122705 - Are all the ahaadeeth in Saheeh al-Bukhaari saheeh (sound)?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Saheeh of Imam Abu ‘Abd-Allaah Muhammad ibn Ismaa’eel al-Bukhaari is the soundest book of narration after the Book of Allaah. The scholars, muhaddithoon (scholars of hadeeth) and hafizes all bear witness to its high status in terms of authenticity and precision. al-Haafiz Abu ‘Amr ibn al-Salaah said in Siyaanat Saheeh Muslim (p. 86), with his isnaad going back to Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni that he said:

If any man were to swear that he would divorce his wife if it were not the case that what is in the books of al-Bukhaari and Muslim is what they ruled to be sound of the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), then divorce would not be binding upon him, and he would not be breaking his oath, because the Muslim scholars are unanimously agreed that they are saheeh. End quote.

This is not far-fetched, because al-Bukhaari is the great imam and hafiz to whose memory and precision all the muhaddithoon bore witness. He used to ask Allaah for guidance (by praying istikhaarah) and pray two rak'ahs concerning every hadeeth he included in his book, until he completed it in this manner.

Even though we are aware that there are some minor criticisms levelled at a few ahaadeeth that are recorded in Saheeh al-Bukhaari, we are certain that there is nothing wrong with applying the label of saheeh to all the ahaadeeth in the book, for the following reasons:

1.

Most of the scholars and muhaddithoon think that Imam al-Bukhaari is in the right with regard to matters for which he was criticized. It is well known that it is not correct methodology to accept criticism just because it exists, rather it depends on evidence and proof. Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him), in his great book Fath al-Baari and especially in his introduction which is called Hadiy al-Saari, discussed the answer to these minor criticisms, and explained what is correct.

2.

The number of ahaadeeth in Saheeh al-Bukhaari, including repetitions – according to the numbering of Muhammad Fu'aad 'Abd al-Baaqi (may Allaah have mercy on him) – is 7563. When we realize that the number of criticisms is less than twenty, and that most of these criticisms have to do with matters concerning the isnaads, or whether the hadeeth reaches the highest level of saheeh, or they have to do with one or two words in a hadeeth, and that the criticisms which have to do with matters affecting the soundness of the matn (text) are rare and affect no more than one or two or three ahaadeeth – when we know all that, we realize that applying the label of saheeh to everything that is in al-Bukhaari, texts and isnaads, is correct and cannot be denied.

Imam al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The ummah is unanimously agreed that these two books are saheeh and it is obligatory to follow their ahaadeeth. End quote.

Tahdheeb al-Asma' wa'l-Lughaat (1/73).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

There is no book beneath the canopy of heaven that is more sound than al-Bukhaari and Muslim, after the Qur'aan. End quote.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (18/74).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar said, answering criticism of Saheeh al-Bukhaari:

The answer to that in general terms is:

There is no doubt that al-Bukhaari and then Muslim are superior to the people of their own era and the imams of this branch of knowledge who came after them in finding out what is saheeh or sound and what is mu'allal or faulty. The scholars did not differ concerning the fact that 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni was the most knowledgeable of his peers about 'ilal al-hadeeth (faults of hadeeth) and that al-Bukhaari learned that from him. He used to say: I did not feel myself inferior to anyone except 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni. Nevertheless, when 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni heard about al-Bukhaati saying that he said: Ignore what he says, for he has never seen anyone like himself. Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Dhuhali was the most knowledgeable of his era about faults in the hadeeth of al-Zuhri, and both of the two shaykhs (i.e., al-Bukhaari and Muslim) learned that from him. Al-Farbari narrated that al-Bukhaari said: I did not include any hadeeth in al-Saheeh until after I prayed istikhaarah, asking Allaah for guidance, and being certain of its soundness. Makki ibn 'Abd-Allaah said: I heard Muslim ibn al-Hajjaaj say: I showed this book of mine to Abu Zur'ah al-Raazi and every report in which he indicated there was some fault in it, I omitted it. Once it is known and established that they did not narrate any hadeeth except those in which there were no faults, or in which there were faults but they did not damage the hadeeth in their view, then the view of the one who criticized them is to be understood as being opposed to what they determined was sound. Therefore there is no doubt that they have more knowledge than others concerning that, so this criticism carries little weight. This is in general.

But with regard to the details of the matter, the ahaadeeth which have been criticized may be divided into categories:

1.

Those concerning which the narrators differed, adding or omitting names in the isnaad. If the author of al-Saheeh narrated it with a longer isnaad, and the critic criticized it on the basis of the shorter isnaad, then it is a criticism that is to be rejected. And if the author of al-Saheeh narrated it with the shorter isnaad and the critic criticized it on the basis of the longer isnaad, then his objection implies that there is an interruption in the isnaad of the hadeeth which is regarded as

saheeh by the author [i.e., al-Bukhaari]. The answer on behalf of the author of al-Saheeh is that he narrated such reports because there are other, corroborating reports or other evidence for regarding it as strong, and for that reason the hadeeth is strengthened to the point of being saheeh.

2.

Where the reports differ in that the names of some men in the isnaad are changed. The answer to this is that just because there is a difference in some of the names of the isnaad it does not mean that this is proof of a fault, because mere differences do not mean that there is a problem which renders the hadeeth da'eef (weak). Therefore this argument should also be ignored.

3.

Where some narrators narrated additional material that is not present in the reports which were narrated by many narrators or where narrators who were known for greater precision did not narrate this additional material. This does not mean that the hadeeth is to be regarded as faulty unless the additional material contradicts it in such a way that it is too difficult to reconcile the two. But if it is not difficult to reconcile the additional material with the hadeeth then it does not mean that the hadeeth is to be regarded as faulty, unless there is strong evidence that the additional material that is narrated alongside the hadeeth is the words of one of the narrators. What comes under this category is something to be taken into account, as in hadeeth no. 34.

4.

What is narrated only by some narrators who are those who are classed as da'eef or weak. There is nothing of this type in al-Saheeh apart from two hadeeths, and it became clear that they both have corroborating evidence.

5.

Hadeeth in which some of the men of the isnaad are determined to have been confused. In some cases this confusion may damage the hadeeth and in other cases it does not.

6.

Cases where there are differences in the wording of the text. Most cases of this type do not lead to regarding the hadeeth as faulty, because it is possible to reconcile the differences, or determine which is more correct. But Daaraqutni and other imams did not examine this issue with regard to these two books as they discussed the issue of isnaads. What they did not examine in this regard includes: the hadeeth of Jaabir which tells the story of the camel; his hadeeth concerning the paying off of his father's debt; the hadeeth of Raafi' ibn Khudayj about al-mukhaabarah; the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah concerning the story of Dhu'l-Yadayn; the hadeeth of Sahl ibn Sa'd concerning the story of the woman who offered herself in marriage to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him); the hadeeth of Anas about starting recitation of al-Faatihah with the words "al-hamdu Lillaahi Rabbi l-'aalameen"; the hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas about the case of the woman who asked about the vows of her mother and sister; and others.

This is a summary of the categories of criticism levelled at al-Saheeh according to the imams. I have listed them, examined them, categorized them and explained them, and none of them undermine the basic matter of al-Saheeh, praise be to Allaah, except in a few rare cases. End quote.

Hadiy al-Saari (345-346)

See also the answer to question no. 20153

And Allaah knows best.