



## THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HADITH SCIENCE

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**Annotation:** This article primarily discusses the significant contribution of women to the development of Hadith science throughout history. In the early periods of Islam, women played an important role not only in family life but also in scholarly activities. Research shows that women served as trustworthy scholars and as primary sources of Hadith literature. They held great importance in studying and disseminating Islamic teachings. Women in the field of Hadith had their own lectures and legal opinions (fatwas). Their unique knowledge and experience contributed to the education of future generations. Numerous hadiths were narrated about women, and their perspectives on life and various matters are reflected in these narrations, which serve as valuable guidance for improving women's quality of life.

**Keywords:** Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, isnad, the science of knowing narrators, tahammul, ijazah, sama', wijadah.

The 3rd/9th century is considered the golden age in the history of Hadith science. From the middle of the 8th century onward, the science of Hadith developed steadily, and over the course of the next two or three centuries, more than four hundred authors were engaged in it<sup>1</sup>. During this period, organizing hadiths scientifically based on reliable sources became the most respected and essential activity among scholars. Moreover, the hadiths collected during this century were arranged systematically according to specific legal principles from a scholarly perspective. In the 2nd Hijri century, hadith was studied as part of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), but by the 3rd century, it had separated as an independent field with a solid foundation. The first scholar to demonstrate the distinction between Hadith science and jurisprudence as separate disciplines was Imam al-Shafi'i.

Over time, due to the large number of hadith narrators, there arose a need to study their identities, verify the chains of transmission, distinguish differences among narrators, and confirm the authenticity of reports. This gave rise to a specialized discipline known as «ulum al-hadith» (the sciences of hadith). Prominent figures in the formation and development of Hadith science belonged to the generation of the tabi' al-tabi'in. They compiled hadiths into books. As the Islamic state expanded, people from various nations, religions, sects, and ethnicities embraced Islam. Their varying abilities to memorize, knowledge of the Arabic language, beliefs, and other factors often created difficulties in understanding the religion. Moreover, political strife erupted, various conflicts emerged, and diverse sects appeared. Intellectual and ideological battles intensified. Each side attempted to prove its correctness using different means, including bringing evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah. In such situations, false parties began to misinterpret the Qur'an and falsely attribute fabricated sayings as hadiths. Scholars labeled such forgeries as mawḍū' hadiths (fabricated or forged hadiths)<sup>2</sup>.

Hadith scholars collected only trustworthy and just narrations in order to pass on the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah in its purest form to future generations. They studied hadiths in two parts: the isnād and the text. The Arabic word isnād means "support" or "chain of transmission" and refers to the list of narrators who transmitted the hadith, ending with the person who narrated it<sup>3</sup>.

Additionally, the content of the hadith was examined. Scholars ensured that its wording and meaning did not contradict the Qur'an, and that it was consistent with similar narrations. If inconsistencies were found, the hadith of a more reliable narrator was preferred. Once the accuracy of the text was confirmed, the muhaddith accepted it.

The science of Hadith mainly developed in seven directions:

1. The science of evaluating narrators in terms of integrity and precision (*ʿIlm al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*);
2. The science of identifying hadith narrators (*ʿIlm Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*);
3. The science of analyzing conflicting aspects of hadiths (*ʿIlm Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*);
4. The science of detecting hidden defects in hadiths (*ʿIlm ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth*);
5. The science of recognizing hadiths narrated solely by a single transmitter (*ʿIlm Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*);
6. The science of examining the abrogation of one hadith by another (*ʿIlm al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*);
7. The science of understanding the reasons behind the occurrence of hadiths (*ʿIlm Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth*)<sup>4</sup>.

The role of women in Hadith science is examined within the framework of three aspects:

1. The role of women in *tahammul* – the science of receiving hadiths by listening to the shaykh, memorizing them, and conveying them to others.
2. The journeys of female narrators in pursuit of hadith knowledge.
3. The role of women in the science of *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* (criticism and validation of narrators).

Concerning the role of women in *tahammul*, the following points can be noted:

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), *tahammul* was primarily based on oral listening and narration. From the 3rd Hijri century onward—during the period of compilation—transmission began to rely on various books and authenticated hadith collections.

There are eight recognized methods of *tahammul*: *Samāʿ* (listening), *Qirāʾah* (reading)<sup>5</sup>, *Ijāzah* (authorization), *Munāwala* (handing over texts)<sup>6</sup>, *Kitābah* (writing), *Iʿlām* (notification)<sup>7</sup>, *Waṣīyyah* (bequeathing)<sup>8</sup>, and *Wijādah* (finding written hadiths).

Female narrators received hadiths via various means during the Prophet's time:

1. Private gatherings and general sessions open to Muslims. This is seen in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice of designating special days for women. They would attend the mosque and listen to hadiths orally. Such occurrences also took place during Eid days and the Hajj season.

