

The Concept of Riwāyah: The Need for a Holistic and Systematic Approach in Islamic Narrations

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Abstract: Historically, knowledge and information have been transmitted by three means: speech, writing, and practice. These mediums give rise to three types of narration: oral, written, and practical. In Islamic terminology, this is known as *riwāyah*. It is a principle in Islamic law that nothing can be attributed to Islam without a supporting narration. When a narration is presented, its authenticity must be confirmed; otherwise, it is considered unacceptable. This principle requires that the concept of *riwāyah* be broad enough to include not only the three forms of narration but also the content transmitted through each of them. However, upon studying contemporary literature on the topic, it appears that the concept primarily focuses on one form, oral narration. In contrast, the other two forms are largely neglected. In particular, practical narration, which was widely accepted as an essential source of Islamic law and was more relevant during the Prophetic, Companions, and Successors periods, has been completely excluded from this concept. In this context, it is crucial to determine whether Islam utilises just one form of narration or all three. If all three forms are used, can the concept of narration in Islam be fully understood by focusing on just one form, or does it require a holistic approach to understand the entire system of narration? This paper explains the role of all three forms of Islamic narrations, especially the role of practical narration, while emphasising the need to create a holistic and systematic approach to the concept of *riwāyah*.

Keywords: Riwāyah; Ḥadīth; Sunnah; Narration; Ta'amul; Companions; Follower of Companions

I. INTRODUCTION

The need to preserve knowledge and pass it down to future generations has always been a basic necessity.¹ Since ancient times, humans have recognised this need and have used three primary methods to achieve this goal: 1) practice, 2) speech, and 3) writing.² In the history of religions, it is commonly seen that prophets and reformers conveyed their teachings through one or more of these three methods.³ In the context of Islam, the Prophet Mohammad⁴ also conveyed his teachings using these three primary methods.⁵ After his death, the Ṣaḥāba (the companions), followed by the Tābi'un (the successors) and the Atbā al-Tābi'in (the followers of the

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¹ M Abul Halim Chishti, *Islami Kutub Khāne* (in Urdu) [*Islamic Libraries*] (Lahore: Al-Faisal 1981) 207-208.

² Johann Friedrich, *Die Geschichte des Schreibens* (in German) [*The History of Writing*] (Sulaiman Ahmad Al-Daher (tr) *Tārīkh al-Kitāba* (in Arabic) Damascus: Wazarat al-Thaqāfa 2013) 33.

³ Syed Nawab Ali, *Tareekh-e-Suhuf-e-Samawī* (in Urdu) [*The History of the Heavenly Scriptures*] (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore 1919) 8.

⁴ On every occasion in this article where reference to Prophet Mohammad appears, the words "Peace Be Upon Him" shall be assumed.

⁵ Researchers, *Dawat-e-Deen ke Qur'ani Usool* (in Urdu) [*Quranic Principles of Preaching of Islam*] (Karachi: Idārat al-Ma'ārif 2009) 212.

successors), continued to preserve and transmit these teachings using the same three methods.⁶ This process of preserving and passing on the Islamic teachings is known as *riwāyah* (الرواية).⁷

The Arabic term *riwāyah*, often translated in English as tradition or narration,⁸ is seen as a term specific to Ḥadīth Sciences, a branch of Islamic Studies.⁹ It is even sometimes translated as 'Telling a Ḥadīth,'¹⁰ which is a more suitable translation of *taḥdīth* rather than *riwāyah*.¹¹ Although the use of these three forms of narration has never been limited to a particular religion, region, nation, country, or social class, anyone who bases their beliefs or practices on any tradition or narration has benefited from all three forms.¹² Considering this, it does not seem to necessarily be tied to Ḥadīth Sciences in particular or even Islamic Sciences in general.

The likely reason for this is that the concept of narration in Islamic literature was primarily explored by Ḥadīth scholars, who used the term *riwāyah* in a specialised sense.¹³ This resulted in three main ideas:

1. Riwāyah and Ḥadīth are considered the same.
2. Riwāyah is based on oral narration, like Ḥadīth.
3. The sole criterion for authenticating a narration is Isnād (the chain of narrators), just as it is for Ḥadīth.

If someone tries to understand the system of narration and authentication in Islam based on Ḥadīth literature, they will come to the following three conclusions:

1. Islamic narrations depend on Ḥadīth.
2. Islamic narrations were oral.
3. In Islam, the authentication of a narration depends solely on Isnād.

In the modern era, when Western scholars began studying the system of narration in Islam, they saw Ḥadīth as representing the entire system.¹⁴ This likely led them to translate Ḥadīth as 'tradition' instead of 'Prophetic sayings'.¹⁵ Since their studies were based on the previously mentioned ideas and conclusions, they questioned the two-century delay in documenting

⁶ Ibrahim Madani, *The Preservation of Hadith* (New York: Madania Publications 2010) 7.

⁷ Muhammad bin Abdul Razzaq Aswad, *Shurut al-Rawi wal-Riwaya 'Inda Ashab al-Sunan* (in Arabic) [*The Conditions of the Narrator and the Narration According to the Compilers of the Sunan*] (Damascus: dār Taiba 2002) 31.

⁸ Abu Jannah Al-Fuqayyir, *The Prodigy in Hadith Terminology, The Supporter of the Majority and of the Prophet's Methodology* <islamicknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-Prodigy.pdf> accessed 26 January 2026.

⁹ Muhammad Abu al-Layth al-Khair Abadi, *Mu'jam Muṣṭalahāt al-Ḥadīthwa 'Ulūmihiwa Ashhar al-Muṣannifīnfihi* (in Arabic) [*Dictionary of Hadith Terminology and Its Sciences, and its Most Famous Compilers*] (Amman: Dār al-Nafa'is 2009) 67.

¹⁰ Dr. Tariq Abdelhaleem, *Terminology of Hadith And Methodology of Muhaditheen* (Toronto: Dār Al-Arqam Publication) 111.

¹¹ al-Khair Abadi (n 9) 32.

¹² Syed Suleman Nadwi, *Maqālāt-e-Suleiman* (in Urdu) [*The Essays of Suleiman*], vol 2 (Azamgarh: 1968) 170.

¹³ al-Khair Abadi (n 9) 67.

¹⁴ Dr. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features, and Criticism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University 1961) xix-xxviii.

¹⁵ Dr. Ahmet Yücel, *Oryantalist Hadis Anlayışive Eleştirisi* (in Turkish) [*Orientalist Understanding of Hadith and Its Criticism*] (Istanbul: IFAN 2021) 43.

Islamic narrations.¹⁶ They also criticised the concept of the chain of narrators, viewing it as a criterion for assessing the entire Islamic system of authentication.¹⁷

In response to these Western studies, two prominent trends emerged in Muslim academia:

1. A new field, known as the History of Ḥadīth, was introduced. While the title and approach were new, the content itself was not. Its primary objective was to present scattered statements about the system of narration from earlier Ḥadīth literature within a new framework. It was also sometimes referred to as the History of the Sunnah.¹⁸
2. Works titled History of Ḥadīth were authored to challenge the idea that Ḥadīth was solely transmitted orally. By studying the earliest Ḥadīth collections, these works highlighted and clarified the significance of written narration in Islam.¹⁹

In this context, Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (1908-2002) gathered official documents from the time of the Prophet and the Rashidun Caliphate to present them as evidence of written narration in the early period of Islam.²⁰ Following his work, a widespread movement began in Muslim academia, regardless of language or region. Many scholars investigated written collections from the Ṣaḥāba and the Tabi‘un, proving that they not only transmitted their narrations orally but also documented their observations and what they heard.

As a result, a vast body of work was created in the three major languages of the Islamic world, Arabic, Urdu, and Turkish. In Arabic, Muhammad Abdul Aziz al-Khouli (1892-1931), in Ottoman Turkish, Hussein Auni Arapkiri (1864-1954), and Urdu, Syed Manazir Ahsan Gilani (1892-1956) were pioneers. Additionally, the work of other critical scholars from the same era, such as Ismail Haqi Izmiri (1869-1946) in Turkish, Sayyid Muhammad ‘Amīmul Eḥsān al-Barkatī (1911-1974) in Urdu, Professor Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi (1886-1976) in both Arabic and English, Professor Muhammad Muhammad Abu Zahw (1909-1983) in Arabic, Dr. Ghulam Jailani Barq (1901-1985) in Urdu, Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah (1917-1997) in Arabic, Professor Abdul Samad Sarim Azhari (1918-2003) in Urdu, Professor Talat Koçyiğit (1927-2011) in Turkish, Professor Ibrahim Canan (1940-2009) also in Turkish, and Dr. Muhammad Mustafa Azami (1930-2017) in English, later translated in Arabic, gained significant recognition.

These scholars were the first to formally focus on the History of Ḥadīth as a distinct academic subject. At the same time, other scholars from the same period also contributed to the topic by dedicating substantial sections of their books to related themes, adding valuable discussions and insights.²¹ Meanwhile, Western scholars continued to support their previous views on the matter while critically analysing the examples provided by Muslim scholars. A notable figure in this domain was the German scholar Professor Gregor Schoeler (b. 1944), who made the

¹⁶ Siddiqi (n 14) xxii.

¹⁷ Siddiqi (n 14) xxiv.

¹⁸ Dr. Ahmad Snobar, *Min al-Nabi ila al-Bukhari* (in Arabic) [*From the Prophet to al-Bukhari*] (Amman: Dār al-Fath 2021) 10-11.

¹⁹ Bekir Kuzudişli, *Hadis Tarihi* (in Turkish) [*The History of Hadith*] (Istanbul: Kayihan 2023)78-81.

²⁰ Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmū‘at al-Wathā‘iq al-Siyāsīyah li-l-‘Ahd al-Nabawīwa-l-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah* (in Arabic) [*A Collection of Civic Documents from the Prophetic Era and the Guided Caliphate*] (Beirut: Dār al-Nafa’is 1985) 24.

²¹ A great example of this is: Muhammad Abdul Rashid Numani, *Imam Ibn Majah aur Ilm-e-Hadith* (in Urdu) [*Imam Ibn Majah, and the Science of Hadith*] (Karachi: Noor Mohammad 1957).

study of early Islamic oral and written traditions his primary area of research. He wrote several articles on the subject, which were later compiled, translated and published in a book.²²

Despite differences in perspective, both Eastern and Western works on this subject have some common features:

1. The presentation and analysis of early examples of both oral and written narration.
2. A focus on early examples of written narration, without distinguishing whether their origin is in written form or originates from oral or practical forms.
3. The collection and compilation of the history of oral narration, as well as written narration, without focusing on the third form: practical narration.
4. This historical narrative primarily centres on Ḥadīth, without attention being given to other Islamic sciences transmitted by narrations, such as the narration of the Qur'an, Qirā'āt, exegesis (Tafsīr), the Prophet's biography (Sīrah), the traditions of various schools of Islamic law and jurisprudence, and the history of Islam.

