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Concerning The Gatherings of Swift Hadith Recitals

by Shaykh Muhammad ‘Awwāmah

From his book Ma‘ālim Irshādiyyah

Translated by

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Translator's Preface

Attending a few gatherings of completion of Hadith books (like the khatm-Bukhari) for the purpose of barakah etc is applaudable and encouraged.

However, the recent trend of arranging **public** 'maqra-ahs' (swift recitals) of Hadith books, like Sahih Bukhari etc. are indeed beneficial for the scholars, but harmful for the **layman** who doesn't have a sound grounding in the basic subjects of the Islamic sciences.

Such recitals should be held in controlled environments, for the scholarly only. An 'under qualified' layman cannot suffice on mere Hadith recitals like these after which '*ijazah*' (permission) for transmitting Hadith is given to all. This could inflate one's ego more than his knowledge!

In any field of knowledge, there is always a standard that needs to be maintained. Unfortunately in the recent past, there has been total disregard for any standard with regards to the knowledge of Islam. The extent of the resulting disarray is not good, and will be explained further in this booklet.

In such a state, it is the responsibility of the learned ones to point out the wrongs so the **sincere** ones may take heed.

This is exactly the motive of this book; to illustrate the malpractices that accompany the contemporary maqra-ahs, and to point out as well as encourage the ideal. The genuine enthusiasts will surely make the adjustments and will do what it takes to pursue their goal, which ultimately should be the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.

My Esteemed teacher, Al-Muhaddith Shaykh Muhammad 'Awwamah (may Allah protect him) has discussed the issue of contemporary maqra-ahs from various angles in his recent book; 'Ma'alim Irshadiyyah'.

What follows in the next chapter is an explanatory translation of that section in the book.¹

A Brief Picture

Before I present the translation, I would like to explain what exactly is meant by 'contemporary maqra-ahs' (also referred to nowadays as 'Hadith Majlis')

It has become a frequent occurrence in many parts of the world, that some enthusiasts organise a gathering in which a traditional Hadith book is recited very swiftly to one or two scholars who have attained ijazah (permission to transmit Hadith) from their teachers.

The system of ijazah is ancient in Islam and has been endorsed by the Hadith Masters, as long as the conditions are fulfilled.

The reason for revisiting this issue is the malpractices that have crept in to the modern day maqra-ah.

It should be noted that neither my Honourable Shaykh, nor I or any of my Hadith teachers are against the **correct** recitals of Hadith books. Why would we oppose such a noble deed? Especially since we engage in it ourselves!

The issue here is the **innovative methods** that have crept in...

Here is a brief description of what happens:

The date and times of the maqra-ah/Hadith majlis are set by the organisers, who then advertise and promote their program to as many people as possible. Whoever wishes to attend needs to sign up, pay an administration fee and if he cannot be

¹ *Ma'alim Irshadiyyah*, from page 188 till 194.

there in person, he is given access to an online link up to the maqra-ah. There doesn't seem to be any 'admission criteria'.

During the recital, only a select few are chosen to recite, due to their experience in swift recitals. The rest are expected to pay attention. The entire book is recited with no real explanation or translation of the Hadiths, except for a few occasional points.

At the end of the recital, all the attendees are given the ijazah.

What are the malpractices?

1. These gatherings have a lot of laymen in attendance. For them to merely participate in such a maqra-ah is harmful because of the lack of sufficient commentary on the Hadiths.

Ibnus Salah (rahimahullah) – demise: 643 A.H. says: 'It is not good for a seeker of Hadith to suffice with listening to a Hadith recital without dedicating himself to acquiring its meaning and correct understanding. One who does so, has actually **tired himself in vain**. He will not be considered part of the 'seekers of Hadith'.

In fact such a seeker is deficient, a copy cat and from those who portray themselves to have what they have not!²

2. One attendee in his feedback commented that he was grateful to the organiser for sharing beneficial links to articles to be read while the recital was in progress!

Engaging in other activities during the recital is a proof of the boredom a layman will expectedly suffer. How is he supposed to stay focused when he has no idea whatsoever about what is being recited, its correct meaning and commentary?

² *Muqaddimah Ibnus Salah*, pg. 250

3. Many of those who sign up are people who have little or no solid grounding in the Islamic sciences. All they want is to attain the ijazah from the ‘musnid’ in attendance. (A musnid is one who narrates Hadith with a chain. It’s also used to refer to one who has abundant links and ijazat)

The fear is that these people may be ineligible to receive the ijazah for a variety of reasons. See the next point for an example.

