has mentioned as the qualification of those who will appreciate and accept this position that they look forward to their meeting with God and to the Last Day, and as a result always remember God. Following the Holy Prophet's example has been made a part of faith, an accompaniment to faith in God, and the Last Day, and anyone who does not accept and follow this example cannot claim, by the evidence of the Word of God itself, to be complete in faith. Here the word

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"example" has been used absolutely, not limited to any particular aspect of the Holy Prophet's life, and so covers his words, his deeds, his permissions and prohibitions, his private and public behaviour, his worship and his administration, his moral qualities and his manners.

The Holy Prophet's Sunnah is hereby elevated to the position of a divine institution in Islam, and his sayings a divinely authorised interpretation of God's message. In the verse discussed previously, God states "God hath indeed shown grace to the believers in sending them a messenger among themselves who reciteth unto them his revelations, and purifieth them, and teacheth them the Book and Wisdom." The special grace shown to the believers in the Final Message of God to mankind is that God has not only sent an authoritative Book in which the principles of faith and practice are laid down, but in order to make the "straight path" more clearly distinguished and easier to travel, has also sent a living example to show the perfect expression of these principles in human life; in other words, God has granted us that special grace of sending both the principles and their application. The Holy Qur'an is the verbal message, and the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) is the human message, the projection of the verbal message into the sphere of human behaviour. God has stated that those who look forward to meeting Him and to the Last Day, and who remember Him much, will certainly accept this human message, and the more their faith and their remembrance become firmly established, the more they will be able to profit by it and to identify themselves with it. Those Muslims from the Companions onwards who have always treated the following of the Sunnah as an article of faith were not merely acting on their personal opinion, they were obeying the clear injunctions of the Holy Book, and this explains the utmost care they took to preserve the Holy Prophet's practice and sayings and transmit them to those who came after.

We have seen that God has defined the functions of the

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Holy Prophet, and set up his personality in all its aspects as a model on which Muslims should pattern their lives. It remains to discover exactly to what extent Muslims are obliged to follow this pattern; with what particular emphasis this duty has been laid upon them. The reply to this question is immediately forthcoming:

"Obey God and obey the Prophet", (5, xcii).

where we are told that just as God's orders in the Holy Book are worthy of obedience, so are the interpretations and applications of God's orders by the Prophet equally binding on the Muslim Community. In fact, God's orders and the orders of the Holy Prophet based on them are essentially one, for:

"Whoever obeys the Prophet, he has obeyed God", (4, ixix).

It is part of God's infinite wisdom and kindness towards mankind that the main principles of Islam have been stated clearly in the Holy Book, while the application of these principles has been left to the Holy Prophet, but the Holy Prophet's orders are authorised and confirmed by God, so that obedience to the Holy Prophet's order is really obedience to God.

It is plain from the preceding examination of the Sunnah in Islam and of what Muslims' attitude should be towards it, that the whole life of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) is inspired by God, that he is perfectly guided at every moment by divine revelation. It would be impossible otherwise for God to hold him up as an unflinching example to mankind, or to order implicit obedience to him. But the highly illogical stand of the "modernists" is that revelation is confined only to the Holy Qur'an and that the Holy Prophet's words and deeds apart from transmitting the Holy Qur'an to mankind are uninspired by God, and therefore not binding on succeeding generations. This stand, as has already been shown, is quite untenable in the light of God's commands to the

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Muslim Community regarding the personality of the Holy Prophet, but it is untenable also for the reason that the Holy Qur'an makes it quite clear that revelation (**Wahy**) is not confined to Books of God, but is a continuous process in the lives of the Prophets. There are numerous incidents related in the Holy Qur'an about Prophets receiving revelation as a process quite apart from the revelation of Books. For instance, God said to Adam: "O, Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, (2 xxxv), "and their Lord called them: "Did I not forbid you . . . . .", (7 xxii). In the case of Noah: "And it was inspired in Noah: No one of these folk will believe save him who hath believed already", (11, xxxvi), "Load therein two of every kind", (11, xi), "O, Noah, he is not one of thy household", (11, xlvi). God states of Abraham: "That is our argument, which we gave to Abraham against his folk" (6, lxxxiii), "O, Abraham, forsake this", (11, xxvi). Jacob said: "I do indeed scent the presence of Joseph", and when he retrieved his eyesight, he said: "Did I not say to you that I know from God that which you know not?" (12, xciv ff.). In the case of Joseph: "We inspired in him: thou wilt tell them of this deed of theirs when they know not", (12, xv). God called to Moses in the valley of Tuwa: "O, Moses, verily I am thy Lord", (20, xii) and then: "Hearken to what is inspired". Again: "We inspired Moses saying "Take away my slaves by night", (20, lxxvii). These are only some of the many instances which can be given, in all of which reference is made to revelations from God to the Prophets on occasions which have nothing to do with the revelations of Books.

