Is Ilm-ur-rijal a Science or is the criteria for the authenticity of hadiths?

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Abstract: **This article provides a details understanding in dealing with the issue of validity of hadith, the second source of 'Islamic Shariah'-whether the ilm-ur –rijal could be considered as a part of science or not. The method for convincing the topic is based on the Holy Quran and Sunnah. It explains the importance of scrutinizing 'isnad' to follow the authentic hadith and thus to walk through the straightforward way (Siratool Mustaqim). For logical purpose, some aspects and methods of science have been explained. Foundation and method of 'ilm-ur-rijal'have been discussed providing examples from the renowned 'rijal' books written by the early leaders (Imam) in the respective area. Common arguments supporting 'ilm-ur-rijal' are also mentioned.**

Key-words: **ilm-ur-rijal, isnad, Siqah, daeef, matrook, data-science, pseudo-science.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Almighty Allah has sent the mankind as His successor(Khalifa).In this examination hall of the world, He has revealed the Constitution of His commands, forbids, or rules and regulations(Wahi) in order to walk through the straightforward way(Siratool Mustaqim) in addition to has sent His Messengers and Prophets as the teachers or guides for the mankind. The final heavenly book, the Holy Quran and the last Prophet as well as His Messenger, Muhammad (SAW) is the Guide to walk through the straightforward way over the world until the final Day (Qiyamaat). According to the speech delivered on the day of farewell Hajj, the means to protect oneself from misguidance (the opposite or bypasses of siratool mustaqim), is keeping oneself adhered to the Holy Quran and Sunnah. To go on adhered to the Quran and Sunnah, one has to have a total collection/arrangement of the words and speeches delivered by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) available (nearby hands) along with the way of justifying it-whether it's intact or falsified. In his lifetime, the Prophet Muhammad has warned his followers of thirty liars (fake prophets). So, if the prophet is fake, then why isn't hadiths?How should we verify those?Moreover, the Messenger of Allah(SAW) has warned of the dangerous outcome of giving the lie to him—their ultimate fate will be in the hell. Mentioned in Sahihul Bukhari as in hadith no.108: (38) Chapter: The sin of a person who tells a lie against the Prophet (saws)- Narrated Anas(radi.): The fact which stops me from narrating a great number of Hadiths to you is that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever tells a lie against me intentionally, then (surely) let him occupy his seat in Hell-fire."[Ref.1]. So, by analyzing the biographical information of the narrators of hadith as well as criticizing and appreciating

words about them (*al-Jarh wa Ta'dil*) with the help of *ilm-ur-rijal*, and in this way by examining the sources(*isnad*) of hadith, we can protect ourselves from falling in the lie.

In my article,"Do Religion and Science need each other?", I tried to explain that science is a single element in the vast field of religion. So, all elements of religion isn't dependent on science. It's not meaningful to measure the religion from scientific point of view or determine it's acceptibility. In most cases, religion is just faith or beliefs. So, in this article, I intend to explain whether the *ilm-ur-rijal* is a science or not, what's it's base, what are it's elements, how is it's methods, whether it has any paradoxes or fallacies or contradictions etc. or if there's any alternative of it to justify any hadith. Before that, let's move to have some ideas of science. Although the readers are informed basically of these fundamentals, I mention them just to have a look.

What is Science?

Science is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.[1][2] And there're numerous definitions from different points of view.

Essence of science:

Research – systematic investigation into existing or new knowledge.

Scientific discovery – observation of new phenomena, new actions, or new events and providing new reasoning to explain the knowledge gathered through such observations with previously acquired knowledge from abstract thought and everyday experiences. And many more.

Scientific method [3]

Scientific method (outline) – body of techniques for investigating phenomena and acquiring new knowledge, as well as for correcting and integrating previous knowledge. It is based on observable, empirical, measurable evidence, and subject to laws of reasoning, both deductive and inductive.