This development led to a broader understanding of the concept of narration in Islam, which had previously been associated primarily with the oral form. The written form, which had not been given proper attention in earlier discussions, was now recognised as necessary. However, because practical narration was not included in this framework, a comprehensive understanding of the concept of narration in Islam was not fully realised.

During the same period, the credit for emphasising the significance of practical narration in contrast to oral narration goes to two distinguished scholars from the Indian subcontinent. Maulana Haider Hassan Khan Tonki (1864-1942) authored a brief Arabic treatise titled *Al-Tu'āmūl* (Praxis), which touched upon the concept. While his elder brother, Maulana Mahmood Hassan Tonki (1860-1947), wrote an Urdu treatise, *Usool-e-Tawarruth* (*The Principles of Practical Heritage*), focusing on the narration of practice. However, neither of these works succeeded in establishing this concept within the broader framework of narration. There was no attempt to connect it to the concept of *riwāyah* or to expand its definition within that context.

In 2004, during a conference held in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Ahmad bin Ma'bad Abdul Karim introduced the concept of practice as a form of narration under the title of Sunnah or Ḥadīth, likely being the first to do so.²³ However, after writing a single sentence on it, he refrained from discussing the details of all three forms of narration. As a result, academic discussions on the subject of narration have so far been limited to just two forms, with the position of practical narration in the early periods of Islam yet to be thoroughly examined. This is evident from the recent works, such as Dr. Ahmad Sanobar's *Min al-Nabīlā al-Bukhārī* (From the Prophet to al-Bukhārī) in Arabic and Dr. Bekir Kuzudişli's *Hadis Tarihi* (The History of Ḥadīth) in Turkish. Both books aim to focus on the history of narration in the first three periods of Islam. Despite gaining significant recognition in both Arabic and Turkish academia in a short time, neither of them includes practical narration in the concept of *riwāyah*.

²² Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, (U. Vagelpohl (tr), J. E. Montgomery (edn), London, New York: Routledge 2006)

²³ Ahmad bin Ma'bad Abdul Karim, *Kitābat al-ḥadīthfi'ahd al-NabīwaṢaḥābatahiwaatharuhāfthifz al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah* (in Arabic) [*The writing of Ḥadīth during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, and its impact on the preservation of the Prophetic Sunnah*] <bkb-hal1803-ketabpedia.com/doc> accessed 26 January 2026.

In this context, it is essential to examine the meaning of *riwāyah* and its historical aspects to determine whether there is a specific reason for its association with oral narration. To this end, this brief paper aims to:

1. Analyse the linguistic and terminological aspects of *riwāyah* to identify its association with any one of the three forms of narration.
2. Explore the historical background of the term *riwāyah* during the first three key periods of Islam, the era of the Prophet, the time of the Companions, and the period of the Tabi'un, to understand whether practical *riwāyah* was an integral part of the core Islamic concept of narration.
3. Assess whether the narrative of *riwāyah* in Islam can be understood without considering this aspect.

In this brief study, the following Section II examines the usage of the word *riwāyah* in classical Arabic literature, highlighting its conceptual meaning in various texts. Section III traces the development of this concept into an Islamic one, exploring how it acquired religious connotations and evolved. Section IV investigates whether Islamic teachings prioritise a specific form of narration or adopt a broader approach, considering its conceptual and practical significance. Section V analyses the history of *riwāyah* during the Prophetic era, exploring both its conceptual understanding and practical application to the three types of narration. Section VI examines the precise dimensions of the era of the Companions (Ṣaḥābah). At the same time, Section VII evaluates their contributions in this context and the extent to which the three types of narration were emphasised. Section VIII shifts focus to the era of the Successors (Tābi'ūn), examining the historical context of narration during this time. Section IX assesses the attention and significance given to the three types of narration in light of key developments of this period. Section X examines the evolution of narration in the post-Tābi'ūn era, focusing on its role in shaping juristic schools (*fuqahā'*) and the distinctions between jurists and traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*), as well as the circumstances under which narration became closely tied to oral forms. Finally, Section XI examines the theoretical and practical limitations of confining the concept of *riwāyah* to oral narration.

II. RIWĀYAH IN THE CLASSICAL ARABIC LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

This section examines the historical uses of a specific term, *riwāyah*, in classical Arabic literature. It begins by presenting quotations from different sources, followed by an analysis of the contexts in which the term is used.

Al-Muhalhil Uday ibn Rabī' a at-Taḡlibi (443-531), a pre-Islamic poet says, addressing his two slaves:

أوصيكما أن ترويا عني بيت شعر²⁴

(Translation: I instruct you to narrate a couplet of poetry from me.)

Hassan ibn Thabit (563-674), the poet of Prophet Muhammad says after reciting one of his poems:

²⁴ Alī ibn Mūsā, Ibn Sa'īd al-Andalusi, *Nashwat al-ṭarabftārīkhJāhiliyyat al-'Arab* (in Arabic) [*Ecstasy of Joy in the History of the Pre-Islamic Arabs*] vol 2 (Ammān: Maktabat al-Aqsa 1982) 645.

خشيت أن يدركني أجلي قبل أن أصبح، فلا تروها عني²⁵

(Translation: I feared that my death would come before the morning, so do not narrate it from me.)

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (718-791) says:

يقال: قد روى، معناه: قد استقى على الرّواية.... والرّواية: رواية الشعر والحديث²⁶

(Translation: It is said: "Qad rawā," its meaning: he brought water on the camel... and the *riwāyah* refers to the transmission of poetry and Ḥadīth.)

Abū Zayd Sa'īd ibn Aws al-Anṣārī (d. 830) says:

ويقال: رويت للقوم على البعير أروي لهم رية... إذا استقيت لهم من الماء²⁷

(Translation: It is said: "Rawaytu lil-qawm 'alāal-ba'ir, arwī lahum rayyatan,"... when you brought water for them.)

Abd al-Malik ibn Qurayb al-Aṣma'ī (740-831) says:

رَوَيْتَ عَلَى أَهْلِي أُرْوِي رِيًّا، وَهُوَ رَاوٍ مِنْ قَوْمِ رَوَاةٍ، وَهُمْ الَّذِينَ يَأْتُونَ بِالْمَاءِ. فَالْأَصْلُ هَذَا، ثُمَّ شَبَّهَ بِهِ الَّذِي يَأْتِي الْقَوْمَ بِعَلْمٍ أَوْ خَبْرٍ فَيُرْوِيهِ، كَأَنَّهُ أَتَاهُمْ بِرِيَّتِهِمْ مِنْ ذَلِكَ²⁸

(Translation: *Rawaytu 'alā ahlī arwī rayyan*: so, he is a *rāwī*, the singular form of *ruwāh*, and they are those who bring water. This is the original meaning, and it was later likened to one who brings knowledge or news to people, as if he brought to them that which would quench their thirst.)

Ibn al-Qūṭīyya, Muhammad ibn Umar (d. 977) says:

رَوَى الْحَدِيثَ وَالشَّعْرَ رَوَايَةً: حَفَظَهُ وَأَخْبَرَ بِهِ، وَلِأَهْلِهِ وَعَلَيْهِمْ رِيًّا وَرِيَّةً: اسْتَقَى لَهُمْ²⁹

(Translation: *Rawā al-ḥadītha wa al-shi'ra riwāyatan*: he preserved it and reported it, and *Rāwa li'ahlīhī wa 'alayhim rayyan wa rayyatan*: he brought water for them.)

Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī (895-980) says:

رَوَى فَلَانَ حَدِيثًا وَشَعْرًا، يُرْوِيهِ رَوَايَةً، فَهُوَ: رَاوٍ، فَإِذَا كَثُرَتْ رَوَايَتُهُ، قِيلَ: هُوَ رَاوِيَةٌ، الْهَاءُ لِلْمَبَالِغَةِ فِي صِفَةِ الرَّوَايَةِ، وَيُقَالُ: رَوَى فَلَانٌ فَلَانًا شَعْرًا، إِذَا رَوَاهُ لَهُ حَتَّى حَفَظَهُ لِلرَّوَايَةِ عَنْهُ³⁰

²⁵ Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham al-Himyari, *As-Sīrah an-Nabawīyah* (in Arabic) [*The life of the Prophet*] vol 3 (Damascus: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabi 1990) 109.

²⁶ Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farahīdī, *Kitāb al-Ayn* (in Arabic) [*The Book of the letter 'Ayn*] vol 8 (Cairo: Dār and Maktabat al-Hilal) 212-213.

²⁷ Abū Zayd Sa'īd ibn Aws al-Ansari, *Al-Nawadir fi al-Lughā* (in Arabic) [*The Rarities in the Language*] (Beirut: Dār al-Shuruq 1981) 501.

²⁸ Abū Ubaid al-Qasim ibn Sallam al-Harawi, *Al-Gharib al-Mushannaf* (in Arabic) [*The Rare Words Compiled*] vol 1 (Damascus: Dār al-Faiha 2005) 518.

²⁹ Ibn al-Qūṭīyya Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar, *Kitāb al-Af'āl* (in Arabic) [*The Book of Verbs*] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji 1993) 105.

³⁰ Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-Lughah* (in Arabic) [*The Refinement of the Language*] vol 15 (Cairo: Dār al-Katib al-Arabi 1967) 313.

(Translation: *Rawā fulānun ḥadīthan wa shi'ran, yarwīhī riwāyatan*: so, he is a *rāwī* (narrator). If his narration becomes frequent, it is said that he is a *rāwiyah* (a frequent narrator). The "hā" (in *rāwiyah*) is for exaggeration in the description of the narrator. It is also said: *rāwā fulānun fulānan shi'ran*; when he narrated it to him until he memorised it to narrate it from him.)

Abu Nasr Isma'il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari (940-1002) says:

ورويت الحديث والشعر رواية فأنا راو، في الماء والشعر والحديث³¹

(Translation: *Wa rawaytu al-ḥadītha wa al-shi'ra riwāyatan*: so, I am a *rāwī*: in water, poetry, and Ḥadīth.)

Aḥmad ibn Fāris ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d.1004) says:

روى: الرأء والواو والياء أصل واحد، ثم يشتق منه. فالأصل ما كان خلاف العطش، ثم يصرف في الكلام لحامل ما يُروى منه، فالأصل: رُوِيْتُ من الماء رِيًّا³²

(Translation: *Rawā*: the letters *al-rā'* and *al-wāw* and *al-yā'* are one root, then the rest of the words are derived from it. The origin is what is opposite to thirst, and then it is used in speech for the one who bears what is narrated from it. So, the origin is: *ruwītu min al-mā'I rayyan*: I was quenched by the water.)