We cannot stress too much the point that in order to be a "good example" to Muslims, it is necessary that the Holy Prophet be at all times under the inspiration of God. Matters connected with the preaching of Islam and spiritual training of the believers, are specifically stated by God to be under His auspices, but even in the details of wordly life without inspiration it would be impossible to be an example, and that too for all Muslims at all times. No man by his own efforts or by dint only

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of his own natural qualities could personify Islam. It is no argument to bring forward the occasions when the Holy Prophet stated that he was only speaking from personal opinion. These occasions were when the matter concerned did not involve any religious or moral question, such as methods of cultivation, or the placing of the troops in battle. Another occasion was when deciding a case after hearing the evidence of both sides, for it is part of the Holy Prophet's example, as inspired by God, that cases should be decided on the outward evidence, and anyone who falsifies evidence in such a way that his deceit is not outwardly apparent, may have the case decided in his favour but will have to pay for his deceit before God. The Holy Prophet has been expressly ordered in the Holy Qur'an to decide matters of worldly expediency after consulting with his followers:

"Consult with them upon the conduct of affairs" 3, clix.

The exercise of human reason on the occasions which warrant it is also part of the Holy Prophet's example, and is under the commands of God. Neither it is an argument to say that the Holy Prophet used to draw conclusions from the Holy Qur'an by the exercise of reason, for God has made it quite plain, as had already been shown, that the Holy Prophet's application of Qur'anic principles is authorised by Himself and is to be taken as from Himself; it therefore follows that the reasoning used by the Prophet for drawing conclusions from the Holy Qur'an is itself inspired. That God inspires Prophets with reasoning as well as conclusions is expressed in the Holy Qur'an:

"That is Our argument, which We gave to Abraham against his folk" (6, lxxxiii),

where a whole process of reasoning is inspired to the Prophet Abraham.

To sum up, the Ahadeeth and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) are demonstrated by the Holy Qur'an to be divinely inspired.

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and to form a permanent part of the message of God to man. The interpretation of the Holy Book by the Prophet is therefore authoritative. The direct injunctions of the Qur'an are mostly compulsory, though some are recommendatory. The Sunnah too comprises categories. Many interpretations of the Prophet of Qur'anic ordinances have passed into law and have become mandatory. Some particularly regarding worship, can be graded as strongly recommended, or simply recommended. But in every way the Sunnah is always a beacon of guidance to the Islamic Community, and a living picture of the Islamic Ideal, gifted to us by a Most Kind Allah. To neglect it is to follow one's own low desires in preference to Divine Pleasure.

### **The Truth About Hadith**

It is a sign of the influence of a great deal of loose talk in criticism of Hadith, which has become fashionable in some circles, that the heading given to report in a newspaper recently was simply "Hadith should not be treated as a source of law." The heading, of course, was blatantly incorrect and misleading, and did not conform to the words reported below, but it is characteristic of a mentality which has been biased by sweeping and ill-informed remarks about the Hadith. The saying and actions of the Prophet, which include what is known as the Sunnah, or his practise, are both as a matter of faith and as a matter of fact a source of Muslim law, and are so by Divine Command and by the very nature of things. The Qur'an deals extensively with matters of faith and morality, the nature of God, the reality of prophethood, the day of judgement and the life of the next world, the principles of worship, or human relationships and the inward attitude man must cultivate towards his fellow-men; it also lays down certain fundamental civil and criminal laws, but of necessity, since the Qur'an is intended to be easily read, understood and encompassed, detailed application of the law is not its subject, and it is part of God's providence that this should be demonstrated by His Prophet. This element in God's message to man, that is to say, its practical application by the

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Prophet, was clearly asserted in the Qur'an, and understood as an indivisible and vital part of Islam both by the Prophet himself and his Companions. Under God's inspiration, the Prophet developed legal ordinances in the light of the Qur'an which were intended by him and accepted by his Companions to be of permanent validity. The 'Khulafa-i-Rashidin' and those Companions who survived them were insistent that after the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet had an obligatory nature in matters of law, and this they took their authority from the frequent order of God "Obey God and obey the Messenger", or simply "Obey God and the Messenger", in which the last phrase God and His Messenger are indissolubly linked, as also in another; "He who obeys the Messenger obeys God". It has never been in question at any stage in Islamic history that the Sunnah as recorded in authoritative Hadith is, in development of the legal principles laid down in the Qur'an, an essential source for Islamic legislation.

