

A Critical Study of Objections of Orientalists and Hadith-Deniers on Sense-Reporting of Hadith Text

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ABSTRACT:

Riwayat bil-ma'na (sense-reporting) means that a narrator narrates a hadith in his own words without uttering the actual words he listened. It is a method of narrating hadith which is, although opposed by some scholars and declared an illegal and unfair method, yet most of hadith-experts have conditionally allowed it. A narrator may not be allowed to report the sense/meaning of a hadith without abiding by some conditions. It is a fact that, on basis of sense-reporting, many orientalist have played the blame game on hadith. After having influenced by the orientalist, hadith-deniers, modernists and many so-called Muslim scholars have also made objections on this ground. The main reason of these objections, in their opinion, is that during the whole period before compilation of hadith, hadith narrating has been used to take place by the method of sense-reporting. It is a recognized fact that all people do not have the same level of reasoning, memorizing and understanding capability. It is not possible that ten people narrate the words of Prophet in the same wording. That's why there are many narrations of Hadith on the same topic and different as well. This difference means that any change or fluctuation has been occurred in hadiths. So, these hadiths will no more be viable argument. Moreover all hadiths of books of hadith comprise sense-reporting. The deniers of hadith propagate such ambiguities and make denial and disregard of hadith. So, it is needed to review the objections of deniers of hadith on research point of view and to describe the conditions of hadith-experts clearly. Not mentioning these conditions is, no doubt, dishonesty. Besides this, it is to view different forms of sense-reporting which are present in hadith. So that the matter being discussed, may be made clear on all its aspects. This research article consists on this discussion.

Keywords: *riwayat bil-ma'na*, sense-reporting, hadith-deniers, orientalist.

No doubt, Hadith is second basic source of Islamic Sharia. Due to its importance, ancient and modern scholars took special interest in it. They compiled it, wrote books on hadith informants, set up the art of explanation and differentiating hadith. They laid the foundation of many other sciences and arts concerning hadith. A basic reason of interest and struggle of Muslim scholars in serving hadith was that it is the second basic source of Sharia and a commentary on Quran and that it is a preserver of Islamic civilization and its social values. It is the Hadith which highlights the rules, regulations and limitations of Islamic society. Due to this much importance of hadith, it has always been a thorn in eyes of the enemies of Islam. So, they have always been making it

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the target of their criticism so that the righteousness and certification status of hadith should be made suspicious, and position of Islamic society rather Islamic sharia should be disturbed. Such people had also been present in first centuries, who challenged the deciding position of hadith. Imam Shafei, other jurists and hadith-experts chased their ideologies and defended hadith on solid academic basis. In 20th century, the enemies of Islam continued their practice with their modern name 'orientalists'. They criticized and raised objections upon different aspects of Islam but they couldn't succeed to get the required consequences. So, they turned the direction of their objections towards hadith and the biography of the Prophet ﷺ. Ignaz Goldziher earned fame on objections upon hadith. Among his objections on hadith, there are the objections on sense-reporting as well. These objections, in deed, were the result of his objections on compilation of hadith. He thought that compilation of hadith couldn't take place till two and half centuries, rather it was used to be reported people to people orally. So, in so much long period the original wording of Apostle ﷺ could not maintain its originality. Sense-reporting was a common practice among hadith-experts as well. That's why every narrator of hadith was supposed to narrate the hadith in his own words. So, narrations presented in books of hadith are not the wording of Prophet ﷺ, but the words of their narrators. As the narrators got the hadith, they reported it in their own words. Due to this practice, the validity of hadith was shaken. For an instance, a renowned orientalist Ignaz Goldziher writes in his book:

"The question whether transmitted accurately in substance but not in wording may claim to be a correct hadith (*riwaya bi'l-ma'na*) a question which was raised as early as the third century becomes increasingly a real problem for the science of tradition."¹

Influenced by such type of orientalists, some Muslim scholars also raised this objection. As these scholars were Muslims, so their thoughts affected the society bit more than the orientalists and influenced a large part of community. For example an Egyptian scholar Mufti Muhammad Abduhoo and his followers expressed objection on the hadiths containing sense-reporting.² In Sub-Continent a specific group was formed which was named *Ahl-e-Qur'an*. Actually this was the group of hadith-deniers in disguise of *Ahl-e-Qur'an*. They influenced a great part of higher Muslim community. Among them was a remarkable name, Ghulam Ahmad Pervez. Making objection on sense-reporting, he writes:

"As many books of hadith (including Bukhari, Muslim) we own, none of their hadiths may be claimed to be the exact words of Prophet ﷺ. All hadiths comprise sense-reporting. Their style is, that a companion (Sahabi) heard something from Prophet ﷺ, whatever he understood about the said wording of Prophet ﷺ, he reported forward in his own words. And so on this process continued up to two and half centuries. After that, people collected this type of spread things. So, it is obvious that how much it will be connected with the actual words of Prophet ﷺ."³

According to Ghulam Ahmad Pervez, due to this sense-reporting, following results are extracted:

- All hadiths are depending on sense-reporting.