4. Another attendee admits to having little understanding of the Arabic language, but was overjoyed to receive the ijazah!

The scholars mention an important rule of acquiring Hadith; that the one acquiring must be able to comprehend what he/she is acquiring. This is generally applied to the acquisition of children. So if an adult narrates something that he/she heard or saw in their childhood, then it will only be accepted if at the time of the occurrence, that child was at an age of **understanding** (*tamyiz*). The same applies to when a person who doesn’t **‘understand’** the Arabic language at the time of acquisition. How could such an acquisition be legitimate?

5. One attendee stated that ijazah means: ‘permission to **teach** that particular book.’

How can that person teach the book if he doesn’t even understand Arabic?! Even if he understood the language, there was no commentary given, so what is he really going to teach?

6. Undoubtedly, some of those who have acquired the ijazah will have the urge to now pass it on, even though they haven’t understood the Hadith.

‘Allamah Dhahabi (rahimahullah) –demise: 748 A.H. writes: ‘[If] the only purpose of acquiring [Hadith] is to pass it on, then this, by Allah! is **not** [done] for the sake of Allah.’³

7. The attraction of amassing abundant ijazat without acquiring the proper explanation of the Hadiths, and without thorough study of the other fields of Islamic knowledge is an old trap of Shaytan.

Ibnul Jawzi (rahimahullah) has expounded on this in his *Talbis Iblis*. I have quoted excerpts in the footnotes.

At the beginning of his book,⁴ Imam Ibnus Salah (rahimahullah) –demise: 643 A.H. - complains of the degeneration of some of the Hadith students in his era. He described them as: ‘Those who engage in listening to Hadith lessons inattentively, they have no standard of research and have abandoned the other branches of the field of Hadith.’

While discussing the etiquettes of a Hadith student,⁵ Ibnus Salah (rahimahullah) advises: ‘He should ensure that his motive is correct. His object should not be to ‘increase the numbers’ [of his shuyukh].’ He then quoted from one Muhaddith who had managed to acquire one particular Hadith with 200 different chains. He saw Imam Yahya ibn Ma’in in a dream telling him: ‘I fear that this [abundant amassing of chains] could fall under the [warning in] the verse’:

أَلْهَمَ التَّكَاثُرَ

You have been distracted by abundant amassing

(Surah: 102, Verse:1)

³ *Bayanu Zaghlil ‘ilm*, pg.7

⁴ Pg. 6.

⁵ pg.254-255

The ideal

In light of the above, the ideal for any person who wishes to acquire the knowledge of Hadith, is to first study the basics of Islamic knowledge. After spending several years in this, when his teachers deem him eligible for Hadith study, then only should he pursue it. In his perusal, he should study the traditional books with its translation and adequate commentary under qualified Masters of the field. This has been the methodology in all traditional schools of learning, irrespective of the country and ethnic background.

When the seekers of Hadith do not follow the above pattern they expose themselves and the blessed field of Hadith to objection. The famous, Khatib Baghdadi (rahimahullah) – demise: 463 A.H. wrote an entire book because of this. His book is entitled: *'Advice for the Ahlul Hadith'* (نصيحة أهل الحديث)

His concern was exactly the same; namely that the Hadith seekers were abandoning other fundamental branches of knowledge. Due to their lack of understanding of the Hadiths, they became targets of abuse. This is a natural result of one who becomes infatuated with amassing ijazat only.

The Senior Muhaddith of ancient Spain, Ibn 'Abdil Barr (rahimahullah) – demise: 463 A.H. has a dedicated chapter in his *'Jami'u Bayanil 'ilmi wa Fadlihi'* entitled: **'Those who criticized abundant amassing of Hadith without acquiring its understanding'**

In this chapter, Ibn 'Abdil Barr (rahimahullah) mentions that it is **makruh** (disliked) by the scholars for someone to acquire the Hadith only without its explanations.

A Ploy

I keep asking myself: 'Why didn't any of my Hadith teachers (or even their teachers) engage in this kind of **public** maqra-ahs?'

If attending maqra-ahs for 'barakah' was a genuine pretext for public maqra-ahs, why did the Muhaddithun that I quoted above not say so? Why did they discourage such

kinds of swift Hadith recitals without excluding those who were doing it for ‘barakah’?