The butt of criticism, mostly superficial and backed by no solid foundation of knowledge, of some over-enthusiastic purveyors of **Ijtihad** is the authoritative nature of the Hadith which we have in our possession. Very few of these critics, if any of them, have ever cared to make a deep and unbiased study of Hadith literature, much of which is only available in Arabic, especially the critical and analytical works. From one aspect in particular this perfunctory attitude to Hadith is a matter of great sorrow, for the collection and sifting, grading and comparing of Hadith is one of the greatest achievements in scholarship not only of the Muslims but of the whole world. Precisely in order to remove any doubt of authenticity, generation after generation of traditionists subjected Hadiths to the most rigorous scrutiny and came to very definite conclusions; what a pity that this wonderful monument of faith and brilliant scholarship should be dismissed in a few glib words by "modernists" who have not taken the trouble even to examine it. No mass of historical material has ever been put to such

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tests, nor have such meticulous subsidiary sciences such as the biography of the Companions, their Followers, the Followers of their Followers and the other relaters of Hadith, ever been created by any other body of scholars. The whole of Hadith literature is pervaded by a spirit of such fine exactitude that it would seem pedantic if it were not for the unstained honesty of purpose of the Traditionists, to leave no avenue of research untraversed.

The first of the criticisms which are now commonly being directed against the Hadith is that they were not collected in the time of the Prophet or of the '**Khulafa-i-Rashidin**', (period of the four 'rightly guided' Caliphs immediately after the death of the Prophet), and that during the period between the utterance or occurrence of their contents and their being recorded in writing there was every chance of their being materially altered. Some have even gone so far as to say that they were not recorded because they were unreliable. That in the earlier stages they were not fully recorded in writing, is true, though it is not true that they were not recorded at all even as regards the Prophet's life-time, for there is good evidence to show that Abdullah bin Amr bin As for one, used to write down what he heard from his Master. Other Companions too put their collections of Hadith into writing later in life, particularly Abu Huraira and Abdullah bin Abbas, two very important sources of Hadith. The reasons for their not being fully written down in the time of the Prophet and the early Companions are quite clear and there is nothing mysterious about them. The Arabs' indifference to writing in this period is well-known; very few of them were literate. Huge stores of knowledge of genealogy and poetry were preserved in their prodigious memories; some people being able to recite a hundred thousand verses. There were no books in currency among them; even during the Prophet's lifetime the Qur'an did not circulate in book form. The fact that the Prophet's sayings, legal decisions and deeds, were not

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generally written down is therefore not surprising in the least. There is also evidence that the Prophet disapproved of the general writing of Hadith in his lifetime for fear that they would become mixed up with the Qur'an, which had not yet been fully revealed, and with which the Muslims had yet to become completely familiar. But this is not to say that he disapproved of the memorising of or acting upon Ahadith; on the contrary, he insisted on it. The more learned of the Companions, including the '**Khulafa-i-Rashidin**', spent their time in absorbing thoroughly the explanations, applications, and developments of the Qur'an by the Prophet in addition to their study of the Qur'an itself. When the Prophet had passed away from this world and the age of the '**Khulafa**' came, after some deliberation they also came to the conclusion that the written recording of Ahadith and publishing them in a book form was inexpedient at this stage, for the same reasons as in the Prophet's lifetime, that the Word of God must be learnt and studied and thoroughly absorbed first, while its practical application by the Prophet can be handed down by word of mouth and by personal example. But if we look at the life and the decisions of the '**Khulafa-i-Rashidin**', we find that in every case where any matter had not been dealt with explicitly by the Qur'an, they considered it obligatory to discover what was the practice of the Prophet in this situation and made their decisions according to their findings. To contravene the practice of the Prophet on any vital matter was in their eyes equivalent to contravening Islam itself.

