A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF HABIT LITERATURE

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INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF HADITH LITERATURE
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HADITH LITERATURE

A SURVEY OF
THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF HADITH LITERATURE IN THE
SUB-COINTINENT OF PAKISTAN AND INDIA FROM THE EARLIEST TIME
DOWN TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

TOGETHER WITH
The lives and the works of the leading Muhaddithun of the time

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INTRODUCTION

In the opinion of the late 'Allâma Rashid Riḍâ of Egypt, the Indian Muslims are playing the leading rôle in the diffusion and dissemination of Hadîth learning in the world to-day. As a matter of fact, according to him, but for the painstaking labour of the Indian Muslims towards the cultivation of the Science of al-Hadîth, it would have well-nigh died down.1 If the achievement of the moribund Muslim India, when she has fallen on evil days after the loss of her political power, has been such, it behoves us well to take stock of what our noble forefathers did for the cultivation of the sciences in general, and Islamic sciences in particular, during their palmy days which lasted for the better part of a thousand years. True, 'Allâma Dr. Sayyid Sulaymân Nadawi2 and the late Ḥakîm 'Abd al-Ḥayy of Nadwa3 have done some pioneer work as far as India's contribution to Hadîth literature is concerned; but they have not, I am afraid, done full justice to the subject, partly because of lack of materials available in this connection, partly because of the range of their studies being generally wide and varied—a fact that might have precluded them from concentrating on a particular topic like this. Anyway, the small but very precious work they have done is enough to provoke the thoughts of our present-day youth to go forward in search of 'fresh fields and pastures new.' This thesis entitled 'India's Contribution to the Study of

1. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bâqî, Miftâḥ Kunûz al-Sunnah (Cairo, 1934); Muqaddimah, p. 3; al-Furqân, Shâh Wall Allâh Number (Bareilly, 1940), pp. 164, 222; Ma'ârif Aḥsan Gilani, Niẓām-i-Ta'lîm wa Tarbiyât (Delhi, 1944), vol. I, p. 108.
2. Ma'ârif, vols. XII, Nos. 4-6; XIII, No. 2, art. Hindustân men 'Ilm-i-Hadîth.
Hadith Literature' will, therefore, make a modest effort to give a survey of what Indians have contributed towards the Science of al-Hadith from the beginning of India's connection with the Muslim World down to the foundation of the Islamic University of Dâr al-‘Ulâm at Deoband. We do not purposely like to deal with what has been, and what is being done after that, as that is a matter of common knowledge to all of us. The work has, for purposes of convenience and easy handling, been divided into two parts. The first part deals with Tradition and the Traditionists in India, and the second, with the Indian Traditionists outside India.

Although the invasion of Sind was first launched during the days of the Șahâba in 23/643, it was finally conquered in the early years of the Tabî‘un when al-Hadith entered into a new phase of development. Up to that time no systematic attempt had been made to collect the vast mass of traditions lying scattered with the scholars in different parts of the Islamdom. Nor had the State taken any initiative in the matter. But now with the accession of Caliph ‘Umar b.‘Abd al-‘Azîz (99-101), things took a new turn. Himself a Traditionist of no mean repute, the Caliph issued an edict to his Governors directing the attention of the scholars to the collection and codification of Aḥādîth—the supreme need of the hour. This Caliphal mandate infused a fresh life into Hadith literature; the Muslim divines and doctors, therefore, devoted themselves to the task of piecing together the erstwhile scattered Apostolic traditions. Side by side with these developments, al-Hadith made its way to Sind. But before the foundation of the independent Arab principalities in al-Manṣūra and Multân towards the close of the third century of the Hijra, no appreciable progress in its study was made in Sind. As a result, the territory could not keep pace with other Muslim countries in the services of Hadith literature during the second and the third centuries when ʿIlm al-Hadith or the Science of Hadith literature was evolved. Nevertheless during this evolutionary period of al-Hadith, a group of brilliant Taḥābîl-ʿIlm belonging to the tribes of Sind settled in al-ʿIrāq and to the families of the Indian war-prisoners who had embraced Islam and established themselves in Muslim lands, took an active part in the transmission of Aḥādîth. Of them al-Awza‘î (d. 157) in Syria, Najîh al-Sindî (d. 170) in al-Madina and Baghdad and Râjâ’ al-Sindî (d. 222) in Khurâsân attained great distinction as early collectors and codifiers of Aḥādîth. A grandson of Râjâ’ al-Sindî, namely, Muḥammad al-Sindî (d. 286) compiled a Mustakhlîrîn on the Șahîh of Muslim (d. 261), while Khalaf al-Sindî (d. 231), an ardent Taḥâbîl-ʿIlm of the early third century, prepared a Mustâna. Unfortunately, neither the Mustakhlîrî nor the Mustâna could stand the ravages of time. If preserved, they would have added to the contribution of the Indian Traditionists to Hadith literature during its formative period. Nevertheless, a fair number of Aḥādîth transmitted on the authority of Indian Rûvâ‘it has been preserved in the Șîhâh-Sitta and the other compilations of Aḥâdîth.

While the Indian Rûvâ‘it referred to above were working for the cause of al-Hadith outside India, there sprang up in Sind, under the auspices of the independent Arab rulers of al-Manṣūra and Multân, seats of Hadith learning that produced several good Muḥâlîthîn and deputed a number of Taḥâbîl-ʿIlm outside India to acquire proficiency in the Science. As a matter of fact, Sindian Muḥâlîthîn in the fourth century showed a great promise in the domain of Hadith literature. Unfortunately, their cultural activities had to be transitory and short-lived as the principalities were usurped by the Ismâ‘îlîtes towards the