2. Women visiting the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asking questions.

There are many examples of this, especially regarding matters unique to women or questions they felt shy to ask publicly. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal reports the following narration from the Prophet's wife ʿĀ'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her):

“Praise be to Allah, Who hears all voices! A woman came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to present her complaint while I was in a corner of the house. I could not hear what she said. Then Allah revealed the verse: ‘*Certainly has Allah heard the statement of her who argues with you.*’

In this narration, ‘Ā’ishah testifies that Allah hears everything flawlessly. This historical event took place in her house. Khawlah bint Tha‘labah had begun presenting her complaint to the Prophet (peace be upon him), while ‘Ā’ishah moved to a corner of the house. Although she heard their voices rising and falling, she did not understand the content of the conversation. Then Allah revealed the verse: “Qad sami‘a Allāhu...” — “Indeed, Allah has heard...”<sup>9</sup>.

3. When time allowed, women also approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) with questions during his travels.

4. The witnessing of certain events by female Companions or the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) declaration of a new ruling regarding a particular matter.

After the passing of the Prophet (peace be upon him), both male and female Companions became sources of knowledge for those seeking it. For the Tābi‘īn (followers of the Companions), *tahammul* (transmission of hadith) manifested in different forms depending on the extent of their knowledge:

- Samā‘ (listening) – One of the main ways of learning hadiths. Most female narrators acquired hadiths through listening, including the students of the Prophet’s wives, residents of Medina, and those who came to perform the Hajj pilgrimage.

- Kitābah (writing or receiving written hadiths) – This method involved a shaykh writing down a hadith for a student, or a narrator writing from memory something heard in the past, or recording what they heard from someone else. This form of *tahammul* emerged especially after the expansion of the Islamic conquests and the need to exchange information. Letters often contained the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), though they may not have been written specifically for issuing fatwas or learning hadiths. An example of this type of *tahammul* can be seen in a narration reported from ‘Ā’ishah bint Ṭalḥah (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: “People from various cities would come to visit ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her). Elderly women would come from time to time to visit her. Younger women treated me with friendliness, followed me, and wrote me letters from different cities. I would say to ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her): ‘Dear aunt, this is a letter and a gift from such-and-such person.’ She would respond, ‘My daughter, write a reply and send a gift. If you do not have anything to give, I will provide something for you,’ and she would give it to me.”<sup>10</sup>

- Wijādah (finding written hadiths) – This refers to when a narrator finds hadiths in the written work of a shaykh from whom they did not hear the hadith directly or receive permission to transmit it<sup>11</sup>. When studying the lives of some Companions and Tābi‘īn, we find statements like: “I found this in my father’s book”

It is important to note that wijādah is not used in a formal transmission chain if the person is a child or student of the shaykh. One such example is Samānah bint Ḥamādān, the daughter of Waddāḥ ibn Ḥiṣān. She narrated some information based on the writings of her grandfather,

saying:

“I found this among the writings of my grandfather Waddāḥ ibn Ḥiṣān.”<sup>12</sup>

Ijazah (Permission) – refers to the verbal or written authorization granted by a shaykh (teacher) to a narrator (student) to transmit hadiths to others. Once hadiths began to be

documented in written form, greater attention was paid to the chain of transmission (isnad). In this context, the teacher-student relationship became an important aspect. It is well known that delivering a book to several students at once is difficult. Therefore, scholars considered it important that the person eligible to receive an ijazah be someone among the people of knowledge. Among those who transmitted hadiths through ijazah is Fatimah bint Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Sharī'ah al-Lakhmī. She attended the sessions of some of her teachers along with her brother Muhammad and received ijazah together with him<sup>13</sup>.

As for the travels of female narrators in pursuit of hadith knowledge, the following can be said: from this aspect, the contribution of women to the development of hadith sciences may appear limited due to the natural responsibilities of being housewives, the hardships of travel, and their inability to travel alone. Nevertheless, available information and historical and biographical sources confirm the presence of women in this field as well. The verse in the Qur'an that states, "(O wives of the Prophet!) Stay in your homes..." (Surah Al-Ahzab, 33)<sup>14</sup> does not imply that women are prohibited from going out. Even after the revelation of this verse, the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) left their homes, and sources indicate that they even undertook long journeys. For example, Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) accompanied the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to Hudaybiyyah. Our mother A'ishah also performed Hajj with them<sup>15</sup>.

Travel was a common practice during the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Women participated in gatherings where representatives from various tribes came to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and they tried to convey what they had heard. The teaching of hadith mainly occurred during the migrations to Abyssinia and Madinah, during which women accompanied their husbands. After the passing of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), male and female companions spread to various regions to teach hadith. These journeys played a significant role in the dissemination of the Sunnah. The role of female companions in this regard deserves special emphasis:

Umm 'Atiyyah al-Ansariyyah. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, in his books, specifically mentioned her as a female hadith scholar and stated that she was from the people of Basra. According to the female successor Hafsa bint Sirin, Umm 'Atiyyah came to Basra and settled in the area of Banu Khalaf. There, she became renowned for her knowledge of jurisprudence (fiqh), narration of hadiths, and teaching of legal hadiths.