The whole of the history of this period shows this valuation of the Prophet's practice, and on this point there is complete unanimity. It is a grave mis-statement to say that Hazrat Umar was against the relating of Traditions; he decided only against collecting them into a book form, not that they should not be learnt and known. He was certainly strict as regards accuracy of reporting and always demanded a supporting witness if any Companion recounted something of the Messenger of God; when that witness was forthcoming he

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accepted the Tradition with no further hesitation. In those cases which came up before him he continually had recourse to his own knowledge of the Prophet's rulings, and if he himself did not have this knowledge he appealed to the other companions; on receiving the required information and after satisfying himself regarding its accuracy, he immediately acted upon it. Indeed, the fact that some of the Ahadith were not completely recorded in writing during the lifetime of the Companions was no drawback; they themselves were living models of his practice and treasure-houses of his sayings. They spread over the huge areas which now constituted the Islamic empire, to Kufa and Basra in Iraq, to Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Khurasan. Here they were surrounded by eager pupils both Arab and non-Arab, thirsting to hear about their revered Prophet from those who had seen and lived with him. Some of these pupils, who are known as the Followers of the Companions (**Tabe'in**) became renowned all over the Islamic world for their learning in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, for their correct reporting and understanding of Hadith, and for their piety and purity of life. Such were Hasan Basri, the associate of the companions Imran bin Husain and Anas bin Malik in Basra; Alqama and Aswad, the repositories of the vast learning of Abdullah bin Masud in Kufa, who were also the pupils of Hazrat Umar and Aisha; Said bin Musayyib, the pupil of Abu Hurairah and others; Taus, Mujahid, Ata bin Abi Rabah and Nafi, the pupils of Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdullah bin Umar; Masruq, Urwa bin Zubair, and Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, the pupils of Hazrat Aisha, and many others whose honesty and trustworthiness are unquestioned. Here it is important to note that Hazrat Aisha and Abu Huraira lived up to between 50 and 60 A.H. Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdullah bin Umar to around 70 A.H., Abu Said Khudri to between 70 and 80 A.H. and Anas bin Malik to 90 A.H. This is to say that in the second half of the first century of the Hijra it was still possible to hear a great store of Hadith from those who had seen or heard them directly from the Messenger of God himself. Nearly all famous **Tabe'in** we have mentioned

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just now, lived up to dates between 90 and 120 A.H., which means that up to this time the collections of Hadith related by these perfectly reliable reporters were available to all who wished to take them. In the latter half of the first Hijri century, there were many written collections current, such as the **Sahifa** which Hammam ibn Munabbih wrote at Abu Huraira's dictation, the **Sahifa** of Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, or Samura bin Jundub, and other Companions. It was at the first quarter of the second century (100-125 A.H.) that the first large-scale collections in book form began to be made, those by Ibn Juraji, Malik Sufian Thauri, Ma'mar bin Rashid and others, all pupils of the **Tabe'in**. The idea that much time elapsed between the original hearing and final recording in book form of Hadith as would make them unreliable is found to be completely unfounded when their history as given above is attentively considered, particularly with regard to these early collections, almost all the contents of which found their way into the later collections of Bukhari etc., a century later. But the principle is also established that those Ahadith recounted by the well-known and reliable **Tabe'in** whether collected into book form or not were available from the recounters themselves up to the first quarter of the second century of the Hijra, and it only requires two or three successive trustworthy scholars of Ahadith to convey them to Bukhari and his contemporaries. It is also necessary to mention that between the earliest published collections of great importance such as that of Abdur Razzaq (died shortly after 200 A.H.), the pupil of Ibn Juraji, Sufian Thauri, Ma'mar bin Rashid, and Malik, were the earlier collectors. The question arose as to what were these unreliable, wrong or concocted Hadith of which so much is being made by ill informed critics today? It is not true to state that untrustworthy traditions regarding the Messenger of God existed to any noteworthy extent during the main portion of the era of the **Khulafa-i-Rashidin**. It was only when the schismatics began to appear such as the Kharijis, and the dynastic clashes of the Bani Umayya, Bani Abbas and Bani Hashim convulsed the Ummat, and particularly after the martyrdom of Imam Husain

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and his family at Karbala, that some partisans had recourse to distorting or inventing Hadith to justify their claims. But it was never the real scholars of traditions who related these incorrect reports, nor had they any purpose in doing so; unreliable traditions were purveyed by unreliable people, the partisans, popular preachers, story-tellers and so on, and have not escaped the eagle eyes of the very critical **Muhaddithin**. The solid body of recognised Hadith which forms the basis of Muslim Law can be found in Malik as well as in the decisions of Abu Hanifa and the later Imams. If there are differences of opinion on any important points it is almost always where that difference already existed among the companions. What is remarkable about Muslim Law based on the Qur'an and Sunnah as presented by Abu Hanifa and Malik, for instance, is not the differences in detail but the extraordinary agreement in its main structure, which proves that there was an agreed corpus of Sunnah which was common to both schools of thought. It is a common fallacy to speak of the accepted books of traditions such as Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, etc., as if they themselves constitute the source of Islamic Fiqh. They are certainly adduced as authorities in later judicial controversy, but it is often forgotten that the whole fabric of Fiqh was erected before these famous traditionists were even born. Abu Hanifa himself was born in 80 A.H. when some of the other Companions of the Prophet were still alive, and he was the pupil of some of the famous **Tabe'in** we have mentioned above, particularly Ata bin Abi Rabah in Mecca. The body of traditions used by Abu Hanifa and Malik were fresh from the **Tabe'in** and unsullied by partisan politics and imaginative interpolations, which in any case affected traditions treating with law very little. These traditions are present in the later collections, but were used by Abu Hanifa one hundred years earlier.

