

## LECTURE 2

### INTRODUCTORY POINTS ON ILM AR-RIJAL

The differences between Ilm ar-Rijal and two of its sister Ilms, as below:

#### **A. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ILM AR-RIJAL AND ILM AT-TARAJIM**

--> Ilm at-Tarajim is an Ilm that investigates the personalities of individuals and the histories of their lives; it looks at their geneologies, their academic accomplishments, their contribution to the socio-economic and political landscapes and other aspects of their existence.

--> In essence, Ilm at-Tarajim strives to shed light on the events in the lives of individuals who play(ed) a role in society.

--> From this definition we understand that this Ilm is not something initiated by or confined to the Muslims, rather non-Muslims before the dawn of Islam had already authored numerous books in this regard.

--> This is because every grouping throughout history has paid attention to its famous or infamous figures.

--> The aim of this Ilm apart from acting as a monument to glorify or revile men (and women) who have impacted the society, is to allow them to become either role models and a source of emulation for others if their contribution was positive, or cast them as a source of admonition, warning and instruction to others if their contribution was negative.

--> Muslim authors have also written in this regard from the earliest of times (since they are not an exception to the natural impulses that call for such works), and the Shia Ulama in particular being an important subset of the body of Islam were not left behind in this regard.

--> Thus we see that some of the Ashab of the Aimmah and their immediate predecessors i.e. our Salaf - wrote books that depicted events in the lives of eminent personalities and likewise despicable characters, thus we see biographical works on, for example, Hujr b. Adi and Di'bil al-Khuzai, while on the opposite end of the spectrum, we see those dealing with unjust rulers such as - Yazid b. Muawiyah and Hajjaj b. Yusuf.

--> Coming to more recent times, we have seen encyclopedic works in this Ilm, some of these include Rawdat al-Jannat (by al-Khwansari), Riyad al-Ulama (by al-Efendi) and Ayan al-Shia (by al-Amili).

--> The objective of the above mentioned works was to record some glimpses in the lives of numerous major figures in Shi'ite history, including the Ulama, political leaders, military leaders, false claimants of the Imamah (pretenders), poets, scientists, critics and so on.

--> In conclusion this Ilm is quite different from Ilm ar-Rijal since it differs from it in definition, scope/topic, and aim, as follows:

\*\* Its definition is wider than that of Ilm ar-Rijal since it investigates all the attributes of individuals and not only those attributes that have a bearing to the acceptance of an individual's narrations or not.

\*\* Its scope/topic is wider than that of Ilm ar-Rijal since it involves all the individuals who merit such attention, regardless of them being narrators of Hadith or not.

\*\* Its aim is to paint a certain picture of history, provide a feeling of unified vision and shared experience to a community, identify role models, while the aim of Ilm ar-Rijal is simply to judge the acceptance of a given narrator's Hadith or not.

**NOTE:** This is not to say that these two Ilms do not intersect, indeed Ilm at-Tarajim may investigate an individual who is a narrator of Hadith [thus fall under the scope/topic of Ilm ar-Rijal], and in this investigation it may also scrutinize some of the attributes that are of importance to Ilm ar-Rijal such as Wathaqa [again falling under the definition of Ilm ar-Rijal], but the aim for embarking on such an endeavour is what will always distinguish between these two Ilms as has already been pointed out, since what is of primary importance to one is only of secondary importance to the other.

## **B. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ILM AR-RIJAL AND ILM AD-DIRAYAH**

--> It is easy to confuse between Ilm ar-Rijal and Ilm ad-Dirayah, maybe because both Ilms exist to serve the Hadith.

--> We can define Ilm ad-Dirayah as the Ilm that investigates the classification of Hadith [Isnad + Matn].

-> Basically, what Ilm ad-Dirayah does is to study the various types of Isnads and Mutun of Ahadith and provide terminologies for them so as to classify the Hadith.

--> Ilm ad-Dirayah is the one that tells us, for example,

If a Sanad of a Hadith has all Rijal Thiqaat, and in their respective Tabaqat, then it is Sahih.

If a Sanad of a Hadith has all Rijal Thiqat, and in their respective Tabaqat, but one or more non Imami, then it is Muwathaq.

If a Sanad of a Hadith has one or more Rijal whose status is unknown, then it is Majhul.

If a Sanad of a Hadith lacks explicit names of some of its Rijal, then it is Mursal.

**NOTE:** but who is the one who declares the Rijal Thiqat, Imami or non-Imami, in their Tabaqat or not, it is Ilm ar-Rijal.

If a Matn of a Hadith has an error in transcription, then it is Musahhaf.

If a Matn of a Hadith has words which have mingled into it from the footnotes, then it is Mudarraj.