The reality is that the modern maqra-ah seems to be a ploy of Shaytan. **Firstly**, a person is distracted from acquiring what is more important for himself.⁶ **Secondly**, by the layman acquiring ijazah, he will gradually see himself as independent of the knowledgeable scholars, despite his ignorance. This will create a huge gap between the well-grounded ‘Ulama and the ignorant masses.

Even if they are told that the ijazah is merely for ‘barakah’, the fact that they are being given official ‘ijazah certificates’ surely inflates the ego. Ijazah is **not** a precondition for ‘barakah’. The limitless blessings and benefits of Hadith recitals are not restricted to maqra-ahs. They can still be attained if one spends one’s time constructively, by acquiring the correct explanations of a Hadith book that is more conducive to the layman’s level; like Riyadus Sawlih.

Here in South Africa, our seniors have refused to accept or endorse this practice of **Public** Hadith majlis’ / maqra-ahs. It’s unfortunate, that in some parts of the world, there are traditional scholars who have been overwhelmed by this trend. Insha Allah, the following pages are sufficient to convince the sincere reader of this unfortunate modernization of Hadith recitals.

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29 Rajab 1435 A.H. = 29 May 2014

⁶ Ibnul Jawzi (rahimahullah) writes in *Talbis Iblis*, pg.155: “One group of those who aspire to amass abundant chains, are sincere, but shaytan has occupied them with this so they do not engage in what is more beneficial for them.

A discussion regarding the innovative methods that have been introduced in the swift recitals of Hadith books

The debate regarding contemporary styles of teaching, calls me to discuss these new methods which have been introduced in the [swift] recital of the books of the Prophetic Sunnah.

Very concisely I present the following:

Firstly, a quick comparison between incidents pertaining to recitation and listening of Hadith books, in the past and that of current times, gives us a true unbiased ruling over the recent intrusions on the traditional scene.

Eye opening incidents from History⁷

From amongst the incidents of the predecessors in precision of receiving and narrating Hadith are the following:

- 1) It is reported concerning the reliable, upright scholar; Ali ibn Hasan ibn Shaqiq al-Marwazi, one of the exclusive students of Ibnul-Mubarak (rahimahumallah), that he was asked: “have you heard ‘*the book of prayer*’ from Abu Hamzah (As-Sukkari)?”

He replied: “I heard the entire book, but one day [whilst reciting], a donkey brayed resulting in me not hearing one Hadith or a portion of a Hadith.

⁷ From here on, all subheadings are added by the translator. This is to create ease for the reader to follow the various angles of the discussion. Furthermore, all footnotes, besides the references, are also by the translator.

Thereafter, I forgot which Hadith of the book it was, so I left the entire book!”⁸

- 2) Ibn Ma’in said: “We brought some Hadiths of ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Umar to Hatim ibn Ismail (rahimahumullah). After he had recited to us one Hadith, he said: “I ask Allah’s forgiveness! I had written a book [of narrations which I had heard] from ‘Ubaydullah, but then I had doubt regarding one particular Hadith, therefore I will not narrate anything from him.”⁹
- 3) Yusuf ibn Muslim (rahimahullah) said: “I heard al-Haytham ibn Jamil (al-Baghdadi al-Antaki) saying: “I heard **seven hundred** Hadiths from Shu’bah (rahimahullah), but I then developed a doubt regarding **one** Hadith, so I left all of them.”¹⁰
- 4) As-Sam’ani quotes the following narration from Imam Yahya ibn Yahya at-Tamimi an-Naysaburi, one of the narrators of *al-Muwatta* from Imam Malik (rahimahumullah): “After having completed the reading of *al-Muwatta*, Yahya said to Malik: “my heart is not at ease with this listening. Imam Malik asked: “Why is that?” he replied: “It is because I fear that I may have omitted something [during my recital].” So Imam Malik recited the entire

⁸ *al-Kifayah*, 234-235

⁹ *al-Kifayah*, 234-235

Imam ‘Ali ibn Madini said regarding the famous narrator; ‘Affan ibn Muslim (rahimahullah): ‘Whenever he doubted even a single letter in a Hadith, he would abstain from reporting it.’ (Taqrīb, no. 4625)

¹⁰ *al-Kifayah*, 234-235

book to him. When he had completed the reading Yahya said: “My heart is not pleased with this either, because I fear that something may have escaped my ears.” Imam Malik asked: “So what do you propose?” he replied: “I will read it again and you will listen.” He then recited, thereby achieving three readings of the Muwatta.”¹¹