- None of Hadith books may be claimed that its hadiths are the exact words of Prophet ﷺ.
- Among the sense-reporters, were such type of informants as well, who were not capable of understanding the real concept.
- All narrators practiced sense-reporting.

Moreover, the modernists also contributed in this job. For example a scholar of Ghamidi school of thought, Sajid Hameed expresses his notions in such a way:

“I had made title of my article ‘*Matn-e-Hadith me Hamare Tasarrufa’t*’. The word ‘*tasarruf*’ means mattering, scuffling, utilizing etc.”

Moreover, he writes: “A remarkable part of hadiths has been transferred in sense-reporting methodology. Whenever a prudent, after making it clear from a prudent, transmits a thing in his own words, he is not transmitting the concept of his informant, but that of his own. It is a natural requirement of reporting, because before compilation of hadith, hadiths were rarely reported as a complete hadith rather these were stated in light of informant’s own opinion or practice. In such type of conversation, transforming of concepts is a natural matter. In first ages, hadith texts were not in written form, from which words of text might be verified. This facility was achieved after the hadith books came into existence. Now these books consist upon the hadiths of sense-reporting. Transferring of hadiths by sense-reporting, concepts are so changed and they do not let the real thing remain universally compatible and free of errors whereas Allah and His Apostle ﷺ has issued universal and errorless commandments.”⁴

He further writes: “In modern age, among the reasons of attack on hadith, there is a reason that when the prudent and non-prudent reporters converted hadith in their own words, concept was differed on minor or major basis.”⁵

According to Ghamidi school of thought, Muslim scholars have worked out in hadith. As hadiths had not been written, so there was no source to verify them. Due to sense-reporting, concept and subject of hadith varied. It is needed to work on the collection of hadiths from the beginning, so that it would be investigated that which words are actually of Prophet ﷺ and which were added by the informants afterwards.

These are the major objections which were raised on sense-reporting by orientalist and the hadith-deniers. Their main target is to prove that traditions narrated in books of hadith are actually not the teachings of Prophet ﷺ, but that of narrators. Those may be right, may be wrong as well. So those are not trustworthy. In the same way, hadith-experts deceived Ummah, saying that those are the words of Prophet ﷺ, whereas those are not. The experts didn’t make clarity about this reality, unless Ummah may lose the trust in hadith. In the following lines, we will analyze these objections in perspective of rule set by hadith-experts, so that their contribution and services for hadith and their dignity would be highlighted and the reality of these objections may be exposed as well. Terminology of Sense-Reporting (*Riwayat bil-ma’na*):

In sense-reporting, a narrator describes the tradition in his own words instead of its exact wording. Hafiz Ibn-us-Salah writes:

"إِذَا أَرَادَ رَوَايَةَ مَا سَمِعَهُ عَلَى مَعْنَاهُ دُونَ لَفْظِهِ"⁶

"When a narrator describes the meanings of a tradition instead of its exact wording, it will be sense-reporting."

Status of Sense-Reporting:

The rule of narrating a hadith was to report it in its original words as Prophet ﷺ uttered. However, sense-reporting was allowed when it was severely needed. This permission was not a general rule, rather it was an exceptional situation. But orientalist tried to bring it under discussion as a general rule. If a narrator had to narrate a hadith as sense-reporting, after narrating, he was demanded to explain it in such words which mentioned that those were not the words of Prophet ﷺ, but those were the words of the narrator. The companions (*Sahaba*) followed the same methodology. They had the utmost desire to narrate a hadith within the words they had listened from the Prophet ﷺ, as Umar bin Khattab describes:

"من سمع حديثاً فحدث به كما سمع فقد سلم."⁷

"Whoever listened a hadith and narrated it as listened, he remained safe."

Explaining this, Allama Suyuti wrote:

"وينبغي للراوي بالمعنى أن يقول عقيبها أو كما قال أو نحوه أو شبهه أو ما أشبه هذا من الألفاظ، وقد كان قوم من الصحابة يفعلون ذلك وهم أعلم الناس بمعاني الكلام"⁸

"A sense-reporter should use to utter the words like نحوه كما قال or the words like them, because Sahaba used to follow the same practice, whereas they were the most aware of the concept."

So, it is very clear that the actual rule of narrating hadith, near hadith-experts was to narrate word by word, not that of sense-reporting. Sense-reporting was just allowed in some special situations. And this permission was not granted to all the narrators as Ghulam Ahmad Pervez and other hadith deniers attempted to prove. All hadith-experts and jurisprudents agree that the permission was only for the person who had the best approach and knowledge of the words and their reasoning. Other than such a person was not permitted for sense-reporting. Hafiz Ibn-us-Salah describes:

"فإن لم يكن عالماً عارفاً بالألفاظ ومقاصدها، خبيراً بما يُجِيلُ مَعَانِيهَا، بصيراً بمقادير النقاوتِ بينها، فلا خلاف أنه لا يجوزُ له ذلك، وعليه أن لا يزوي ما سمعه إلا على اللفظ الذي سمعه من غير تغيير."⁹

"If a narrator has no knowledge of the words and their objectives and he is unaware of variations of the words, sense-reporting is not lawful for him. It is necessary for him to narrate a hadith with the words he heard."