If a Matn of a Hadith has strange content, then it is Gharib.

If a Matn of a Hadith has ambiguous meanings, then it is Mudhal.

--> From the above, it becomes clear that Ilm ad-Dirayah studies the Isnad of the Hadith as a single unit, and provides terminologies for it, while Ilm ar-Rijal studies the constituent parts of the Isnad, that is the Rijal who make up the Isnad, and this is a very important difference, again Ilm ad-Dirayah looks at the Matn as a whole, and provides terminologies for it, it does not discuss the meanings of particular Mutun, or the conflicts between various manuscripts, this is done by the commentators of Hadith.

--> It is based on this definition that we notice that Ilm ad-Dirayah originated with the A'mmah (Sunnis).

--> Infact the first Shia scholar to use it and refer to its findings was Sayyid Ahmad b. Tawus, when he categorized the Hadith in its famous four pronged division, borrowing terminologies from the Sunnis, and the Allamah who was his pupil was the first to use it in his discussions on Fiqh.

--> The first Shia scholar to write comprehensively concerning Ilm ad-Dirayah was Shahid II then his pupil Shaykh Husayn b. Abdis-Samad (the father of Shaykh al-Bahai).

--> This admission might come as a surprise to some, but it is important to understand why this Ilm took so long to be incorporated by the Shia.

--> During the times of the Ashab, to know assuredly whether a given Hadith was actually from the Imam or not, all a Sahabi has to do was ask any of the Imams to confirm it.

--> During the times of the Ulama just after the Ghaybah, when a scholar said that a Hadith was 'Sahih' he meant that he was certain that it was spoken by the Imam, thus in essence Hadith to them was either spoken by the Imam (Sahih) or wrongly attributed to the Imam i.e. not said by the Imam (Saqim), all other divisions were just artificial.

--> They could recognize whether a Hadith was spoken by the Imam or not by the various Qarain (indicators) that they had in possession, being very close to the age of the Imams. **NOTE:** the Isnad was just one among these multiple Qarain.

--> As time passed, and we went further from the age of the Aimmah, to the Muta'akhir, the only Qarina he has to ascertain the Hadith's authenticity becomes the Isnad, thus greater effort was put in studying it and doing so methodologically .

--> It is because of this that the Shia scholars borrowed most of the concepts of Ilm ad-Dirayah from the Sunnis, who faced a similar problem just alluded to, but much earlier since their only source was the messenger who was before the Aimmah.

--> So do not confuse, Ilm ar-Rijal always had a place in the Madhab from its earliest of times, since even the Ashab of the Aimmah placed importance in whom they took Hadith from, and evaluated the status of each other, and discussed the attributes of the narrators of Hadith, but Ilm ad-Dirayah and its methodological classification of the Hadith based on Isnad and Matn only developed later, and that too after borrowing much from the A'mmah.

## **BENEFICIAL POINTS**

--> It is because Ilm ad-Dirayah originated from the laps of the A'mmah that you will see even Shia works of this Ilm discussing concepts that are alien to our Hadith, for example,

Occurrence and effects of Tadlis

Riwayah of Kabir from Saghir

Qalb (interchange) of the Isnad

All these matters are quite common in Sunni Hadith due to their gap in Tadwin (writing down) of Hadith, but since we have always maintained the need to write down the Hadith they have not affected us to merit their discussion, anyone who studies the book on Dirayah by Shahid II will know that there are entire passages taken from the Muqadimat of Ibn Salah (the Sunni author of arguably their most important book on Ilm ad-Dirayah).

--> It is also true that writings concerning the overall concepts (Qawaid) of Ilm ar-Rijal were not written in separate works by the Ulama of the middle ages, thus you see some discussed concepts of Ilm ar-Rijal in works of Dirayah for example Muhadith Nuri in his Miqbas, and other discussed them briefly in books on Usul al-Fiqh like in the Uddah (of Shaykh Tusi), Ma'arij (of Muhaqiq al-Hilli), Qawanin al-Usul (of Muhaqiq Qummi) etc.

**NOTE:** But the modernists have now separated this, and made special books for Ilm ar-Rijal and Ilm ad-Dirayah and Ilm Usul al-Fiqh.

--> In the latter sections of Ilm ad-Dirayah there are also some topics on the Adab [convention] of narrating and writing down the Hadith, this has no practical relevance in the present day, for example, there are rules like - if you write down the names of the prophet and the Aimmah in the Hadith make sure to send the relevant Salawat etc.

--> In the end, Ilm ad-Dirayah has no practical relevance, hence its late amalgamation into Shia scholarship, it is nothing but a science of terminologies of Hadith and some Adab of narrating and writing down the Hadith.