- 5) Hafiz Ibn Hajar (rahimahullah) states at the end of the biography of Imam al-Hafiz Abu Qurrah az-Zabidi: “He compiled the book *as-Sunan* according to the chapters (of jurisprudence) in a single volume, which I have personally seen. A distinct habit in this book is the he does not say in his narration of Hadith: ‘So and so narrated to us’ (حدثنا فلان) [like is the norm]. Rather, he only says: ‘So and so mentioned’ (ذكر فلان). When Imam Daraqutni (rahimahullah) was asked about this he said: “An irregularity had

¹¹ *Adabul Imla*, number:22

Compare this level of caution to what happens nowadays, where Hadith recitals are broadcast over the internet for anyone who can afford to pay the ‘registration fee’ to participate. Only Allah Ta’ala knows the real condition, concentration and respect with which the ‘online audience’ participates. The Hadith lesson demands a certain amount of respect, demeanour and dress-code, which isn’t easily adhered to when one is alone behind a computer monitor...

Consider the fact that in the era of our predecessors, the modes of transport were very limited. Despite that they undertook lengthy journeys to attend Hadith lessons. The modern-day situation is completely opposite; we have unparalleled modes of transportation, yet we lack the courage and heart to physically attend the lesson!

For our salaf, their courage and aspirations made up for their lack of technological advancements. They too viewed the world as one village, nay as one room; moving to any corner as they wished to attain their goal... (see Ma’alim Irshadiyyah, pg.124)

befallen his books; therefore he was cautious of being explicit with the usage of the term: “So and so narrated to us” (حدثنا فلان).¹²

- 6) Az-Zarkashi states that Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Juwayni narrates from Abu Bakr al-Hiri about Abul-Abbas al-Asam (rahimahumullah): “A Hadith was being read to him, and he said: “I can narrate half of it, and not the other half.” When he was asked about that, he replied: “I read half of it to the shaykh thereafter a donkey brayed, so I did not know: if the shaykh heard the rest or not? Because of this doubt, I left it. This is how [cautious] the people were”.”¹³

The demise of this Abul-Abbas was in the year 346 A.H. Look attentively and comprehend his statement: **“This is how [cautious] the people were”!!**

The incidents which I have quoted above clearly attest to the people [of the past] being like this.

- 7) It is mentioned, in the biography of Imam ‘Ibnul-Imam’; Abu ‘Abdillah Muhammad ibn Fadl al-Furawi (rahimahullah) that he said: “We would hear the book ‘*Al-Musnad*’ of Abu ‘Awanah being read to Abul-Qasim al-Qushayri. A very modest man would be present sitting next to the shaykh (al-Qushayri). My father was the one reciting. It so happened that after he had recited a substantial portion of the book that modest man was absent one day. The shaykh came out, according to his habit; he would generally

¹² *Tahdhibut Tahdhib*, vol.10, pg.350

¹³ *Nukatuz Zarkashi*, vol.3, pg.1008

come out and take his seat. At this time he was wearing a coarse black upper garment and a small turban. I was under the impression that my father had been reciting the book to that modest man [who was now absent]. Suddenly my father began reciting, so I said: “My Master! To whom are you reciting? The shaykh is not present.” He asked; “It is as if you think my shaykh is that (well-mannered) individual?” I replied: “Yes.” He became annoyed and uttered: “*inna li-llahi wa inna ilaihi raji’un.*” Addressing me, he said: “Oh my beloved son, your shaykh is this man seated here.” He highlighted that spot in the book and thereafter repeated his recital –for my sake–from the beginning of the book till that spot.”¹⁴

This narration also shows the importance of knowing the identity of the shaykh under whom one is studying.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Siyar A’lamin Nubala*, vol.19 pg.618 & *Tabaqatush Shafi’iyah*, vol.6 pg.168

¹⁵ Unlike another contemporary ploy; where the names of all the enthusiasts are written in a book, and one **genuine seeker** takes these names to every Shaykh he visits. After acquiring the ijazah (permission to narrate) from that Shaykh, he asks the Shaykh to confer his ijazah to all those mentioned in that book!

I understand that one has the option to delegate someone to acquire the ijazah on his behalf from a **specific** Shaykh, but in the above scenario, those whose names are on that list have no clue whatsoever about which Shuyukh (plural of Shaykh) that ‘genuine seeker’ will be visiting!