Nashwān ibn Sa'īd al-Ḥimyarī (d.1178) says:

رويت على أهلي رِيًّا فأنا راو، وقوم رواة: وهم الذين يأتون بالماء، ورويت الحديث رواية³³

(Translation: *Rawaytu 'alā ahlī rayyan*: so I am a *rāwī*, and the people are *ruwāh*, and they are those who bring water. And *rawaytu al-ḥadītha riwāyatan*.)

Al-Qāḍī Muhammad A'la al-Thawāwī (d. after 1745) says:

الرواية: بالكسر والواو، لغة: النقل³⁴

(Translation: *Al-Riwāyah*: with a kasra and a waw, lexically: transmission.)

The usage referenced above, coming from distinguished Arab poets, linguists, and philologists spanning from the 6th to the 18th century, suggests that the original meaning of *riwāyah* was to protect something and transmit it to someone who did not have it. In the pre-Islamic period, the usage shifted to the preservation and transmission of poetry. By extension, or in a broader sense, it could also refer to the transmission of knowledge or information. In the early days of Islam, the idea of transferring water became less significant, while the transmission of poetry and knowledge gained more prominence. This shift in meaning is why Muslims chose this term

³¹ Abu Nasr Isma'il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari, *Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (in Arabic) [*The Correct Words*] vol 6 (Beirut: Dāru Ilm lil-Malayeen 1990) 2364.

³² Aḥmad ibn Fāris al-Rāzī, *Mu'jammaqāyīs al-lughā* (In Arabic) [*Analogical Templates of Language*] (Beirut: DārIḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī 2001) 408.

³³ Nashwān ibn Sa'īd al-Ḥimyarī, *Shams al-'ulumwa-dawa' kalam al-'Arab min al- kulum* (in Arabic) [*The Sun of Wisdom and the Remedy for the Arabic Language's Lesions*] vol 4 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1999) 2682.

³⁴ Al-Qāḍī Mohammad A'la al-Thawāwī, *Kashaf Istilahaat al-Funoon* (in Arabic) [*Lexicon of the Terms of the Sciences*] vol 2 (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnan Nashirun 1996) 875.

to refer to the transmission of Ḥadīth. Subsequently, the word became so closely associated with Ḥadīth that its original meanings related to transferring water or poetry were largely overlooked. This is likely why Al-Qāḍī Muhammad A'la al-Thanawi chose the word '*naql*' (transmission) to clarify its literal meaning, as it is a term that applies to both ancient and modern contexts. It is noteworthy that none of these scholars, however, limited this transfer to any particular medium, whether oral or written. Even when terms like *ikhbār* were used, they functioned as examples within the context of Ḥadīth literature, not as restrictions.

III. RIWĀYAH IN ISLAMIC TERMINOLOGY

The first recorded usage of the word *riwāyah* to give the meaning of transmitting Ḥadīth is from the Prophet Mohammad (570-632) himself such as in the following saying:

مَنْ رَوَى عَنِّي حَدِيثًا، وَهُوَ يَرَى أَنَّهُ كَذِبٌ، فَهُوَ أَحَدُ الْكَاذِبِينَ

(Translation: Whoever transmits a Ḥadīth from me thinking it to be false, then he is one of the two liars).³⁵

This suggests that its use as an Islamic term started in the early period of Islam. However, when examining Islamic terminology literature to understand its technical meaning, the definition of this term appears much later.

Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari (1074-1143) says:

ومنه قولهم: هو راوية للحديث، وروى الحديث: حملة، من قولهم البعير يروي الماء أي يحمله، وحديث مروى، وهم رواة الأحاديث وراووها: حاملوها كما يقال: رواة الماء³⁶

(Translation: And from [this root] is their saying: *huwarāwiyat al-Ḥadīth*, and *rawā al-ḥadīth*: he carried it. It is borrowed from the expression: 'the camel conveys water,' meaning it carries it. And a Ḥadīth *marwī* [means 'conveyed.']. They are *ruwāt* of *aḥādīth*, meaning 'carriers of them,' just as it is said: '*ruwāt* of water'.)

Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (1083-1149) says:

وقد يكون عندي استعارة من رواية الماء، ومنه سمي راوية الحديث والعلم، لحملة إياه كحملة الماء والانتفاع بما عنده ... كما ينتفع بمائها³⁷

(Translation: ... and it may, in my view, be derived from *riwāyat al-mā'* (conveyance of water), and it [a narrator] was called *rāwiyat al-Ḥadīthwa al-ilm*; as he is carrying it just as one carries water, and will benefit from his knowledge as one benefits from water.)

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505) says:

³⁵ Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah al-Rab'ī al-Qazwīnī, *Al-Sunan* (in Arabic) [*The Traditions*] vol 1 (Nasiruddin al-Khattab (tr), Riyadh: Dārussalam 2007) 98.

³⁶ Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās Al-Balāghah* (in Arabic) [*The Foundation of Eloquence*] vol 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah 1998) 398.

³⁷ Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, *Ikmal al-Mu'lim bi-Fawā'id Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (in Arabic) vol 8 [*Completion of the Informer of the Benefits of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*] (Al-Mansoura: Dār al-Wafā' 1998) 82.

حقيقة الرواية: نقل السنة ونحوها، وإسناد ذلك إلى من عُزِي إليه بتحديث أو إخبار وغير ذلك³⁸

(Translation: The definition of *riwāyah*: the transmission of the Sunnah and similar matters, and attributing that to the one it is ascribed to by narrating, reporting, or other means.)

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī (1545-1621) says:

رواية الأحاديث: حملها، مستعار من قولهم: البعير يروي الماء، أي يحمله، وحديث مروى: محمول، وهم رواة الأحاديث، كما يقال رواة الماء³⁹

(Translation: *Riwāyatofahādīth* means to carry them. It is borrowed from the expression: 'the camel conveys water,' meaning it carries it. And a *Ḥadīthmarwī* means it is carried. They are the *ruwātofahādīth* [meaning 'conveyors of Ḥadīth'], just as it is said *ruwāt* of water).

Al-Qāḍī Muḥammad A'la al-Thānawī (d. after 1745) says:

الرواية: بالكسر والواو، لغة: النقل، وفي عرف الفقهاء: ما ينقل من المسألة الفرعية من الفقيه سواء كان من السلف أو الخلف، وقد يخص بالسلف إذا قوبل بالخلف، كذا في جامع الرموز. وفي مجمع السلوك: الرواية علم يطلق على فعل النبي صلوات الله عليه وسلم وقوله... وفي علم القراءة: تستعمل بمعنى يجيء بيانه في لفظ القراءة... والراوي عند المحدثين: ناقل الحديث بالإسناد⁴⁰

(Translation: *Al-riwāyah*: with a *kasra* and a *wāw*, lexically means 'transmission.' In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence scholars, it refers to a subsidiary issue transmitted by a legist, whether from the early generations or later ones. It may specifically refer to the early generations when contrasted with the later ones, as mentioned in *Jāmi' al-Rūmūz* in *Majma' al-Sulūk*. In this context, *riwāyah* is defined as a science that applies to the actions and sayings of the Prophet. In the science of recitation, it refers to an explanation that is presented in the form of recited words. And a *rāwi* in the science of Ḥadīth is the one who transmits Ḥadīth with its chain of narration.)

Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī (1687-1768) says:

الرواية: قسم من الإخبار⁴¹

(Translation: *Al-riwāyah* is a type of reporting.)

Dr. Rifat Fauzi Abdul Muttalib:

رواية الحديث هم الذين يحملونه وينقلونه إلى غيرهم، وهو مأخوذ من المعنى اللغوي السابق. وكان العرب قبل الإسلام يتحملون الشعر وينقلونه، وسموه رواية، فلما جاء الإسلام حفظ المسلمون القرآن الكريم ونقلوه، وكذلك حفظوا حديث رسول الله صل الله عليه وسلم ورووه، وتعاقب الأجيال على ذلك⁴²

³⁸ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-Rawī* (in Arabic) [Training of Narrator] vol 2 (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj 2016) 18-21.

³⁹ Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī, *Al-Tawqīf alā Muhimmāt al-Ta'ārīf* (in Arabic) [To make aware of the Essentials of Definitions] (Cairo: Ālam al-Kutub 1990) 182.

⁴⁰ Al-Qāḍī Mohammad A'la al-Thānawī (n 35) 875

⁴¹ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī, *Tawdīh al-Afkār* (in Arabic) [Explanation of the Thoughts] vol 2 (Beirut: DārIhyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī 1947) 205.

⁴² Dr. Rifat Fauzi Abdul Muttalib, 'Ruwat al-Hadith' in Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq (ed) *Al-Mawsoo'ah al-Islamiyyah al-'Aammah* (in Arabic) [The General Islamic Encyclopaedia] (Cairo Wizārat al-Awqāf 20023) 711.

(Translation: *Ruwāt al-Ḥadīth* are those who carry Ḥadīth and transmit it to others, a meaning derived from the earlier lexical usage. Before Islam, the Arabs would memorise and pass on poetry, and they called such individuals *ruwāt* (narrators). When Islam emerged, Muslims preserved and transmitted the Qur'an, just as they memorised and narrated the Ḥadīth of the Prophet. This tradition has continued through successive generations.)

Based on these quotations, it can be concluded that for a long time, there was no clear or established definition of 'riwayah', as seen in the words of Zamakhshari and Qadi Iyad. Those who attempted to define it, such as Al-Suyuti, Al-Munawi, and Al-San'ani, primarily limited their definitions to Ḥadīth, reflecting their focus on this field. However, scholars with a broader perspective, such as Al-Qāḍī Muhammad A'la Thanawi and Dr. Rif'at Fauzi Abdul Muttalib, have expanded the concept to include other Islamic sciences. This broader approach highlights that *riwāyah* is not limited to the transmission of Ḥadīth alone. Yet, a comprehensive and systematic definition that covers all forms of transmitted knowledge within Islam through *riwāyah* remains absent.

The above discussion can be summarised here in the following points:

1. *Riwāyah* is not limited to Ḥadīth; it applies to the transmission of all forms of knowledge and experience, whether Islamic or non-Islamic.
2. *Riwāyah* involves knowledge that embodies three essential qualities: preservation, transmission, and attribution.
3. While *riwāyah* has been predominantly associated with Ḥadīth sciences over time, its usage extends beyond Ḥadīth to other Islamic disciplines and fields of knowledge.