Empirical method –

Experimental method – The steps involved to produce a reliable and logical conclusion include:

I. Conducting initial research and asking a question about a natural phenomenon

II. Making observations of the phenomenon and/or collecting data about it

III. Forming a hypothesis – proposed explanation for a phenomenon. For a hypothesis to be a scientific hypothesis, the scientific method requires that one can test it. Scientists generally base scientific hypotheses on previous observations that cannot satisfactorily be explained with the available scientific theories.

IV. Predicting a logical consequence of the hypothesis

V. Testing the hypothesis through an experiment – methodical procedure carried out with the goal of verifying, falsifying, or establishing the validity of a hypothesis. The 3 types of scientific experiments are:

- Controlled experiment – experiment that compares the results obtained from an experimental sample against a control sample, which is practically identical to the experimental sample except for the one aspect the effect of which is being tested (the independent variable).
- Natural experiment – empirical study in which the experimental conditions (i.e., which units receive which treatment) are determined by nature or by other factors out of the control of the experimenters and yet the treatment assignment process is arguably exogenous. Thus, natural experiments are observational studies and are not controlled in the traditional sense of a randomized experiment.
- Observational study – draws inferences about the possible effect of a treatment on subjects, where the assignment of subjects into a treated group versus a control group is outside the control of the investigator.
- Field experiment – applies the scientific method to experimentally examine an intervention in the real world (or as many experimentalists like to say, naturally occurring environments) rather than in the laboratory. See also field research.

VI. Gather and analyze data from experiments or observations, including indicators of uncertainty.

VII. Draw conclusions by comparing data with predictions. And there're cyclic order or restarting.So, we can try to explain it by using a flowchart:
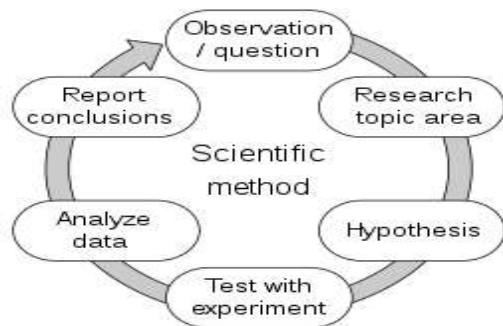

Fig. adopted from Wikipedia.org

The scientific method is often represented as an ongoing process. This diagram represents one variant, and there are many others.

Now, Let's move to Methods of Ilm-ur-rijal:

What-is-the-science-of-Ilm-Rijaal-and-its-significance

Biographical evaluation (romanized: ʿilm al-rijāl; literally meaning 'Knowledge of Men', but more commonly understood as the Science of Narrators) refers to a discipline of Islamic religious studies within hadith terminology in which the narrators of hadith are evaluated. Its goal is to establish the credibility of the narrators, using both historic and religious knowledge, in order to distinguish authentic and reliable hadiths from unreliable hadiths.[1] ʿIlm al-rijāl is synonymous with what is commonly referred to as al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl (discrediting and accrediting) – the criticism and declared acceptance.

Foundations of ilm-al-rijal

Ilm-al-rijal has been founded on the following verse from the Holy Quran:

"O you who have faith! If a fasiq (evil-doer, profligate person) should bring you some news, verify it, lest you should visit [harm] on some people out of ignorance, and then become regretful for what you have done." [Surah Hujurat, 49:6]

- The proof is in the verse: {… from whom you are pleased with from the witnesses} [al-Baqarah: 282]
- and the verse: {And let two who possess integrity among you bare witness} [at-Talāq: 2].

Thus it demonstrates what we mentioned from these two verses that the report of the sinful is dropped and not accepted, and that the testimony [Shahādah] of one who does not possess integrity is rejected, and the report [Khabar] as well- even though its significance is separated from the meaning of testimony in some respects, they are in agreement regarding the overall conditions they share since the report of the sinful is not acceptable according to Ahl ul-Ilm just as his testimony is rejected according to all of them . The Sunnah demonstrates the prohibition of transmitting abominable transmissions just as in the example from the Qur'ān regarding the prohibition of the report of the sinful.