In my opinion, this falls under what the famous Ibnus Salah (rahimahullah) termed as: ‘unapproved sloppiness’. (استرسال غير مرضي)

The first time I heard of this practice was when I met a ‘genuine seeker’ in Turkey in November of 2007.

- 8) Imam al-Hafiz al-Qutb al-Halabi (rahimahullah) says in the biography of Imam Ibn Daqiqil-‘Eid (rahimahullah): “He was a paragon of caution and precision. I brought him a *juz* (booklet of Hadith dealing with one section out of the various sections of the sunnah) which he had heard from Ibn Rawaj and which he had written himself. He said: “[Just wait] until I study it.” When I returned to him and he said: “This is indeed my handwriting, but I can’t remember hearing it” so he did not narrate it [to me].”

These incidents, and others besides them, present an accurate image of how recitation and listening [to Hadith] would occur in the past. They illustrate that the transmission of chains was actually considered part of religion, and is a glorious trait of the Islamic sciences, in addition to it being a manifestation of Islamic ingenuity. It also proves it to be a source of contentment and dependence on to the religion of Islam. [i.e, when one reads incidents like the above, one becomes convinced of the divine protection of the knowledge of Islam, thereby rendering it totally reliable.]

With the passage of time

A **second** point to understand here is: as time passed, two matters began to intrude into the system of acquiring Hadith;

Note: My objection here is on those who put their names on those lists. Undoubtedly there are many sincere, genuine seekers who abide by the general rules and whose intentions are good. It’s just that they could have spent their energies more fruitfully. See the quote from Imam Ibnul Jawzi (rahimahullah) in the footnote on page 20.

The **first** being: the habit of bringing tender aged children to the gatherings of narration, as well as those who were not scholars.

[They did this with the expectation of such attendees progressing in Hadith, later in their life]

Second was the desire of some scholars to acquire shorter chains of narrations for particular books or to achieve **more chains** for that book.

[which they had already studied diligently prior to that]

As for the first group

On many occasions the hope for this child would materialise, and he grows up dedicating himself to knowledge and will be in the future, a scholar who is sought by travel due to his knowledge and short chain of narrators.

[Since he attended lessons of seniors as a child, his chain would be shorter than his fellow contemporaries]

Likewise, it is possible that the other person who was not from amongst the scholars also applies himself, and becomes blessed by treading the path of knowledge and thus he becomes from the scholars too. Such examples are many.

Frequently though, neither this nor that occurs...

The ill-effects of the unqualified attending such gatherings

From amongst the ill-effects of the presence of these two categories of people in these gatherings, is that they end up narrating what they had acquired at a time when their aptitude for acquiring Hadith was lacking.

During this early period in their lives, they may have acquired some renowned book too. Despite their acquisition of that book being deficient, it would **not** be harmful to that celebrated book which is already in circulation [due the prevalence of other reliable reporters/copies of these books]

However, they would have also acquired booklets of Hadith that are called: *juz*. [a booklet of Hadith dealing with one section out of the various sections of the sunnah] This *juz* could be unknown and not in circulation. Since both these types of learners were not suitable to receive Hadith as it should, the possibility of them lacking accuracy and proficiency in what they have received is very likely. It therefore becomes difficult for the scholars coming after them to pass verdicts of authenticity on the Hadiths of these *ajza*. [plural of *juz*].

As for the second group

They have, in reality already acquired that book on numerous occasions **while adhering to the highest forms of caution and precision, in addition to studying the meanings of the Hadiths contained therein.**

Now they pursue **another** recital of that book out of desire to increase their number of chains for that book and so that their chain of narrators be elevated. Their acquiring by this manner will not harm it, in the least, if anything comes to pass.

A Contemporary Trend

On the other hand if this feeble acquisition [like that of the first group, which has become common nowadays!] is the **first and last**¹⁶ acquisition of that book of Hadith,

¹⁶ There are many contemporaries who have attended Maqra-ahs repeatedly, thereby achieving several acquisitions of some books. Of these, some are such that not a single

and by means of it this person begins to boast¹⁷ that he heard such and such a book from the six famous works, **whilst not having any previous knowledge regarding the established principles of knowledge:**¹⁸ then there is no value¹⁹ to this listening and acquisition!

acquisition of theirs was done with adequate commentary of the Hadiths. These will remain in the same category being discussed by my Respected Shaykh above.