However, the subject remains incomplete in terms of exploring the Islamic perspective and the stance of the early Muslims on this matter. The discussion can be further expanded upon or developed in relation to these aspects.

IV. ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE THREE FORMS OF RIWĀYAH

There is the well-known Ḥadīthin, which the Prophet said:

“Convey [my teachings] to the people, even if it were a single verse or sentence (from the Qur'an or Sunnah).”⁴³

He said in another one:

“May Allah gladden a man who hears a Ḥadīth from us, so he memorises it until he conveys it to someone else.”⁴⁴

Both of these sayings highlight the significance of memorising what was heard or witnessed from the Prophet and narrating it through the established methods of *riwāyah*, without specifying it to any particular form of narration. Instead, through examining Islamic teachings, it becomes possible to understand the perspective on each form of narration.⁴⁵

⁴³ Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (in Arabic) [*The Compilation of Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth*] vol 4 (Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (tr), Riyadh: Dārussalam 1997) 417.

⁴⁴ Muhammad ibn Isa al-Tirmidhi, *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* (in Arabic) [*Comprehensive Book of at-Tirmidhi*] vol 5 (Abu Khaliyl (tr), Riyadh: Dārussalam 2007) 58.

⁴⁵ Chishti (n 1) 213.

The beginning of the revelation to the Prophet Mohammad highlights that the initial form of revelation was oral.⁴⁶ When reflecting on the words 'Read' and 'He taught by the pen' in the first revelation of the Quran,⁴⁷ it becomes clear that reading is linked to writing, while teaching through the pen is associated with written transmission. This highlights the importance of both oral and written forms in the process of revelation and knowledge transmission.⁴⁸

Another verse states:

“Allah has surely conferred favour on the believers when He raised in their midst a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom....”⁴⁹

The act of reciting is done orally, while teaching the Book requires writing. This is why the Prophet placed great importance on the written preservation of the Qur'an. Whenever a revelation was received, he would call upon the scribes among his companions to write it down immediately, using whatever materials were available, such as paper, animal skin, or date palm leaves.⁵⁰ These written verses were subsequently copied by other companions, despite the challenging circumstances and persecution faced by Muslims in Mecca, and were used to educate others. A notable example of this is the story of Umar ibn al-Khattab's conversion, where the emergence of the written compilation of verses marks the beginning of the written *riwāyah* of the Quran in the early days.⁵¹

In terms of practical revelation and *riwāyah* in Islam, two *Aḥādīth* related to prayer can be examined. In one of them, the Prophet conveys orally how the Angel Jibrīl led him in prayer at the Ka'ba, showing him the correct times for each prayer over two consecutive days.⁵² This event is an example of practical revelation delivered by Jibrīl to the Prophet. While this event was later transmitted through the oral form of *riwāyah*, its *practice in the form of riwāyah* continued as well. The Prophet followed Jibrīl's example and commanded his companions with another Ḥadīth:

“Offer *Salāt* (prayer) as you have seen me praying”.⁵³

By doing so, he passed on Jibrīl's manner of prayer through practice, thereby establishing an ongoing chain of practical *riwāyah* that persists to this day.

In summary, this shows that the Prophet accepted and encouraged all three forms of *riwāyah*,⁵⁴ and these forms were adopted from his era onward, although with varying emphasis depending on the context and available resources.

⁴⁶ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 47.

⁴⁷ Qur'an, Sūrat al-'Alaq (The Clot) 96: 1-5.

⁴⁸ Chishti (n 1) 224.

⁴⁹ Qur'an, SūratĀl 'Imrān (The Progeny of Imran) 3: 164 [Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (tr) The Noble Qur'an (Karachi: MaktabaMa'ariful Quran 2010)]

⁵⁰ Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *Ulūm al-Qur'an* (in Arabic) [*Sciences of the Qur'an*] (Karachi: Maktabah Dar al-Uloom Karachi 1995) 179.

⁵¹ Al-Himyari (n 25) 371.

⁵² Al-Tirmidhi (n 44) vol 1, 176.

⁵³ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 366.

⁵⁴ Researchers (n 5) 212.

V. RIWĀYAH IN THE PROPHETIC PERIOD

The history of the preservation and transmission of knowledge in Islam during the Prophet's era can be categorised into two distinct phases:

A. Riwāyah in The Meccan Period

During the Meccan period, the methods of narrating the message of Islam were highly restricted. Oral narration encountered significant challenges, as the environment in Mecca was not conducive to openly proclaiming the message. At first, the Prophet was unable to share his message publicly, and when he began to call people to Islam, it was met with fierce opposition from the people of Mecca.⁵⁵ Only a small group of individuals who had accepted Islam were narrating the message, and they faced persecution and adversity. As a result, the number of people willing to narrate the message was limited, and there was a lack of enthusiasm to share it further. Even when both the narrator and the listener were present, significant obstacles prevented the message from being fully and freely narrated.⁵⁶

During this period, written narration was even more limited; therefore, oral narration relied heavily on memorisation.⁵⁷ In fact, the Prophet prohibited writing anything other than the Qur'an. As a result, written narration was primarily restricted to Qur'anic texts.⁵⁸

At that time, when both oral and written narration were less effective, practical narration became increasingly significant. From the very beginning of Islam, the Prophet himself demonstrated the application of every command. He was the first to act upon these teachings, and every new Muslim was expected to follow his example.⁵⁹ As a result, more people followed his practices than those who narrated the message orally or in writing. Moreover, he frequently performed acts of worship and other practices in front of the community, allowing many to observe and learn from his example. Many of these practices were repeated daily, making his practical example a continuous source of guidance.⁶⁰ During this time, while not everyone was obligated to narrate through oral or written narration, following the Prophet's practice was essential for all Muslims.

B. Riwāyah in The Medinan Period

During the Medinan period, the methods of narration became more widespread and accessible, thanks to a more conducive environment.⁶¹ As more people accepted Islam and were free to narrate the Prophet's message, the number of oral narrators grew.⁶² Those who spent time with the Prophet closely would record his sayings and observe his practices, discussing them among

⁵⁵ Al-Himyari (n 25) vol 1, 319-321.

⁵⁶ Al-Himyari (n 25) vol 1, 324.

⁵⁷ Madani (n 6) 7-17.

⁵⁸ Uthmān ibn 'Abd il-Rahmān Ṣalāh, *Muqaddimah ibn al-Ṣalāh fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (in Arabic) [*Introduction to the Science of Hadith*] (Erik Dickinson (tr), Berkshire: Garent 2005) 129-130.

⁵⁹ Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, *Khutbat-e-Madras* (in Urdu)[*The Lectures in Madras*] (Syed Riazul Hassan (tr), New Delhi: Adam Publishers 1996) 82-99.

⁶⁰ Madani (n 6) 17.

⁶¹ Al-Himyari (n 25) vol 2, 146.

⁶² *ibid* vol 4, 203.

themselves⁶³ and passing the knowledge to new converts through oral narration.⁶⁴ With fewer financial constraints, access to writing materials also improved. Additionally, after the prisoners of the Battle of Badr taught many Muslims how to write, the number of written narrators increased.⁶⁵ The initial prohibition on writing anything other than the Quran was relaxed,⁶⁶ and written narration expanded to include documents such as treaties,⁶⁷ agreements,⁶⁸ and letters inviting others to Islam.⁶⁹ Abdullah ibn Amr, with the Prophet's permission, began writing down everything he heard from him,⁷⁰ and other companions followed this practice, benefiting from the same permission.⁷¹

The same factors that facilitated the growth of both oral and written narration also played a significant role in expanding the practical narration. As a result, the number of narrators for the Prophet's practices was the largest. Even in many of his sayings in this period, he highlighted the importance of witnessing and imitating his actions. One such example is his statement:

خذوا عني مناسككم⁷²

(Translation: Learn your rituals from me.)

He even deliberately performed personal practices, usually done in private, in front of others to allow his companions to observe and learn from him. For example, he performed *wudu* (ablution) publicly, articulating specific phrases to help others focus on the details.⁷³ Similarly, the Prophet was witnessed performing the prayer, which was already performed in congregation, at least five times a day. Each companion would then replicate it by observing their actions. Additionally, the Prophet would often perform the prayer publicly by leading it from the pulpit, allowing others to see his practice more widely, replicate it correctly, and then narrate it to those who were absent.⁷⁴

In this context, the Prophet specifically encouraged the more knowledgeable and capable companions to remain close to him,⁷⁵ prioritise time with the community, and spend less time at home.⁷⁶ To ensure that his personal practices at home were retained/preserved, his wives were present to observe and preserve these practices.⁷⁷ Additionally, some companions sent their children to the Prophet's home to observe his conduct directly.⁷⁸ These efforts played a significant role in the widespread narration of the Prophet's practices, ensuring that many people could learn from his example.

⁶³ Muhammad 'Abd al-Halim al-Na'mani, *Lamahat min al-Tarbiyah al-Fiqhiyah li al-Sahabah* (in Arabic) [*Glimpses of the Jurisprudential Training of the Companions*] (Amman: Dār al-Fath 2014) 32.

⁶⁴ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 102.

⁶⁵ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, (in Arabic) [*A Compilation of Musnad Ahadith*] vol 4 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah 2001) 92.

⁶⁶ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 121.

⁶⁷ *ibid* 120.

⁶⁸ Al-Himyari (n 25) vol 3, 363.

⁶⁹ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 4, 119.

⁷⁰ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 11, 58.

⁷¹ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 120.

⁷² Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 7, 168.

⁷³ *ibid* vol 1, 521.

⁷⁴ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 254.

⁷⁵ Ibn Hanbal, (n 65) vol 28, 328.

⁷⁶ Al-Himyari (n 25) vol 2, 43.

⁷⁷ Snobar (n 18) 76-78.

⁷⁸ Ibn Hanbal, (n 65) vol 5, 345.

Looking at the history of narration during the time of the Prophet, it cannot be said that any one of the three forms of narration was specifically highlighted or given so much importance that the others were disregarded. Rather, when comparing the three forms of narration from that period, practical narration appears to have been the most effective and reliable form.

It is also worth mentioning that a survey of the prophetic sayings in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, where the words 'Ḥadīth' and 'Sunnah' are used, reveals that the former generally refers to verbal statements.⁷⁹ While the former refers to actions and practices, the latter refers to actions and practices.⁸⁰ This suggests that perhaps during this time, 'Ḥadīth' began to be specifically associated with oral narrations, while 'Sunnah' was used for practical narrations.⁸¹

This distinction becomes more apparent when examining the incident from the 9th year after Hijrah, when the Prophet sent his companion Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (603-639) to Yemen as a jurist and judge and asked him by which principle he would make decisions. Mu'adh mentioned 'Sunnah' as the second source, not 'Ḥadīth'.⁸² It is surprising that the term 'Sunnah' continues to be used in Islamic jurisprudence and the literature on the principles of Islamic law as the second primary source even today. The goal here is not to diminish the importance of Ḥadīth as a source of Islamic law; however, it is essential to consider whether there was a difference in the usage of these two terms during that period.