Base in the Study of Hadith:

Sahih Muslim- Chapter: The Obligation of Transmitting on Authority of Trustworthy Narrators and Abandoning the Liars

Chapter: That Which is Related to the Statements 'The Chain of Narration is from the Religion'; 'Transmissions are not Taken Except from Trustworthy Narrators'; and 'Criticism of the Narrators With What is Permissible Regarding Them, Even Obligatory and That It is not the Prohibited Kind of Backbiting, Rather it is the Defense of the Noble Sharī'ah'

- It has been mentioned on authority of Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, that she said: 'The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah

upon him, ordered us to afford people their (rightful) positions according to what the Qur'ān states: {And above all who possess knowledge is another who is knowledgeable} [Yūsuf: 76]. Thus based on the example of what we mentioned [regarding the narrators of Hifẓ and Itqān, and narrations which lack excessive inconsistency or strong contradiction], we compiled what you asked for of [those kind] of reports on authority of the Messenger of Allah(SAW)..

As for anything of that wherein the people were charged [with some criticism] by the people of Ḥadīth, or by the majority of [the people of Ḥadīth], then we did not preoccupy ourselves with bringing forward their narrations, such as Abd Allah ibn Miswar Abī Ja'far il-Madā'inī, Amr bin Khālid, Abd il-Quddūs ash-Shāmī, Muhammad ibn Sa'īd il-Maslūb, Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm, Sulaymān bin Amr Abī Dāwud an-Nakha'ī, and those like them whereof they were accused of fabricating narrations and manufacturing reports; and like that are those whose narrations are dominated with Munkar, or mistakes-we withheld from their narrations as well.

❖ There is a famous narration on authority of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah upon him, that: 'Whoever relates on my authority a narration while aware that it is a lie, then he is one of the liars'. Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah narrated it to us that Wakī narrated to us, on authority of Shu'bah, on authority of al-Hakam, on authority of Abd ir-Rahman ibn Abī Laylā, on authority of Samurah bin Jundab. And also Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah narrated to us, that Wakī narrated to us, on authority of Shu'bah and Sufyān, on authority of Habīb, on authority of Maymūn ibn Abī Shabīb, on authority of al-Mughīrat ibn Shu'bah, they both said that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah upon him, said the same thing.

II. METHODS

In all the six renowned books of hadith, known as "Kutub as-sittah", there are detailed description of the chains of hadith(isnad)—started with Haddathana/Akhbarana. .Aan(Arabic letter 'Aain, noon')etc. and so on upto the Prophet(SAW). These chains are justified on the basis of the narrators truthfulness, reliability, memory etc. (mainly Adalat, and Dhabt) virtues. Chain's continuity is checked, if there's any discontinuity or possibility of meeting between the two narrators. Their years of birth, death, introduction or meeting with the Prophet (SAW), history or situation of the described hadith—if there's any credibility gap. Whether the narration is against the monotheism (Tawheed) of Islam or the oneness of Allah, is there any polytheism(shirk) inside it, is it against the fundamental branches of belief (Aqidah), or is it in favor of various misguided or partisan group (Sufism, etc.) In a

nutshell, we can say "Ilm-ur-rijal" as a "Data Science", to my mind.

So, it's clear that the foundation of this science is on the narrator's righteousness or unrighteousness, reliability or not. Some people may not accept this idea. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has certified the people of three (03) ages, known as *khairul qurun-* his companions, and successive two generation (*Tabiyee, tabi-Tabiyee*).

❖ Rijal al-Hadith (the study of the reporters of hadith). In scrutinising the reporters of a hadith, authenticating or disparaging remarks made by recognised experts, from amongst the Successors and those after them, were found to be of great help. Examples of such remarks, in descending order of authentication, are:

i. "Imam (leader), Hafiz (preserver)."
ii. "Reliable, trustworthy."--Siqah
iii. "Makes mistakes."
iv. "Weak." -Daeef
v. "Abandoned (by the traditionists)."--Matrook
vi. "Liar, used to fabricate ahadith." --Kajjab

Reporters who have been unanimously described by statements such as the first two may contribute to a *Sahih* ("sound", see later) isnad. An isnad containing a reporter who is described by the last two statements is likely to be *Da`if jiddan* (very weak) or *Maudu`* (fabricated). Reporters who are the subject of statements such as the middle two above will cause the isnad to be *Da`if* (weak), although several of them relating the same hadith independently will often increase the rank of the hadith to the level of Hasan (good). If the remarks about a particular reporter conflict, a careful verdict has to be arrived at after in-depth analysis of e.g., the reason given for any disparagement, the weight of each type of criticism, the relative strictness or leniency of each critic, etc.