¹⁷ Ibnul Jawzi (rahimahullah) has cautioned that some people amass a lot of Hadith chains so they may brag as follows: 'I met so and so, and I have achieved what no other has' etc. He writes: **'These people are far from sincere'** (*Talbis Iblis*, pg.158)

I have personally encountered and also heard about some contemporaries who introduce themselves to anyone and everyone with statements like: 'The number of ijazah that I have, no other has' etc. Some say it clearly and others imply it.

When the motive is 'all about the numbers', one will compromise in whom he acquires his Hadith ijazah from. In October of 2001, I met a young student of Al-Azhar in Cairo, who was from an Arab country. He was in his early twenties, and by then he had amassed 100 ijazah! He invited me to his apartment, and informed me that he was expecting a visitor whose field of expertise was Usulul Fiqh, but he also had ijazah in Hadith, and that if I wished, I could ask the visitor to grant me his ijazah too. When the visitor arrived, his demeanour never showed him to be a scholar of Islam of any kind. I met and spoke with him, but I didn't request his ijazah!

Imam Muhammad ibn Sirin (rahimahullah) said: 'Indeed knowledge is [part of] your religion, so check whom you acquire your religion from' (*Muqaddimah Sahih Muslim*)

¹⁸ This is an important disclaimer from my Respected Shaykh (may Allah protect him).

This entire expose is to explain the harms of this kind of (unqualified) people attending such Hadith recitals. The learned and scholarly who are adequately equipped in the fields of Islamic sciences are the real deserving ones for such Maqra-ahs. A question arises as to why would people go to such lengths to organise Maqra-ahs for **public** participation? I received **one** explanation from a prominent Arab Hadith teacher who had attended the 'Imam Nanotwi Conference' at Azaadville, South Africa in January 2014. He said that **some** of the organisers that he encountered were benefiting monetarily! Another senior in the same

A Mockery

The following is just one of a multitude of contemporary stories about recitals of Hadith books:

Once, more than forty years ago, a student came to me giving an account, like a proud peacock. He said that he had studied such and such a book, of the six famous works, under the tutelage of so and so shaykh (who was a famed scholar). He continued listing various works and scholars, until he mentioned “*Sunan Tirmidhi*”, which he claimed to have studied under a very eminent scholar. So I deliberately asked him: “Without any gap!” (بلا فوت؟) He immediately kept quiet and didn’t understand what I had just said!²⁰

gathering said: ‘There are **some** who want to show the world that they too have ijazah in Hadith.’ [like the traditional scholars have] By Allah! One who merely suffices on a maqara-ah or two, will **never** match the standard of the traditional Hadith seekers, irrespective of the number of his ijazah!!

Note: I must reiterate that I am not singling out any particular individual here, but if the cap fits...

¹⁹ Ibnus Salah (rahimahullah) says: ‘One who merely seeks to increase his number of Shuyukh (plural of shaykh) and thereby attain fame, has wasted his time and is deprived of tawfiq (divine ability).’ (*Muqaddimah Ibnus Salah*, pg. 249)

²⁰ Another ‘modern trend’ is to acquire ijazah from a shaykh telephonically. As I was preparing this article, one of my seniors received a call from someone in **another continent** requesting his ijazah. My senior had no clue as to who this person was and as expected, excused himself. During the call, the caller mentioned that he did acquire ijazah from other contemporaries whom he met personally. **The question is:** If that is the reality, then why was there a need to add to his list of ijazah **telephonically**? Couldn’t he understand that what he had is sufficient?!

That phone call was on May 20th, 2014.

After writing the above footnote, I stumbled upon a unique surprise on May 22; It turns out that the caller was one of the ‘musnids’ (a technical term referring to one who has amassed many chains/ijazat) who was in attendance at a certain Maqra-ah, earlier this month! (I know this because I took the call on behalf of the senior, and I asked the caller’s name) He was the one ‘granting the ijazah’ to other innocent attendees who were being charged a fee of around \$100, and who had to spend a few days attending a recital to this ‘musnid’!!!

The question is: Why couldn’t he just grant the ijazah for free to all who wanted it telephonically too, instead of forcing them to attend. After all, he himself acquires ijazat in this manner!!

Is it that the ‘musnid’ has the right to get his ijazat for free (or for just the cost of a phone call) and this gives him the authority to ‘use’ this for his own fame & gain?

How true were the words of the senior Hadith Master; Shaykh Mufti Sa’id Palanpuri (may Allah protect him)! Subhanallah!