The statement reported by the biographers of Imam Bukhari that he selected 7,000 Ahadith out of 600,000 is being put to much use by the detractors of Hadith to attempt to show that the majority are unreliable. This statement was made by

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his biographers to extol his industry and discrimination, but from the point of view of the history of Hadith it is necessary to go more deeply into the matter and avoid rash conclusions which do not conform to reality. In citing this bare statement, the impression is given that in Bukhari's time there was a vast, unclassified mass of every kind of tradition, true and false, floating all over the then Islamic Empire, and that he suddenly appeared on the scene, separated the true from the false, and was only able to find 7,000 out of 600,000. The real facts are nothing resembling this at all. Criticism and scrutiny of Hadith was being done from the very beginning, even in the time of the Companions and their Followers, and there had always been a central core of unquestionably true Hadith with the earnest, sincere and pious scholars. For instance, the comments of Muhammad bin Hassan, the renowned pupil of Abu Hanifa, on Malik's book of Hadith, the 'Mu'atta' show that out of more than a thousand traditions of the Messenger of God and the Companions quoted by Malik, Abu Hanifa only differed with about eighty and even then not regarding their authenticity, but preferring a different ruling. The mischief of fabricating or distorting Ahadith was begun, as we have said, during the time of the political dissension between the Bani Hashim and the Bani Umayya, and particularly after the massacre of 'Karbala', when unprecedented passions were roused. But these unreliable traditions circulated among the leading partisans of these two parties and were used to impress their prospective supporters; the really learned were well aware of this and such dishonest tampering with the true Sunnah was clearly denounced by them, and the relators of such traditions singled out and condemned. A study of the comments of the traditionists on such fabricators and the rejection of their claims to credibility show this plainly, for instance, Sha'bi, one of the leading Tabe'in in knowledge of tradition and law, roundly condemns various people who related much partisan reports attributing them wrongly to Hazrat Ali. This kind of fabrication had currency among the ignorant and those who had special interest, not

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among the scholars.

A second breeding-ground for incorrect and exaggerated traditions were the public preachers and story-tellers, who are prone to this weakness to the present day. The books of the biographers of the reporters are full of condemnations of people of this type, and their effusions, though gaining currency among the unlettered, were never accepted by the learned. Apart from these two main sources of falsification, there were other unreliable Hadith which were due to mere human weakness, such as forgetting, mixing-up, exaggeration, ascribing statements of the Companions to the Prophet himself and so on. The whole science of the traditionists was brought to bear on the elimination of such weak reports, and by an amazingly thorough system of analysis and comparison and minute checking, these defects have been brought to light and carefully classified. The immense research which has gone into the study of Hadith through such comparative studies of Hadith such as Asqalani's commentary on Bukhari, where all the ramifications of the variants of a particular Hadith are traced meticulously. After making such a study the only honest conclusion one can reach is that it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at anything but the same conclusions as these great Muslim religious scholars. With regard to the statement regarding Bukhari's selections of Hadith, it is also necessary to understand that in the language of traditionists, all the variants of a single Hadith are counted as a separate Hadith, or an identical Hadith related by two or more different persons. For instance, the famous Hadith reported by Umar "actions are judged by intentions" is related from 700 different authorities. In the terminology of the Traditionists, these are counted as 700 Ahadith. Thus the large number of Hadith mentioned are not actually all different, but contain many slight variations of a single Hadith. Secondly, at that time the statement of a Companion was also known as a Hadith, and these were also not included by Bukhari in his collection. In sum, this statement regarding Bukhari's discrimination only amounts to saying that he took the trouble to study the whole

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of the Ahadith, both reliable and unreliable, which existed written or unwritten in his day. But it should not be imagined that he was the first to determine the true from the false; a generally agreed body of good and fair traditions was already in existence with the earlier traditionists. Bukhari added his own unparalleled acumen to make a final examination and compiled a definitive selection of those Ahadith which possessed the very best authority. Those who lightly challenge the authority of such compilations should be well aware of what they are doing; it requires a person of exceptional industry and intelligence even to reach to the level of a pupil of these great **Muhaddithin**. To surpass them would require something more than the superficial and biased minds of today, which have not shown themselves capable of any constructive work in the religious field up to the present.