VI. RIWĀYAHIN THE TIME OF COMPANIONS

By the time of Prophet Mohammad's passing, the number of his companions had grown to over one hundred thousand, comprising a diverse group in terms of race, background, and abilities.⁸³ Each of these companions, in various ways, became a narrator of the Prophet's words, written messages, and practices. Just as Allah entrusted the Prophet to deliver the divine message, He entrusted his companions to carry it forward and continue narrating it to others.⁸⁴ During the Sermon of Ḥajjatal-Wada' (the final pilgrimage of Prophet Muhammad), when most of the companions were present, he reminded them of their duty to transmit his teachings.⁸⁵ As a result, they took on this responsibility during his lifetime and carried it out diligently after his passing. Not only did they continue to convey the message through the three primary methods — speech, writing, and practice — but they also took proactive steps to expand and ensure the authenticity of each form of narration. In terms of oral *riwāyah*, the companions were divided into two groups:

1. Al-Muqillūn: Those who narrated fewer Ḥadīth.
2. Al-Mukthirūn: Those who narrated a large number.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 114. vol 3, 495. vol 4, 236. vol 6, 169.

⁸⁰ *ibid* vol 2, 57. vol 7, 19. vol 7, 267.

⁸¹ Dr. Rifat Fauzi Abdul Muttalib, *Tawthīq al-Sunnah fī al-Qarn al-Thānī al-Hijrī* (in Arabic) [*The Verification of the Sunnah in the Second Century Hijri*] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji 1981) 16.

⁸² Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 36, 382.

⁸³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī Aḥmad ibn, *Al-Jami' li Akhlaq al-Rawi wa Adab al-Sami* (in Arabic) [*The Compendium on the Ethics of the Hadith Narrator and the Manners of the Listener*] vol 3 (Riyadh: Al-Nasher Al-Mutamayyiz 2021) 436.

⁸⁴ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 4, 417.

⁸⁵ Ibn Hanbal, (n 65) vol 34, 24.

⁸⁶ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Fath al-Mughith bi Sharh Alfīyyat al-Hadith* (in Arabic) [*The Opening of the Savior with the Commentary on Alfīyyat al-Hadith*] vol 4 (Riyadh: Dar al-Minhaj 2005) 42.

The first group consisted of those who narrated less frequently. These individuals were generally more cautious in narrating the Prophet's sayings and practices.⁸⁷ Many of them were among the earliest converts to Islam, such as the first four caliphs and Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. They held a distinguished status among the companions, being part of the *Sābiqūn Awwalūn* (the Forerunners in the Faith).⁸⁸

The second group included those who dedicated themselves to memorising and orally narrating the Prophet's teachings. They made it their primary mission to preserve and share his words. A prominent example from this group is Abu Huraira (603-679), who became one of the most prolific narrators of Ḥadīth, dedicating his life to preserving and spreading the Prophet's teachings.⁸⁹

The trend of written narration expanded significantly during this period. Many companions, who had memorised the Qur'an through oral narration, began to preserve it in written form,⁹⁰ while also recording the oral narrations of Ḥadīth on scrolls.⁹¹ Additionally, original documents written during the time of the Prophet were kept by particular companions, who passed them down to their children for safekeeping.⁹² These original copies were then reproduced to create additional replicas and facsimiles, and their contents were also shared orally.⁹³ Some caliphs and other prominent companions took steps to record the oral narrations and observable practices they had learned, sending these written records to their subordinates.⁹⁴ Even Abu Huraira, known for his extensive oral narrations, began documenting some of them and passing them on in written form.⁹⁵ At this moment, two key questions cannot be overlooked:

1. Although the Prophet entrusted all of his companions with the responsibility of narrating his teachings, fewer than two thousand, which is less than 2% of the estimated total, are barely accepted as oral narrators.⁹⁶ The number of companions involved in written narration was even smaller. This raises the question: What role did the remaining 98% of companions play in conveying the prophetic narrations?
2. The senior companions, who were the earliest converts and held the highest authority during the Prophet's lifetime, were particularly cautious about withholding knowledge. Despite their prominent roles, they were not as actively involved in oral and written narration as one would expect.⁹⁷ This leads to another question: What role did these distinguished companions play in conveying the prophetic narrations?

Suppose the concept of narration is confined solely to oral or written forms. In that case, it may seem that more than 98% of companions, including the forerunners, had little or no role in the preservation and transmission of the Prophet's teachings. However, by broadening the definition to include practice as a form of narration, the essential contributions of these

⁸⁷ Snobar (n 18) 61-62.

⁸⁸ *ibid* 66-67.

⁸⁹ *ibid* 43.

⁹⁰ Ibn Abi Dawood Abd Allah bin Sulayman, *Kitab al-Masāḥif* (in Arabic) [*The Book of the Copies of the Qur'an*] (Beirut: Dar al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah 2002) 283.

⁹¹ Numani (n 21) 136-145.

⁹² *ibid* 139

⁹³ Hamidullah (n 20) 24.

⁹⁴ *ibid* 371-544.

⁹⁵ Numani (n 21) 145.

⁹⁶ Shams ad-Dīn Adh-Dhahabī, *Tajrid Asmā' al-Ṣaḥābah* (in Arabic) [*Listing the Names of the Companions*] vol 1 (Dubai: Dar al-Birr 2021) 67.

⁹⁷ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) 45.

companions to the development and strengthening of the Islamic tradition become clear. For example, the role that the companions of Badr and those who took part in the Bay‘ ahal-Riḍwān (The Pledge of al-Riḍwān) played in the juristic councils under Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar⁹⁸ highlights how their experiences and firsthand knowledge helped preserve the Prophet’s teachings and shape the development of Islamic law.⁹⁹

Similarly, the senior companions left the younger generation with the task of orally transmitting the Prophet's teachings, while they concentrated on preserving and sharing the practical aspects of his guidance. They committed themselves to preserving and sharing the practical and oral teachings they had received directly from the Prophet in a significant practical way. Consequently, the Muslim community continued to follow and apply these teachings, inspired by the practices of these key figures.¹⁰⁰ This responsibility was shared by the four caliphs and other erudite companions, such as Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (594-653), Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (602-672), Mu'adh ibn Jabal (603-639), and Zaid bin Sabit (611-665), among others.¹⁰¹

When later generations referenced the practices of the senior companions such as Abu Bakr (573-634), Umar (582-644), and others, by saying things like, 'I prayed alongside so-and-so for many years, and none of them did this practice,' they were essentially pointing to the practical narrations of these personalities.¹⁰² This demonstrates how the companions' practices, learned directly from the Prophet, became a living example of his teachings. These practices were then passed down to future generations as a vital part of Islamic narrations.

VII. THE COMPANION'S CONTRIBUTION TORIWĀYAH

Considering the three methods of narration and the developments during the time of the Companions, their contributions can be categorised into the following five areas: expansion, differentiation, interaction, authentication, and criticism.

A. Expansion of Riwāyah

This refers to the growth and development of all three forms of narration. For example, if a Companion were initially the sole narrator of a particular oral narration, they would later gather a group of narrators to continue transmitting it, either orally or in writing. This is evident in the group of prolific narrators and their students.¹⁰³

Similarly, if a Companion had a written narration, they would ensure that their descendants and students continued to preserve and pass it on through both oral and written means. One such example is the narrations from the written compilation of Abdullah ibn Amr, known as *Al-Sahīfah al-Ṣādiqah* (The Truthful Scroll), which later appeared in Ḥadīth books with the chain of: 'عن عمرو بن شعيب عن أبيه عن جده' (from Amr ibn Shu'aib, from his father, from his grandfather).¹⁰⁴ Likewise, the written narrations possessed by Ali ibn Abi Talib, referred to as *Sahīfah 'Alī ibn AbīṬālib* (The Scroll of Ali ibn Abi Talib), were transmitted primarily within

⁹⁸ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 34.

⁹⁹ Shibli Nomani, *Al-Fārūq* (in Urdu) [*The Biography of Caliph Umar al-Fārūq*] vol 2 (Delhi: Qaumi Press 1908) 12-16.

¹⁰⁰ Haider Hassan Khan Tonki, *Al-Tu'āmūl* (in Arabic) [*Praxis*] (Karachi: Al-Rahim Academy 1993) 19-20.

¹⁰¹ Muhammad Taqi Usmani, *Usul al-Ifiā' waĀdābuh* (in Arabic) [*The Fundamentals of Ifiā' and Its Etiquettes*] (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam 2018) 43-46.

¹⁰² Ibn Hanbal, (n 65) vol 20, 219.

¹⁰³ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) 42.

¹⁰⁴ Numani (n 21)140.

the family of the Prophet.¹⁰⁵ These narrations remained largely within specific families, giving rise to the concept of "familial chains of narration" or "family *isnads*" in the Ḥadīth sciences.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, those Companions who preserved practical narrations established groups of individuals responsible for safeguarding these practices. For instance, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud nourished four thousand prominent Tabi'ūn to preserve and transmit his practical narrations.¹⁰⁷

B. Differentiation in the forms of Riwayāh

This refers to the increasing distinction between the different forms of narration in terms of acceptance, credibility, and reliability. For example, oral narrations began to face more criticism than practical narrations. Even a minor inconsistency with daily practice could lead to criticism of an oral narration. A notable instance of this occurred when Abu Huraira narrated that ablution will be invalidated by food cooked with fire, to which Abdullah ibn Abbas (619-687) objected, questioning whether ablution would also be invalidated by hot water.¹⁰⁸ While practical narrations were based on solid foundations and observable practices, they were less likely to face criticism. This may have been one of the reasons why oral and practical narrations eventually came to be viewed as opposing forms of expression. As a result, the difference between oral and practical narrations, which had started during the prophetic period with the separate use of Ḥadīth and Sunnah, had grown more pronounced by this time.¹⁰⁹ This distinction became especially apparent in the legal and scholarly discussions among the Companions. In these debates, simply stating 'This is the Sunnah' was often enough to settle a dispute and provide a definitive resolution.¹¹⁰

C. Interaction Between the Forms of Riwayāh

This highlights that the Companions used various approaches to preserve and transmit narrations, rather than relying on a single method. They did not simply depend on the original form in which the narration was received; instead, they preserved it in its original format while also utilising additional methods of transmission. The primary objective during this period was to ensure the preservation and transmission of the narrations, so every available means was utilised. For instance, oral narrations were passed down through oral, written, and practical forms. Similarly, written narrations were conveyed through oral and practical methods, and practical narrations were transmitted via oral and written channels. Consequently, a variety of methods were employed to preserve and transmit each form of narration, with oral narrations being preserved in writing and practice, written narrations being passed down orally and through practice, and practical narrations being communicated both orally and in writing.