Asma bint Yazid ibn al-Sakan. She ranks third among women in hadith narration after Aisha and Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with them). She was well known for narrating hadiths in the region of Sham (Greater Syria). It is also reported that Umm Habibah, who attained the status of "Mother of the Believers," narrated hadiths when she visited her brother, Caliph Mu'awiyah. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, in his book *'Ilal*, mentioned the names of women who narrated hadiths from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in Sham, Basrah, and Kufa<sup>16</sup>.

Travel for the performance of Hajj: The Hajj season was considered important for a hadith seeker striving to attain a high-level isnad. It is known that women also participated in the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Hajjat al-Wada'*). After the death of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), those who came with the intention of Hajj gathered in Madinah to meet the Companions. As mentioned in the previous section, women would go to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and learn hadiths from them. For example, Umm Sulaym bint Malik al-Rumaysiyyah was among the female successors who narrated hadiths from Aisha



(may Allah be pleased with her). According to the book *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, it is mentioned that she came to Basrah with the intention of Hajj 17 times. Another trustworthy female successor, Jasrah bint Dajajah, is said to have performed 'Umrah 40 times<sup>17</sup>. This indicates that such journeys were naturally part of seeking hadith knowledge.

It can be concluded that the travels of women were conducted alongside their fathers, husbands, or others who were their mahrams. The conditions faced by women did not prevent them from undertaking journeys in pursuit of hadith knowledge.

In the field of Jarh and Ta'dil (hadith criticism and validation), women also held a particular position. Linguistically, the word *Jarh* means "to wound" or "to criticize." In technical terms, it refers to the rejection of a hadith due to a specific flaw found in the narrator. The word *Ta'dil*, linguistically, means "to deem just," and in terminology, it refers to the acceptance of a narrator's hadith transmission<sup>18</sup>.

The Companions were extremely cautious when narrating hadiths to ensure that the Sunnah remained free from errors and distortions. Otherwise, it could have led to the emergence of various religious conflicts. Therefore, they paid great attention to memorizing hadiths.

According to Islamic teachings, it is considered sinful to expose a person's faults out of disrespect. However, due to the need to protect hadiths from fabrication and ensure the Sunnah is transmitted in its pure form to future generations, information about individuals known for lying was included in works on Jarh and Ta'dil, adhering to specific ethical guidelines<sup>19</sup>.

There is no direct information in the sources indicating that women conducted specialized work in the science of Jarh and Ta'dil. However, it is noted that Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) possessed knowledge of this field as well. The following hadith may serve as evidence: Abdullah ibn Ubaydullah ibn Abi Mulaykah reported: "A daughter of Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) passed away in Makkah. We attended her funeral. Ibn 'Umar and Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them) were also present. I sat between the two. Then Abdullah ibn 'Umar said to 'Amr ibn Uthman: 'Why don't you stop the crying? Didn't the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: "Indeed, the deceased is tormented because of his family's crying over him"?"

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) replied: 'Indeed, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to mention part of this.' Then he continued and said: 'We traveled from Makkah with Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). When we reached Bayda, we saw a caravan resting under the shade of a samurah tree. Umar said: "Go and see who that caravan belongs to." (I went and) found it was Suhayb. I told Umar, and he said: "Call him to me." I returned to Suhayb and said: "Come with me to the Commander of the Faithful." Later, when Umar was wounded, Suhayb entered crying, saying: "Oh my brother! Oh my companion!" Umar said to him: "O Suhayb! Are you crying for me?! Did not the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: 'Indeed, the deceased is tormented because of the crying of his family over him'?"

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: 'When Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) passed away, I told this to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). She said: "May Allah have mercy on Umar. By Allah, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) did not say: 'Allah punishes the believer because of the crying of his family over him.' Rather, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Indeed, Allah increases the punishment of the

disbeliever due to his family's weeping over him.” Then she added: “The Qur'an is sufficient for you: ‘No soul shall bear the burden of another’ (Surah Al-An'am, 164).” Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) then said: “It is Allah who causes one to laugh and cry.’

Ibn Abi Mulaykah added: “By Allah, Ibn 'Umar did not say anything in response.<sup>20</sup>”

In the field of *ta'dil* (validation of narrators), a statement by Umm 'Umar al-Thaqafiyyah is cited as an example. The historian and hadith scholar Khatib al-Baghdadi, through a chain of transmission reaching Ahmad ibn Hanbal, reports the following: Umm 'Umar bint Hishan ibn Zayd said, “*My father was among the truthful people*” (this phrase refers to a narrator who is very honest, without known flaws, and considered just, though perhaps without having demonstrated strong memorization; for example, expressions like “so-and-so is very truthful” or “so-and-so has no known faults” are used). Umm 'Umar is known in history as one of the seekers of knowledge and is not considered an unknown narrator (*majhūlah*). Being among the people of knowledge, she spoke about what she knew.

In conclusion, the science of Jarh and Ta'dil holds a special place among the disciplines of hadith. Women also, though in smaller numbers, contributed to this field. The involvement of women in different branches of hadith sciences indicates that, in some aspects, they were more competent than even some male scholars in the field. Particularly from the perspective of *ta'dil*, the status given to women has had an impact on the application of their narrations in practical life.

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