We come now to a very crucial matter; it is stated that the Hadith should be re-examined on a new basis and with a view to the changed environment. No one has yet given the least inkling of what this basis is to be, except perhaps that it will be the arbitrary fancies of the re-examiners. We have already mentioned that it will take them most of their time to learn what Bukhari's basis is, let alone working out a new one. But what constitutes exactly this changed environment? We must be very clear about what has changed and what has not. The real change in the modern world has taken place in the physical realm through the invention of machines and scientific apparatus, and has affected particularly communications, travel, the publication of books and disseminating of information, availability of mass-produced books and labour-saving devices. But the spiritual and moral nature of man has not changed, nor indeed, has his basic physical nature; he still has to eat, sleep, wash, relieve himself, marry and bring up children, find shelter, work for his bread and preserve a family and community life. Any amendments in Muslim law which are necessitated by the inevitable changes of the machine age are perfectly justified.

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But there is another type of change which is always lurking consciously or subconsciously in the minds of some of the modernists, and this is the change in habits due to foreign domination, not physical but cultural domination. Many of these habits, both of thought and action, are not inevitable at all, still less desirable, and are simply the result of blind conformity. Much of the criticism and scepticism directed towards religion today is not in the least genuine but simply a western habit of thought. Most, if not all, of the modern critics of Hadith among Muslims have not exercised any constructive or original thought on the question, but borrow the criticisms of western writers and use their arguments. Western detractors of Hadith can be divided into two main categories: (a) sceptic rationalists and (b) Christian missionaries. All of them have the characteristics of one or both of these categories in various proportions. There is one attribute which is common to both of them; they are unable to conceive of a Revealed Law. Christianity in its present form is based on the rejection of the Jewish Law, which was effected shortly after Jesus' removal from this world, in the time of his disciples. This rejection has moulded the mentality of the West so that they now have great difficulty in accepting even the possibility of a law laid down under Divine Inspiration. So the first reason for their criticism of Hadith is an inherent defect of mind. As far as the sceptic rationalists are concerned they do not believe in revealed religion at all, and their criticism starts off with this basic prejudgement. With an inherited warped mentality and a disbelief in the honesty and good intentions of man, they naturally assume that what they cannot understand must have been invented, and use all kinds of specious and unscientific arguments to attempt to prove it. Their attitude to Islam, in fact to all revealed religion, is that of a disbeliever; it is obvious that for a Muslim to adopt their attitude or make use of their very poorly founded arguments is absurd and self-contradictory. The second category of critics are the Christian missionaries or those inspired by the missionary spirit; their intention from the beginning is to denigrate Islam by any method

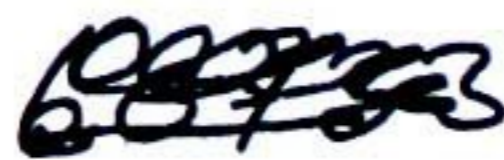
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that comes to hand. All weapons, honest and dishonest, rational and irrational, virtuous and vicious are allowable in their view. To expect them to make a scholarly and impartial study of any branch of Islam would be sheer gullibility. Some of the books regarding Hadith published from European universities are written precisely in this spirit. It can be imagined that any Muslim who bases his knowledge of Hadith on such works can know precisely nil, or rather a minus quantity, regarding the subject. If the basis of Hadith criticism or the criticism of any branch of Islam is to be an outlook based on the borrowed conceptions and way of life of the West then it has no validity at all and must be rejected outright. Subservience to a civilization which happens to be passing through a temporary phase of material prosperity and power can have no place in the religion of Islam. Genuine research and reform which are not coloured by the spirit of mere imitation but based on true faith and directed to the real progress of Islam are quite another thing. To be a genuine Muslim reformer, a person should have a burning faith, the love of God and His Messenger, and intimate personal experience of the spiritual and devotional as well as the practical and institutional aspects of Islam. The characteristic he should not have is the desire to make Islam conform to the present norms of thought and behaviour in the western world, which are founded on agnosticism, rationalism, materialism, anti-metaphysicism, libertinism and sheer prejudice, in fact, the opposite of everything that Islam upholds.