A review of the Ḥadīth collections reveals the following cases regarding this diversity:

1. Practical narration is transmitted through practical narrations.¹¹¹
2. Practical narration is conveyed through oral narration.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ *ibid* 142.

¹⁰⁶ Bekir Kuzudişli, *Aile Isnadları* (in Turkish) [*Family Chains of Narration*] (Istanbul: IFAN 2021) 19.

¹⁰⁷ Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari, *Fiqh Ahl al-'Irāq waḤadīthuhum* (in Arabic) [*The Jurisprudence of the People of Iraq and Their Hadith*] (Beirut: Dar al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah 2023) 42.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Tirmidhi (n 44) vol 1, 104.

¹⁰⁹ Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 12-13.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 4, 401.

¹¹¹ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 2, 241.

¹¹² Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 23, 265.

3. Oral narration is conveyed through practical narration.¹¹³
4. Both oral and practical narrations are combined and passed on through oral narration.¹¹⁴
5. Practical or oral narration transferred through written narration.¹¹⁵
6. Written narration transferred through oral narration.¹¹⁶
7. A person's actions are observed and described as being in accordance with the practice of the Prophet.¹¹⁷

D. Authentication of Riwāyah

The fourth contribution refers to the efforts made to ensure that all forms of narration would be reliable and trustworthy. Narrations with greater legislative significance received particular attention in this regard. The Qur'an, being the most important, was the first to be preserved. However, when there was concern about a decline in the number of oral narrators, the written form of the Qur'anic narration was compiled into a standardised copy at the direction of the first caliph, Abu Bakr.¹¹⁸ Later, during the reign of Uthmān ibn Affān (576-656), additional copies were made and distributed to key cities to preserve and authenticate the written and oral Qur'anic narrations.¹¹⁹ From that time forward, all subsequent copies of the Qur'an were based on the Uthmānic codex. This practice was so influential that, even though the rules of Arabic orthography evolved, the calligraphy and printing of the *maṣāḥif* have continued to follow the Uthmanic script.¹²⁰

The second most significant category of narrations was those attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Among these, oral narrations underwent a more rigorous process of validation. They were compared with practical narrations, and if they did not align, they were subject to criticism from other companions.¹²¹ In such instances, the narrator's character, their early association with Islam, and their scholarly status were used to authenticate the narration.¹²² If this were insufficient, further confirmation from another reliable narrator would be sought to establish its credibility.¹²³

Written narrations were subject to somewhat less rigorous scrutiny because the texts from the time of the Prophet were widely recognised, and the writing methods and script acted as safeguards against fabrication. Furthermore, since trustworthy individuals preserved these writings, the credibility of the writer was often considered enough to authenticate the narration.¹²⁴

As for practical narrations, they were regarded as the most reliable, serving as a direct reflection of how to live according to the Qur'anic and prophetic teachings. These narrations were seen

¹¹³ *ibid* vol 32, 466.

¹¹⁴ *ibid* vol 38, 530.

¹¹⁵ *ibid* vol 1, 409.

¹¹⁶ *ibid* vol 2, 181.

¹¹⁷ *ibid* vol 21, 63.

¹¹⁸ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 9, 190.

¹¹⁹ *ibid* vol 6, 425.

¹²⁰ Al-Shaykh al-Tijānī bin Ahmadi, *Tārīkh al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (in Arabic) [*The History of the Noble Qur'ān*] (Kuwait: Dar al-Dhiya' 2019) 446.

¹²¹ Snobar (n 18) 95-96.

¹²² Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 39.

¹²³ *ibid* 41.

¹²⁴ Numani (in 21)137.

as the most trustworthy among those attributed to the Prophet.¹²⁵ In this context, practical narrations not only stood as a form of narration in their own right but also played a crucial role in validating other forms of narration, thereby giving them greater authority and influence.

E. Criticism

In the absence of formal authentication, the next step taken by the companions was criticism, which is considered the fifth key contribution in this context. Oral narrations, in particular, were subjected to more scrutiny than written or practical ones. During the time of the companions, due to the lack of established chains of narrators, *naqd al-isnad* (chain criticism) was not commonly practised. Instead, *naqd al-matn* (textual criticism) was the more prevalent method. For instance, Umar criticized the oral narration of Fatimah bint Qays,¹²⁶ Aisha (d. 678) questioned several companions' oral narrations,¹²⁷ and Abdullah ibn Abbas raised objections to certain narrations of Abu Huraira.¹²⁸ All of these instances are examples of textual criticism. Moreover, criticism was not limited to interactions among the companions; at the same time, some prominent Tabi'un also criticised the narrations of the companions. One such example is Urwah ibn Zubayr's (644-713) criticism of the oral narration of Ibn Abbas,¹²⁹ or the practice of his big brother Abdullah ibn Zubayr (624-692).¹³⁰ This indicates that in Islam, textual criticism took precedence, whereas chain criticism emerged at a later stage.

In summary, during the era of the Companions, the concept of *riwāyah* was not limited to just one form. Both oral and practical *riwāyah* were recognised as separate categories. Practical *riwāyah*, in particular, had dual importance during this time; it not only served as a form of narration in itself but also became a standard for authenticating and critically assessing both oral and written *riwāyah*.¹³¹

VIII. RIWĀYAH IN THE TIME OF TABI'UN

After the era of the Companions, the period of the Tabi'un followed in terms of the chain of transmission. The Tabi'un were a more diverse group compared to the Companions. Their diversity can be observed in various ways. Some were present during the Prophet's time but did not meet him or embrace Islam after his passing, preventing them from attaining the status of Companions.¹³² Some of them were older than particular Companions.¹³³ Some of them had contributions to the *riwāyah* greater than those of some younger Companions.¹³⁴ Some were even considered to have greater expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and law than some of the well-respected companions.¹³⁵ Additionally, some were appointed to judicial positions during the time of the companions,¹³⁶ while others had already established their circles of narration during the lifetimes of the prominent companions, with some companions themselves attending

¹²⁵ Snobar (n 18) 98.

¹²⁶ Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 40.

¹²⁷ *ibid* 38-42.

¹²⁸ *ibid* 40.

¹²⁹ Snobar (n 18) 98.

¹³⁰ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 41, 120.

¹³¹ Snobar (n 18) 71-72.

¹³² Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 4, 110-111.

¹³³ *ibid* vol 4, 111.

¹³⁴ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 58.

¹³⁵ Muhammad 'Abd al-Hayy al-Laknawi, *Al-Ajwibah al-Fadhilah li As'ilah al-'Asharah al-Kamilah* (in Arabic) [*The Excellent Answers to the Ten Complete Questions*] (Cairo:1984) 213.

¹³⁶ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 56.

these circles.¹³⁷ There were also Tabi'un from whom companions would seek narrations.¹³⁸ In some cases, when a companion was asked a question, instead of answering directly, they would tell the questioner to ask one of the Tabi'un the same question.¹³⁹ Furthermore, there were those among them who would critique the narrations of particular companions openly, even in their presence.¹⁴⁰

These aspects of diversity are primarily scholarly and have a direct or indirect influence on *riwāyah*. However, there are other aspects of diversity that, while perhaps not impacting the narration itself as directly, certainly shaped the intellectual capabilities and cultural outlook of the narrators. For example, some of them were connected to other advanced civilisations and regions,¹⁴¹ others had studied different religions, and some held notable scholarly positions within other religious traditions.¹⁴²

IX. THE TABI'UN'S CONTRIBUTION TORIWĀYAH

Considering the three methods of narration and the developments during the time of the Tabi'un, their contributions can be categorised into the following seven areas: documentation, expansion, differentiation, interaction, diversity, authentication, and criticism.

A. Documentation

During this period, a notable shift occurred in the preservation of narratives, with an increasing focus on converting oral accounts into written form. This movement was initiated by Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan (647-705) during his tenure as the Umayyad governor of Egypt from 685 to 705, which was around the third quarter of the 1st Hijri century. He entrusted Abu Shajara Kathir ibn Murrah al-Hadrami, a prominent figure who had heard narrations from seventy companions of the Battle of Badr, with documenting the oral narrations he had received. The exception was the narrations of Abu Huraira, which were already written down.¹⁴³

Later, Abd al-Aziz's son, Umar (680-720), took several necessary steps to build on this effort. He directed his governors across various regions to ensure that Ḥadīth were written down, sent a message to scholars encouraging them to document their oral narrations, and personally reached out to prominent Tabi'un narrators, including Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (677-742), Abu Bakr bin Hazm (d. 737), Amrah bint Abd al-Rahman (642-724), and Qasim bin Mohammad (668-738), urging them to preserve their narrations in written form. This initiative stemmed from the fear that the knowledge might be lost with the passing of scholars.¹⁴⁴

The question arises as to which form of narration was at risk of being lost with the death of narrators? Clearly, written narrations were not a concern, as they were preserved in written form and passed down to the narrators' families or students.¹⁴⁵ If the worry had been about losing written narrations, then the effort to convert oral narrations into writing would not have

¹³⁷ *ibid* 37.

¹³⁸ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 4, 127.

¹³⁹ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 38.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 41, 120.

¹⁴¹ *ibid* vol 1, 81.

¹⁴² Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 16, 204.

¹⁴³ Dr. Muḥyiddīn Muḥammad Awāma, *Tawḍīḥ 'Ilm Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* (in Arabic) [*Explanation of the Science of the Terminology of the Noble Hadith*] (Istanbul: Dar al-Hadith al-Awamiyah 2023) 14.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid* 14.

