Abstract

Hadīth literature is a literature which consists of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and the things approved by him. However, the term was used sometimes in much broader meaning in the sense to cover the sayings about the Companions and the Followers (Tābi‘ī) as well. Thus, the hadīth originated in the early life of the Prophet of Islam, developed largely throughout his life, and spread simultaneously with the spread of Islam.

It was recorded and compiled in the period of the Prophet, the Companions and the Followers and checked and analyzed by the great celebrities of Islam. With the passage of time many forgers fabricated false ahādīth and ascribed them to the Prophet. Many scholars and experts of the hadīth dedicated their lives to separate these forged narrations from the huge corpus of hadīth literature. These scholars lived in different times and in the recent times Shaykh Muḥammad Nāṣir al Dīn al Albānī was one of the great scholars of this brilliant galaxy.

Born in c. 1334/1916, Shaykh Nāṣir al Dīn al Albānī inclined towards the research in hadīth when he was only twenty. This comes around 1936 A.D. when he took the study of the hadīth literature as his career. It was the time, when Muṣṭafā Kamāl Atā Turk had recently abolished the Institution of Khilāfah in 1924.
As is evident from the various books of the Shaykh he was much influenced by the changing political scenario of the then world. In these awful circumstances, Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al Din al Albānī, came to the fore and distinguished the chaff from the wheat.

Muḥammad Nāṣir al Dīn al Albānī was one of the few scholars who could truly be called a Muḥaddith. Allāh had bestowed upon him a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic ‘ulūm and he strived hard to revive the science of ḥadīth. He dedicated his life to the da‘wah and research so that the Muslims may practice their Dīn as the earliest Muslims had practiced it and may avoid the deviations (Bid‘ah) that have crept into the Muslim Ummah. He reawakened the Muslim scholars to the study of the ḥadīth. Like the books of Dr. Muṣṭafā al Aʿẓamī, the orientalists and the traditionalists does not like the works of Shaykh al Albānī.

Shaykh al Albānī’s works are mainly in the field of ḥadīth and its allied sciences. The number of his works goes above 200. The books of the Shaykh took the Ummah by storm. The people of knowledge, because of their takhrījī and wonderful scholarly footnotes, love these books.

Shaykh al Albānī’s two sets of multivolume Sīsīlatān (Series) have not only revolutionized the Muslim academics of the Arab World but have also influenced most of the Muslim movements there. With the passage of time, same is expected in
the non-Arabic speaking part of the Muslim world. One of his
great contributions to hadīth literature is that he separated the
authentic four Sunan collections of hadīth in Sahih and Da‘īf
parts.

This great scholar of Ḥadīth literature has met with the bitter
criticism from different parts of the Muslim word but except few
all of them are biased in their approach and exhibit the sectarian
prejudice in their refutations.

Shaykh al Albānī's books on different religious issues are of
great academic and religious significance and set in motion the
Tasfiyyah and Tarbiyyah movement throughout the Arab world.
Thus, the Shaykh removed the greatest malice, which had
afflicted the Muslim Ummah from the centuries in the form of a
huge mass of fabricated ahādīth attributed to the Prophet which
had allowed strange, irrational, un-healthy tendencies and trends
to emerge in the Muslim community.

It is, therefore, evident that the Shaykh had a broader scope of
Sunnah and Ḥadīth in mind. In legal aspect, he takes it at par with
the Qur'ān and does not bifurcate them. Except few exceptions,
the Shaykh has largely followed the standards laid by the
torchbearers of this science. He mostly propped his research on
the Muqaddimah of Ibn al Ṣalāḥ and while pronouncing his
opinion on ahādīth he frequently quoted the earlier hadīth
scholars like Ibn Ḥajar, ‘Alī ibn al Madīnī, al Dhahabī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Ḥazm and other stalwarts of this field. It cannot be denied that the Shaykh's decision on any *ḥadīth* cannot be final or irrevocable but it is also noteworthy to mention here that he had tried his best to remain closer to the opinions of the earlier scholars. *Silsilatān* and other books, which share its plan of explicit discussions on the chains has brought his yardstick to the fore and any one can reexamine or reevaluate the standards established by the Shaykh. Despite all this, the Shaykh pronounced such views on various sensitive issues, that raised question marks on his applied methodology as almost all of these controversial views are based on his extensive research in the *ḥadīth* literature. These views of the Shaykh are called as *Tafarrudāt al Shaykh*.

Almost all other scholars who have criticized the Shaykh's works seem to safeguard the identities of their respective schools and most of the contemporary detractors of the Shaykh are jealous of the fame and the works of the Shaykh. This is the reason that the books of the Shaykh are not evaluated in a way in which these need to be examined. It seems necessary to mention here that the books of the Shaykh must be taken in collection and evaluated as a whole rather than picking up a sentence from the multi-voluminous book and building the edifice of rejection of the
Shaykh on this single sentence and ignoring the main and principal works of this great legendary scholar.

No doubt, there is a literature which makes the Shaykh's credibility disputed but the literature developed on these scholarly issues made the *ḥadīth* literature to flourish once again in this era. Shaykh al Albānī's contribution to *ḥadīth* literature revived not only the *ʿulūm al ḥadīth* but also other Islamic religious sciences in the twentieth century. His views like *al Tašfiyyah* and *al Tarbiyyah* are now the trends in the Islamic world in general and in Arab belt in particular. Therefore, one has to consider the Shaykh's literature without any bias and try to compare it with the earlier *ḥadīth* literature. This only can reveal the status of the Shaykh's literature in its right perspective.