## **Khanqah Qadria Razuia**

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WOODHURST, CHATSWORTH, DURBAN  
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## Remembrance

There are two kinds of remembrance of Allah (**Zikr**). One is the direct kind, when a person lays aside all worldly preoccupations and devotes himself exclusively to remembering his Creator. The second is indirect and through the intermediary of actions. This kind of remembrance means that before performing any act we should consider whether it is liked by Allah or not. The perfection of this **Zikr** is that it should be constant, just as a man's activities are constant. When the Sufis say that the object of life is the remembrance of Allah they refer to both these kinds of remembrance, the direct as well as the indirect. Allah the Highest says:

"In truth, it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find contentment."

What life is worthy of the name if the heart is not contented? It follows from this that remembrance of Allah is the very essence of life, and the Sufis do not exaggerate when they say that it is for this that man has been created.

The type of direct remembrance when a person devotes his mind exclusively to Allah is comparatively easy. The indirect kind through the medium of actions is more difficult, and cannot be taught by the master making the pupil practice it in his presence as the first kind can. Indirect **Zikr** has to be practiced by the pupil himself in the course of his daily life. Wherever in the Glorious Quran Allah alludes to the "**muhsinin**" (those who do good, or do well), He means these very people who act only after remembering Him; and that is to say, they act in the best manner, by first referring their action to Him.

There is another type of remembrance (**Zikr**) which is called belief in Allah as the One and Only Agent. The most obvious meaning of the declaration of Unity "**La ilaha ill'Allah**" is that

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there is none fit to be worshipped except Allah, that He is the One and Only God. The question arises is that why is He the only being fit to be worshipped? The reason is that He alone possess all power, and no one else has any power at all; whatever power any other being appears to possess is only His gift. Consequently whatever takes place in the universe is ultimately from Him. Now the way to perform this **Zikr** is that whatever happens to a person he should immediately consider it as coming from Allah, as the Divine Book says "**Say, everything is from Allah.**" People often ascribe major events to Allah, somebody's death, for instance; but this **Zikr** means that when any event occurs whether great or small he should see through the chain of outward cause and effect and immediately remember the Great Author, and realise that it is from Him. As Allah says:

**"Remember thy Lord when thou forgettest Him."** If anyone carries out this **Zikr** constantly, his life no longer remains a meaningless sequence of events, but becomes a series of incidents in his relationship with his Divine Master. If he receives something pleasant he considers it a manifestation of the Bounty and Mercy of God which He has promised to His servants. If he is overtaken by something unpleasant he perceives it as the wages of his sins which the Supreme Judge has given him in this world; he realises that it is a test of his faith and perseverance, and hopes that it will requite for the faults that he has committed. In this way his whole life becomes a communion with Allah. It could even be described as a conversation with Him, for although to speak directly with the Supreme Being is the privilege of his exceptionally favoured servants, through this type of remembrance every believer can converse with his Lord; Allah addresses the believer through the medium of events, and the believer makes his reply by the turning of his heart towards Him in reaction to the event. By means of this **Zikr** the relationship with Allah becomes closer and closer and develops into one of love.