¹⁴⁵ Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 62.

made sense. Similarly, practical narrations were not at risk of disappearing, as those who had observed the practices of the companions could continue to practice and teach them to the coming generation. For example, after the death of Abu Bakr, Umar and other companions maintained and followed his practices, and the same occurred after the deaths of other Rashidun Caliphs, with their practices being preserved by both companions and Tabi'un.¹⁴⁶ Thus, practical narrations were not a concern. The genuine concern, however, was the preservation of oral narrations. The fear was that, with the death of the narrators, these oral narrations could be forgotten and eventually lost. This is reflected in the references to oral narrations in the letters, such as the phrase ما سمع من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من أحاديثهم (the narrations they heard from the companions of the Messenger of Allah).¹⁴⁷

It appears that after the companions had standardised the oral and written narration of the Qur'an under their supervision, the rulers recognised the need to continue this work and focus on preserving and standardising the oral narrations attributed to the Prophet. However, this task was so vast that it could not be completed by a single scholar or a group of narrators from one region. As a result, various individuals were directed towards this task, and consequently, almost all of them contributed to it.¹⁴⁸

Practical narrations strengthened through their consistent implementation, solidifying the term "Sunnah" as a key concept. Originally used during the time of the companions, Sunnah eventually became the foundation for Islamic law and legal rulings by renowned jurists.¹⁴⁹ In situations of legal disputes, scholars frequently referred to the Sunnah as a source of guidance.¹⁵⁰ Because practical narrations were closely tied to the actual practice of Islam in daily life, scholars who focused on them gained greater prominence and influence in society. On the other hand, those who specialised in transmitting oral narrations did not reach the same level of recognition or importance.¹⁵¹

In summary, when considering the status of all three forms of narration during this period, it can be said that practical narration remained the most preserved and significant, referred to as Sunnah,¹⁵² Amal,¹⁵³ or Ta'amul.¹⁵⁴ The acceptance and validation of both oral and written narrations were based on this. Oral narrations, known as Ḥadīth, were collected and compiled due to concerns over their potential loss. Written narration, the third form, saw the most expansion. Not only did narrations begin to be recorded in written form, but written narration also became a key means of preserving both oral and practical narrations.

B. Expansion

Each prominent Tabi'i had a growing number of students and narrators under his guidance, which led to a slight increase in the chain of narrators compared to the earlier period. Over time, this expansion led to the emergence of different schools of thought within each Tabi'i's circle, resulting in further division within the field of narration.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 7, 131.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 1, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Muḥammad Awāma (n 143) 15.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Bukhārī (n 43) vol 8, 435.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid* vol 9, 30-34.

¹⁵¹ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 45-46.

¹⁵² Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 3, 503.

¹⁵³ Mālik ibn 'Anas, *Al-Muwatta'a* (in Arabic) [*The Well-Trodden Path*] (Abu Dhabi: Mu'assasat Zayed 2004) 1494.

¹⁵⁴ Tonki (n 100) 20.

Regarding this expansion, the key point is that the students of each Companion who possessed oral or practical narrations established their own schools of thought, whether in Ḥadīth or Jurisprudence. For example, in Kufa, Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud's narrations were passed on to around four thousand of his students.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the students of Ali ibn Abi Talib carried forward his legacy of narration. Together, these groups established Kufa as a key centre of scholarly thought, with notable figures like Alqama ibn Qays al-Nakha'i (d. 682), Masruq ibn al-Ajda' (d. 682), and Al-Qadhi Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 697).¹⁵⁶

In Medina, the students of Abdullah ibn Umar, Aisha, and Abu Huraira carried on their schools of narrations, with the Seven *Fuqahā'* (jurists) being prominent figures from this tradition.¹⁵⁷ In Mecca, the students of Abdullah ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Zubayr established their own school, with key figures such as Mujāhid ibn Jabr (642-722), Ata ibn Abi Rabah (646-733), and Ibn Abī Mulaykah (d. 735) representing this school.¹⁵⁸ In Basrah, the students of Anas ibn Malik and Imran ibn Husayn continued their schools of narration, with key figures including Abul Aliyah al-Riyahi (d. 713), Mutarrif ibn Abdullah (d. 713), and Qatada ibn Di'amah (d. 735).¹⁵⁹ In Syria, students of Mu'adh ibn Jabal and Abu Darda established their own schools, with notable scholars such as Abu Idris al-Khawlanī (d. 699) and Makhul (d. 733).¹⁶⁰ In Egypt, the students of Abdullah ibn Amr and Uqbah ibn Amir continued their traditions, with prominent figures such as Abdullah ibn Malik al-Jishani (d. 698) and Abd al-Rahman ibn Hujayrah al-Khawlanī (d. 702).¹⁶¹

As a result, different schools of thought in the transmission of narrations developed in each major city, each with its own distinctive traits. These differences played a key role in distinguishing between the centres. Furthermore, the schools that were grounded in the most robust traditions and led by prominent scholars not only endured but also thrived. They had a profound impact, shaping the traditions of other centres, either entirely or partially.¹⁶²

C. Differentiation

A significant factor in the growing differentiation was the increasing separation between oral narration, known as Ḥadīth, and practical narration, referred to as Sunnah. While this distinction was made during the time of the Companions, it became more pronounced in this period, with more precise boundaries drawn between the two forms of *riwāyah*. This distinction is evident in how prominent Tabi‘un used both terms. For example, the renowned Tabi‘i, Abd al-Rahman ibn Mahdi (752-814) said:

السنة المتقدمة من سنة أهل المدينة خير من الحديث¹⁶³

(Translation: The earlier practices of the people of Medina are better than the Ḥadīth.)

He also said:

¹⁵⁵ Al-Kawthari (n 107) 42.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Nu‘mani (n 63) 51-56.

¹⁵⁷ Numani (n 21)29-31.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid* 31.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid* 53-54.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid* 74-75.

¹⁶¹ *ibid* 79-81.

¹⁶² Snobar (n 18) 152.

¹⁶³ Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘AbdAllāh al-Jawharī, *Musnad al-Muwatta’a* (in Arabic) [Arrangement of Al-Muwatta according to the Musnad] (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb, 1997) 1494.

الناس على وجوه، فمنهم من هو إمام في السنة وليس بإمام في الحديث، ومنهم من هو إمام في الحديث وليس بإمام في السن¹⁶⁴

(Translation: People are of different types: some are experts in the Sunnah but not in hadith, while others are experts in hadith but not in the Sunnah).

There are numerous examples of this distinction in this period.

D. Interaction

The interaction can be viewed from various perspectives. For instance, in the styles of narration, as earlier, there were only three styles:

1. A companion narrated directly from the Prophet what he had heard or observed firsthand.
2. A companion narrated from the Prophet through another companion, what he had not heard or observed directly.
3. A companion narrated directly from the Prophet something he had not heard or observed, without any intermediary, which is called: *Irsaal us Sahabi*.¹⁶⁵

However, during this period, additional styles of narration began to emerge:

1. A Tabi'i narrates from the Prophet through the intermediary of a companion.
2. A Tabi'i narrates from the Prophet through the intermediaries of multiple companions.¹⁶⁶
3. A Tabi'i narrates without mentioning the intermediaries between himself and the Prophet, which is called: *Irsaal-ut-Tab'i*.¹⁶⁷
4. A Tabi'i narrates without mentioning the intermediaries between himself and the Prophet, using the term "بلغني" (it was conveyed to me).¹⁶⁸

Another critical aspect of interaction was the exchange of knowledge between different schools of thought. This involved individuals from one school seeking narrations from companions or key narrators of other schools. For example, the students of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud would visit Umar ibn al-Khattab to learn from him.¹⁶⁹ When Ali ibn Abi Talib arrived in Kufa, his narrations, along with those of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, who also came to Kufa, were sought after.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, scholars from one region would travel to other regions to gather narrations from companions there. This mutual exchange of knowledge played a significant role in enriching the body of narrations among the Tabi'un and fostering greater interaction in the scholarly traditions.

¹⁶⁴ Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 20.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 1, 270.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 1, 340.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 1, 238.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 16, 442.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Nu'mani (n 63) 54.

¹⁷⁰ Snobar (n 18) 134-144.

E. Diversity

An aspect of diversity can be seen in the Tabi'un, who associated with one school of narration but benefited from different schools, then carried this knowledge into their centre, either fully or partially. In this regard, the most fortunate were the schools in Makkah and Madinah, as the Sahabah had spread throughout the world, yet they would still travel to these two cities for Hajj, Umrah, and other visits. This made it very easy for the Tabi'un present there to benefit from them. Similarly, Tabi'un from other centres of the Islamic world would also travel to these two cities and seize the opportunity to learn from the Sahabah who were either permanently residing or temporarily visiting, considering it a valuable opportunity.¹⁷¹

Moreover, in cities with a significant number of Sahabah, the Tabi'un would travel from far and wide to meet them and learn from their narrations. Kufa, in particular, was a fortunate city in this regard, as it was home to 1,500 Sahabah, including seventy who had taken part in the Battle of Badr. In this way, the Sahabah settling in various cities, along with the Tabi'un travelling from distant places to seek narrations, contributed to the diversity in their approaches and thoughts, and facilitated the transfer of oral, written, and practical narrations from one centre to another.¹⁷²

A good example of this can be seen in Basra, where prominent Sahabah, such as Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Imran bin Husayn, and Anas bin Malik, were based. Despite this, two renowned Tabi'i figures, Hasan al-Basri and Muhammad bin Sirin, chose to affiliate with different schools of thought rather than joining theirs. As a result, Hasan al-Basri played a significant role in spreading the Madinan school of thought, while Muhammad bin Sirin helped bring and establish the Kufan school in Basra.¹⁷³

F. Authentication

The approach to authentication followed by the senior Tabi'un was essentially a continuation of the practices set by the companions. Since the senior Tabi'un were direct students of the prominent companions, they adhered to the same principles for ensuring the reliability of narrations, which focused on the credibility of the narrators and the alignment of their narrations with established practices.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, during the time of the companions, there was no reliance on a chain of narrators for authentication, and the senior Tabi'un followed this same method.¹⁷⁵ Just as the companions commonly used *irsaal* (omission of intermediaries) in their narrations, the senior Tabi'un also continued this practice.¹⁷⁶ If they narrated from one or a few companions, they would mention the intermediaries; however, when narrating from a larger group, they would omit the names of intermediaries by using *irsaal*.¹⁷⁷ For the senior Tabi'un, the use of *irsaal* was itself considered a valid form of authentication.¹⁷⁸

Some of them, who were initially accustomed to using *irsaal*, began incorporating *isnad* after observing others doing so.¹⁷⁹ However, there were still those among the Tabi'un who continued

¹⁷¹ Numani (n 21)29-35.

¹⁷² Al-Kawthari (n 107) 42.

¹⁷³ Snobar (n 18) 143-52.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid* 161.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid* 165.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 1, 245.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Kawthari (n 107) 32-33.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Sakhāwī (n 86) vol 1, 247.

¹⁷⁹ Snobar (n 18) 165.

to rely on *irsaal* and considered a student's request for an *isnad* to be a challenge to the authenticity of their narration.¹⁸⁰ For these narrators, such a request was seen as improper and a violation of the accepted etiquette of narration.¹⁸¹ In these cases, they would often refuse to provide the *isnad*¹⁸² and might even become upset, viewing the request as an implicit critique of their authentication method.¹⁸³

During the time of the junior Tabi'un, as people with wrong views began to participate in narration, the process of authentication gained much greater importance.¹⁸⁴ This led to a stronger emphasis on verifying the reliability of narrations. It is essential to note which type of narration requires the most authentication. For written narrations, simply proving a link to a companion or their student was sufficient for validation. Practical narrations, on the other hand, were already validated through widespread implementation, so they did not require further authentication. As a result, oral narrations became the focus of authentication, prompting the development of *isnad* as a formal method of ensuring the authenticity of these narrations.