I am referring to a personal account with the Shaykh in 1999. Someone who had studied the 6 books (Sihah Sittah) in detail at a reputable Madrasah/Darul ‘Ulum, had requested him for ijazah. Shaykh Palanpuri responded angrily and said: “Some people have made this system of ijazah a **mockery**! According to me, a bright student needs to further his Hadith study for another 10 years, and then only does he become eligible for ijazah!

That was 15 years ago. Look at where we have reached today!

Anyone who studies the history of the Muhaddithun will know that the latter-day Hadith Masters (Muta-akhirun) had relaxed the rules of acquiring Hadith, in comparison to the earlier Masters (Mutaqaddimun). They did that out of necessity, and out of fear that the system of isnad (chain transmission) may become extinct if the rules were not adjusted. In our era, I don’t see the need to relax the rules any further. Alhamdulillah! There is no real new threat of this system becoming extinct. Throughout the globe, there are literally thousands of Hadith seekers who engage in legitimate acquisitions of the famous Hadith books (Sihah Sittah etc). We therefore need not loosen the knot!

So I ask the reader: is this the type of transmission that Imam Ibnul-Mubarak (rahimahullah) referred to when he said: “The transmission of Tradition with a chain is part of religion”?! (الإِسْنَادُ مِنَ الدِّينِ)

May Allah save us from that! (مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ!)

What he actually meant was the likes of what I just cited a little earlier, about his student Ali ibn Hasan ibn Shaqiq.²¹

A Grave Misinterpretation

It is as if the propagandists who promote this method are unmindful of the following two aspects:

Firstly; they are oblivious to the difference which I have already explained, which is:

The earlier scholars **first** acquired those books, with absolute precision and mastery as well as one could possibly wish, thereafter they acquired them in this manner for a specific motive. Therefore, the argument of the careless ones who quote these examples as evidence is what is termed by the Theologians (*usuliyyun*) as “analogy with a disparity” or “incorrect analogy”. (قياس مع الفارق / قياس فاسد).²²

May Allah Ta’ala guide the Ummah at large and may He keep us all on the correct path. Ameen.

²¹ See incident (1) under the subheading: Eye opening incidents from History.

²² It’s a common contemporary wrong, that we justify our misdeeds with the justifiable ones of the salaf (pious predecessors)

Aiding the Enemy

Secondly; they are unmindful of the current situation we find ourselves in; wherein numerous denominations are attacking the Prophetic Traditions, trying to raze its being an authoritative source from the hearts of people!

These factions include: those who view **only** the Quran as an authoritative source, the laymen, rationalists and the ignorant who feign having knowledge. They employ these fragile methods of acquiring Hadith as a pretext to contest the Prophetic Tradition, saying: “If the Traditions of your Prophet (sallallahu’alayhi wasallam) are based on this kind of a foundation, then it is a foundation on an abyss which is about to collapse and fall apart”.
[i.e, unreliable]

Ibnul Jawzi (rahimahullah) writes in *Talbis Iblis*, pg.155: “One group of those who aspire to amass abundant chains, are sincere, but shaytan has occupied them with this so they do not engage in what is more beneficial for them. If they argue that many of the Salaf also amassed [a large number of] chains, like Yahya ibn Ma’in, ‘Ali ibn Madini, Bukhari & Muslim (rahimahumullah), then the answer to that would be: These [Muhaddithun] had been able to do both; acquire the other necessary branches, like fiqh etc in addition to their achievements in Hadith... Very few are capable of such a combination in our era.” Ibnul Jawzi’s demise was in 596 A.H.!!

Concluding advice

All of the above shows the need to fully comprehend the affairs, understand the occurrences and suitably apply²³ what we read according to the current circumstance we live in.²⁴

[May Allah Ta'ala reward my Honourable Teacher for lifting his pen against this modern drift. From a Master like himself, these few pages say a lot...

One should not become overwhelmed by the current maqra-ah/Hadith majlis 'frenzy' in the world. Rather, inspect the intention before attending/arranging such a gathering. It shouldn't be that one thinks he is doing a good, while in reality he is committing a disservice to himself and Islam.

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the true understanding of the all of the above, and may He bless the sincere ones with the *tawfiq* of accepting the truth. Amin]

²³ It's incorrect to justify our personal whims with what was permitted for the sincere scholars of the past.

²⁴ End of quote from the book: *Ma'alim Irshadiyyah*.