**"He loves them and they Love Him."** Their life in this world turns into a story of a lover and his beloved.

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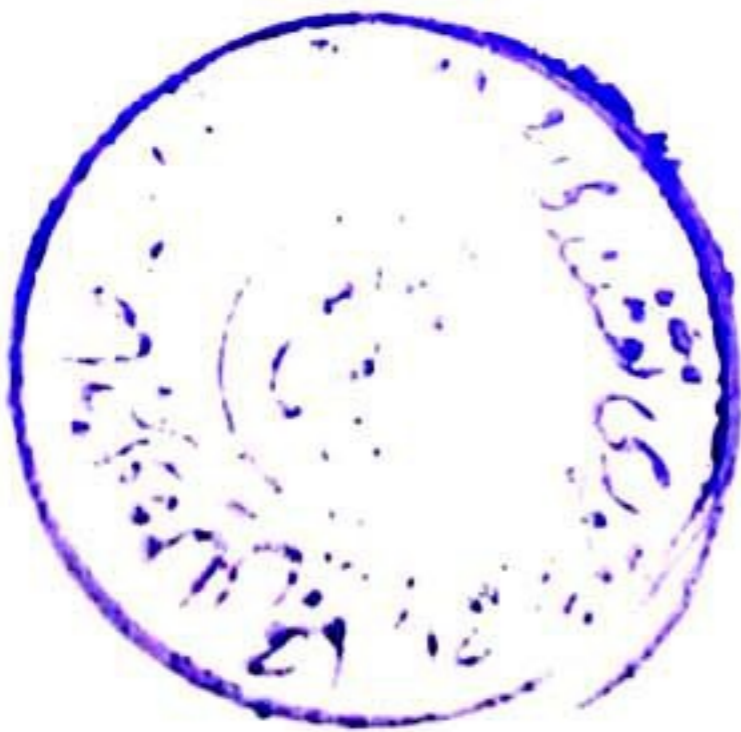
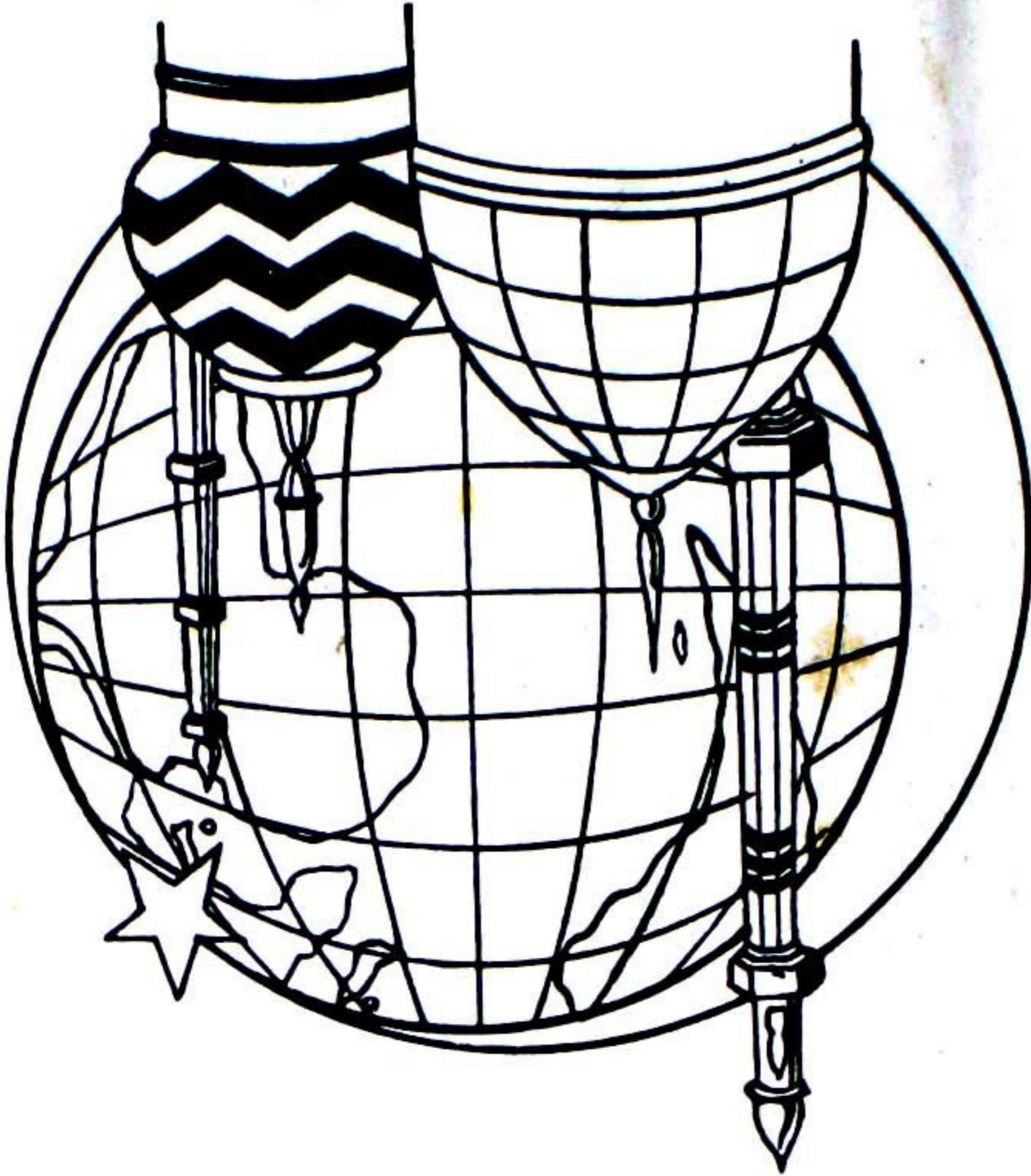
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