The earliest remarks cited in the books of Rijal go back to a host of Successors, followed by those after them until the period of the six canonical traditionists, a period covering the first three centuries of Islam. A list of such names is provided by the author in his thesis, Criticism Of Hadith Among Muslims With Reference To Sunan Ibn Majah, at the end of chapters IV, V and VI.

Among the earliest available works in this field are *Ta'rikh of Ibn Ma`in* (d. 233), Tabaqat of Khalifa b. Khayyat (d. 240), Ta'rikh of al-Bukhari (d. 256), *Kitab al-Jarh wa 'l-Ta'dil* of Ibn Abi Hatim (d. 327) and *Tabaqat of* Muhammad b. Sa'd (d. 320).

A number of traditionists made efforts specifically for the **gathering of information (Data Science)** about the reporters of the five famous collections of hadith, those of al-Bukhari (d. 256), Muslim (d. 261), Abu Dawud (d. 275), al-Tirmidhi (d. 279) and al-Nasa'i (d. 303), giving authenticating and disparaging remarks in detail. The first major such work to include also the reporters of Ibn Majah (d. 273) is the ten-

volume collection of al-Hafiz `Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi (d. 600), known as *Al-Kamal fi Asma' al-Rijal*. Later, Jamal al-Din Abu 'l-Hajjaj Yusuf b. `Abd al-Rahman al-Mizzi (d. 742) prepared an edited and abridged version of this work, punctuated by places and countries of origin of the reporters; he named it *Tahdhib al-Kamal fi Asma' al-Rijal* and produced it in twelve volumes. Further, one of al-Mizzi's gifted pupils, Shams al-Din Abu `Abdullah Muhammad b. Ahmad b. `Uthman b. Qa'imaz al-Dhahabi (d. 748), summarised his Shaikh's work and produced two abridgements: a longer one called *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* and a shorter one called *Al-Kashif fi Asma' Rijal al-Kutub al-Sittah*.

A similar effort with the work of al-Mizzi was made by Ibn Hajar (d. 852), who prepared a lengthy but abridged version, with about one-third of the original omitted, entitled *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* in twelve shorter volumes. Later, he abridged this further to a relatively-humble two- volume work called *Taqrib al-Tahdhib*.

The work of al-Dhahabi was not left unedited.

A number of similar works deal with either trustworthy reporters only, e.g. *Kitab al-Thiqat* by al-`Ijli (d. 261) and *Tadhkirah al-Huffaz* by al-Dhahabi, or with disparaged authorities only, e.g. *Kitab al-Du`afa' wa al-Matrukin* by al-Nasa'i and *Kitab al-Majruhin* by Muhammad b. Hibban al-Busti (d. 354).

Two more works in this field which include a large number of reporters, both authenticated and disparaged, are *Mizan al-I'tidal* of al-Dhahabi and *Lisan al-Mizan* of Ibn Hajar.

Common arguments supporting ilm-al-rijal

One common argument supporting ilm-al-rijal is as follows: The goal of ilm-al-rijal is not about proving hadith as false. It is about determining the degree of *hujjiyya* of a hadith with respect to the narrators in its *sanad*, i.e. the likelihood of its being issued from the companions of the Prophet (SAW) through that particular chain of transmission, which is then added to other evidence to help determine, not whether the hadith is a fabrication, false or deniable or not, but how certain we are that it is from the *Sahabee(s)*.

The value of one of the sciences is not only dependent on taking its legitimacy from the Qurʾān or Sunnah. Do we have evidence from the Qurʾān or Sunnah on the validity of the mechanical sciences with which land, sea and air vehicles travel today?