By the end of the Tabi'un era, the concept of *isnad* evolved. It was no longer just about providing a detailed chain of narrators or being the opposite of *irsaal*. Instead, it became a way to establish trust in the narration. If a narrator had confidence in the authenticity of a narration through *irsaal*, they didn't feel the need to mention the chain of transmission. However, if there were doubts about its reliability, they would provide the chain of evidence.¹⁸⁵ Tabi'un narrators would offer the chain when necessary, but often chose to omit it if they preferred.¹⁸⁶

G. Criticism

Regarding criticism, up until this time, the practice of *irsaal* by the senior Tabi'un was not considered a subject of critique. The focus was generally on the content (text) of the narration rather than the chain of narrators. However, when the chain of narrators was mentioned, it was typically brief, often involving just one or two intermediaries, usually a prominent Tabi'i and a companion.¹⁸⁷ As a result, the chains of narrators from this period were rarely subjected to chain criticism. Consequently, there are few examples of criticism directed at the chains of narration from this era, with most criticism focusing on textual analysis instead.¹⁸⁸

X. RIWĀYAH IN THE POST TABI'UN PERIOD

The factors that initiated differentiation during the time of the Companions and were further refined in the Tabi'un era eventually led to the formation of various schools of Islamic Jurisprudence. Practical narrations became the foundation of these emerging schools of thought.¹⁸⁹ Among them, the Medinan and Kufan schools were the most prominent, often in rivalry with each other. A clear distinction developed between the people of Hijaz (Medina)

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Hanbal (n 65) vol 35, 250.

¹⁸¹ *ibid* vol 35, 250.

¹⁸² *ibid* vol 2, 344.

¹⁸³ Al-Suyūṭī (n 38) vol 3, 165.

¹⁸⁴ Numani (n 21)199.

¹⁸⁵ Khalīl bin Ibrāhīm al-'Azzāmī, *Al-Isnādahammiyyatuḥuwaqṣāmuhuwa 'ināyat 'ulamā' al-ummatbih* (in Arabic) [*Isnad: Its Importance, Types, and the Attention Given to It by the Scholars of the Ummah*] (Amman: Arwiqa 2017) 61.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Suyūṭī (n 38) vol 3, 161.

¹⁸⁷ Numani (n 21)118.

¹⁸⁸ Rifat Fauzi (n 81) 59.

¹⁸⁹ Tonki (n 100) 22.

and those of Iraq (Kufa), with some scholars also differentiating between the Medinan and Ra'i (Iraqi) traditions.¹⁹⁰ Each group established its own principles for aligning and interpreting oral and written narrations in the light of practical narrations. Although there were common elements, their oral narration exhibited significant differences. Over time, written narration became the primary method for preserving both types of narrations, to the point where their original distinctions became somewhat unclear.

The Kufan school of narration, led by Imam Abu Hanifa, evolved into the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, also known as *fiqh*. In contrast, the Medinan school of narration, led by Imam Malik, developed into the Maliki school of *fiqh*. Both schools based their interpretations on practical narration, accepting narrations that aligned with practice.¹⁹¹ The Kufan narrations were compiled in *Kitab al-Athar*, and the Medinan narrations were collected in *Al-Muwatta*.¹⁹² Despite the doctrinal and practical differences between the two schools in both their practical and oral narrations, they shared one fundamental principle: the primacy of practical narrations over the other forms.¹⁹³ As a result, in the scholarly discussions between the Hanafi and Maliki schools, practical narrations were always given precedence and were often referred to as the Sunnah.¹⁹⁴

At the same time, as the distinction between the two schools of practical narration became more defined, a new school of thought emerged that regarded oral narrations as superior to practical ones. As a result, its followers began travelling to different regions to collect oral narrations, specifically those that had not yet been integrated into practical traditions. They focused on gathering the chains of narrators. They placed a strong emphasis on verifying the authenticity of narrations based on these chains, marking a departure from the earlier methods used for practical narrations.¹⁹⁵

They called themselves *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (The Followers of Ḥadīth) and their opponents *Ahl al-Rai* (The Followers of Intellectual Reasoning).¹⁹⁶ They viewed *irsaal* as conflicting with the concept of *isnad*.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, they disregarded many oral and practical narrations of the senior Tabi'un and assessed practical narrations through the lens of their oral narrations. They accepted practices that aligned with these oral narrations and rejected those that did not.¹⁹⁸ This distinction eventually led to the formation of two separate schools of thought: one led by the jurists, focused on practical narration, and the other by the Ḥadīth scholars, who gave priority to the oral narration and chain of narrators.

In society, jurists held greater influence than Ḥadīth scholars for several reasons, which allowed them to maintain a dominant position. However, the arrival of Imam al-Shafi'i (767-820) marked a significant turning point.¹⁹⁹ He, after studying both the juristic and Ḥadīth schools, based his approach on the methodology of the Ḥadīth scholars. This change elevated the status of the Ḥadīth scholars and reshaped the intellectual landscape.²⁰⁰ As a result, the previously

¹⁹⁰ Tonki (n 100) 27.

¹⁹¹ *ibid* 27.

¹⁹² Numani (n 21)163.

¹⁹³ Tonki (n 100) 26.

¹⁹⁴ Numani (n 21)203.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid* 201.

¹⁹⁶ Usmani (n 101) 68. Al-Kawthari (n 107) 17.

¹⁹⁷ Al-Kawthari (n 107) 33.

¹⁹⁸ Tonki (n 100) 28.

¹⁹⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute 1988) 23.

²⁰⁰ Tonki (n 100) 31.

dominant theory of the supremacy of practical narration was significantly challenged. From this point forward, the concept of *riwāyah* became more closely associated with oral narration, marking a significant development in Islamic scholarly thought.

XI. RESTRICTING THE CONCEPT ON ORAL NARRATION

Over time, Ḥadīth scholars began to equate the term *riwāyah* with Ḥadīth, and writing was adopted as a way to preserve oral narrations. However, practical narration was not given any consideration in this context. As a result, in the Ḥadīth collections compiled by this school, such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, the principle of the supremacy of oral narration is fully applied, with an apparent disregard for practical narration. Although al-Tirmidhi was a student of al-Bukhari and belonged to the same school of thought, he does not entirely overlook practical narration. On the theoretical side, he recognises the significance of jurists in understanding Ḥadīth.²⁰¹ On the practical side, in al-Sunan, he includes references to whether each oral narration aligns with practical narration.²⁰² This approach serves to remind readers of the earlier prominence of practical narration.

After compiling key books based on the principle of the supremacy of oral narration, Ḥadīth scholars began to focus on the principles for evaluating Ḥadīth. In doing so, they continued to uphold the same distinction. The extensive collection of books written on the principles of Ḥadīth stands as evidence of this division. The entire subject is dedicated to serving oral narration, while the principles of written narration are briefly included in these books, almost as a subordinate element. Moreover, practical narration was not even deemed worthy of mention under the term *riwāyah*. This situation persisted until Western researchers began discussing "Ḥadīth" in the late seventeenth century. In contrast, Muslim scholars began reassessing their understanding of *riwāyah* and incorporated written forms into the Islamic narration system. However, the practical form of *riwāyah*, which had been regarded as the most important in the early periods of Islam, was still excluded from this revised narrative. The restriction of the concept of *riwayah* to oral forms led to several disadvantages:

1. The lack of a complete narrative for the system of narration in Islam.
2. The absence of a complete narrative for the system of authentication.
3. Consideration of Isnad as the sole criterion for all forms of narration, which was a means of authentication for oral narrations, was regarded as the complete system of authentication.
4. Critique of juristic schools of thought, such as the Hanafi and Maliki schools, which prioritised the supremacy of practical narration, from the perspective of the oral narration-first paradigm.
5. Total Negligence of the Role of Narration in the Preservation and Transmission of Other Islamic Sciences, such as Qira'at, Tafsir, Sira, history, Jurisprudence and Islamic Law, etc.

XII. CONCLUSION

This study examines the usage of the term *riwāyah* in classical Arabic literature, with a focus on its conceptual meaning across various texts. It concludes that the term was not confined to any single form of narration. The study also explores the evolution of *riwāyah* into an Islamic

²⁰¹ Al-Tirmidhi (n 44) vol 2, 379.

²⁰² Numani (n 21)227.

concept, demonstrating that Islamic teachings adopt a holistic approach, emphasising both the conceptual and practical dimensions of narration, without prioritising any specific form.

The analysis of *riwāyah* during the Prophetic era reveals that the Prophet of Islam did not favour any one form of narration, granting his Companions (Ṣaḥābah) the freedom to employ all forms, both as a conceptual framework and in practical application. Moreover, the examination of *riwāyah* during the periods of the Companions and the Tābi‘ūn, alongside their significant contributions to its promotion and development, indicates that they maintained and extended this inclusive approach. They further advanced Islamic narration, ensuring that each form of narration was accorded its due share and rightful place in its promotion and development.

The study also examines the evolution of narration in the post-Tābi‘ūn era, highlighting its role in shaping Islamic juristic schools (*fuqahā*). While practical narration emerged as the dominant form, providing the foundation for jurisprudence, traditionalists (*muḥaddithūn*) continued to emphasise oral narration, leading to an intellectual divide. Jurists gained prominence through formalised schools of thought, while traditionalists, lacking such frameworks, struggled to align with established schools. The rise of Imam Shāfi‘ī as a traditionalist jurist marked a turning point; by establishing a school based on the supremacy of oral narration, he systematised jurisprudential principles, enabling traditionalists to engage and debate with jurists. The study concludes that, while practical narration played a central role, the Islamic intellectual tradition had already adopted a broader, multifaceted approach to narration before the time of Imam Shāfi‘ī. Following his influence, however, the concept of *riwāyah* became increasingly associated with oral narration, eventually becoming synonymous with the Hadith.

Based on the present study, there is no evidence, either in the literal or in the terminological use of *riwāyah* in the early periods of Islam, to restrict this concept to oral narration. This conceptual limitation in the later centuries has led to many disadvantages. In this regard, it seems preferable to return the concept of *riwāyah* to its original meanings, allowing it to regain comprehensiveness and inclusivity. This would facilitate a better understanding of the complete framework of all types of Islamic narrations and help establish a narrative for determining the authenticity criteria for each.