- In Surah Baqarah:16, Surah Yunus:22, it has been mentioned of Allah's mercy while travel through the sea.
- Surah an-Nahl(The Bees):14-"And it is He who subjected the seas for you.. .and you see the ships plowing through it, and [He subjected it] that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful."
- Surah Banee Israel:66-69, Surah Fatir:12, Surah Jathiyah:12, Surah ar-Rahman:24: By strict

observation of these verses, we see that almost the same essence is present. "It is your Lord who drives the ship, By His Command, to Him belong the ships" etc. -- that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.

Here it's said that the Command and Control is of Him. But the mechanical devices or technology or engineering isn't formulated here. Permitted only to search or seek.

So, in the same manner, do we have in the Qurʾān or Sunnah evidence of the correctness of the physical or chemical sciences, their methodology, or their standards in dealing with the phenomena of nature? Rather, do we have texts from the Qurʾān or Sunnah that teach us the method of Ijtihād that we find in the science of Uṣūl al-fiqh in the current method today? Rather, do we have a justification today from the Qurʾān or Sunnah that authenticates our way of understanding ḥadīths? Even the science of ḥadīth itself and the value of narrations, is it something we can take from the narration itself? Because logically a narration can't establish itself, and the same goes for the Noble Qurʾān, it is not possible to establish its authenticity by referring to what it reports about its own authenticity, because it is not possible to authenticate itself. Rather, we must prove its correctness from other scientific, rational and intellectual methods that adopt it, it is not something that a text in the Qurʾān can prove to us – before proving the correctness of the Qurʾān – that the Qurʾān is true, just because its text said that the Qurʾān is true. Firstly, the total purity, correctness of the Holy Quran should be verified in a scientific manner or in a manner(belief) acceptable to the believers in it. But inside the Quran, there're miracles, lots of evidences of it's flawless accuracy.Even it's accuracy has been verified by using supercomputer.

It is not necessary – in order for 'ilm al-rijāl to be a correct science – to take its validity from a verse or a narration by necessity, nor is that required for the science of philosophy, theology, history, natural and human sciences. Sometimes we find a science whose topics have been exposed in religious texts, and other times we do not find this thing, and this is a natural matter for all sciences and their relationship to religious texts, but the main question is: Are there texts that prohibit us from dealing with 'ilm al-rijāl in this way or not? And where are these texts? What is the correct standard in dealing with them?

Although the science is one of the classical sciences, (al-Ulum al-Naqliyyah) that is taught and studied in traditional Islamic seminaries, it would be incorrect to assume that this science is in anyway uniformly rigid and there are varying views as to what the principles and rules of ilm al-Rijaal actually are. It follows therefore that whilst there are general agreed upon principles within the field, there is still debate over the scope of ilm al Rijaal, and even the particular methods of evaluating individual narrators' reliability in the transmissions of reports. The controversial persons are against it.

Fringe Science, Pseudo Science, Junc Science

The subject which isn't mentioned in the Holy Quran or Sunnah, for it, there're independence of the followers-either it (that situation) may be folloed or done or not. But while avoiding, none of the believers can follow one's instinct or desires out of boundary of Islam.The subject which can't fulfill the requirements of science, it may be a fringe science, pseudo science, junc science or something else. But religion isn't always dependent on science, or not on the contrary.

Paradox, Fallacy and Contradiction—in Ilm-ur-Rijal

Paradoxes exist even in many established science. In pure science, mathematics bear many fallacies. Despite they're sciences.

III. CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned discussion, I want to conclude that 'Ilm-ur-rijal' can be evaluated as a branch of 'Data Science' within the method of 'trial and error' [Popper (1963); now-a-days which is being practiced by using 'Ontology'. And with the aid of Machine Learning, Query Language system etc., the method of justifying the chains of narrators can be proved as a scientific method. So, both as a follower of Sunnah and as a man of Science (engineer), I advise the readers to follow 'Ilm-ur-rijal. And Allah knows the best (Wa Allahu a'lam).

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