Allama Aamdi writes:

"والذي عليه اتفاق الشافعي ومالك وأبي حنيفة وأحمد بن حنبل والحسن البصري وأكثر الأئمة أنه يحرم ذلك على الناقل إذا كان غير عارف بدلالات الألفاظ واختلاف مواقعها وإن كان عالماً بذلك فالأولى له النقل بنفس اللفظ إذ هو أبعد عن التغيير والتبديل وسوء التأويل. وإن نقله بالمعنى من غير زيادة في المعنى ولا نقصان منه فهو جائز."¹⁰

"The opinion on which Imam Shafie, Malik, Abu Hanifa, Hassan Basari and most of the imams agree, is that the narrator having no awareness of words-management and about the difference of situations, sense-reporting is strictly forbidden for him. If he has the knowledge of words-management, it would be better for him to abide by the

words because it is safer than the changing of the wording. However, if he makes sense-reporting in such a way that meanings are not fluctuated, it is lawful.”

Allama Ibn-e-Kathir says:

"وأما روايته الحديث بالمعنى: فإن كان الراوي غير عالم ولا عارف بما يحيل المعنى: فلا خلاف أنه لا تجوز له روايته الحديث بهذه الصفة. وأما إذا كان عالماً بذلك، بصيراً بالألفاظ ومدلولاتها، وبالمترادف من الألفاظ ونحو ذلك: فقد جوز ذلك جمهور الناس سلفاً وخلفاً وعليه العمل، كما هو المشاهد في الأحاديث الصحاح وغيرها، فإن الواقعة تكون واحدة، وتجيء بألفاظ متعددة، من وجوه مختلفة متباينة. ولما كان هذا قد يوقع في تغيير بعض الأحاديث، منع من الرواية بالمعنى طائفة آخرون من المحدثين والفقهاء الأصوليين، وشددوا في ذلك أكد التشديد. وكان ينبغي أن يكون هذا هو الواقع، ولكن لم يتفق ذلك."¹¹

“As for as the sense-reporting is concerned, if the narrator is unaware of the things which change the meanings, no one disagree on unlawfulness of sense-reporting. And if he is aware of these things and bears the insight of words-management and is aware of substitutes of the words, most of the experts have declared sense-reporting lawful for him and the same has been practiced. In the authentic hadiths, the same matter is obvious. So, we observe that the same incident is being reported in different words. As the sense-reporting may cause the change in hadith, so some hadith-experts and jurisprudents have strictly prohibited this practice. Righteously it must be so, but it could not be agreed.”

It is absolutely clear by above mentioned theories of hadith-experts that near them, it was a recognized rule a hadith should be narrated in the words uttered by Prophet ﷺ. However in some specific circumstances, sense-reporting was allowed. This permission was only for those narrators who had complete knowledge of words management and had been well aware of vocabulary and Sharia. Their sense-reporting must not fluctuate the theme and order of the hadith. Orientalists and hadith-deniers try to conceal the facts by ignoring these things and show as all hadiths are sense-reported. They claim that no hadith exists which would comprise the original words of Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, all hadith-narrators used to utilize sense-reporting and made changes in hadiths.

Hadith-deniers rightly say that a mistake may occur by a person. It is possible that a narrator may have narrated a hadith in his own words, according to his knowledge. And, while narrating, he would have chosen such words whose meanings were opposite to the purpose of Prophet ﷺ. But this kind of objection would be valid if the experts would have not mentioned such traditions and their reasoning. Indeed, if a narrator committed any mistake in sense-reporting, hadith-experts clearly mentioned it. For this, hadith-experts wrote comprehensive books on *Ilal-ul-Hadith* (hidden setbacks of hadith). This art is the most difficult task. For it, a high level of memory, knowledge and minute insight is required. That's why there are very few experts in this field, like Ibn-e-Madini, Ahmad, Bukhari, Abu Hatim and Darqutni. After studying their books, nobody can claim that the narrators had made changes in hadiths and had changed their original meanings in accordance with their temperament, sect attachment and political ideologies. If a narrator committed any mistake, consciously or unconsciously, while narrating a hadith, the experts chased that mistake. Its few examples may be seen in ‘*Sharah Ilal Altirmidi*’ of Allama Ibn-e-Rajab.¹² So,

claiming that due to sense-reporting, hadith has lost its originality and has become unreliable, is a scientific dishonesty and overlooking the facts.

Opinions of Experts about Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of Sense-Reporting:

The objectors say that sense-reporting was generally allowed and it was a recognized rule of hadith-experts due to which the words of traditions lost their originality. Whereas the fact is that there remained disagreement among the experts and jurists on legitimacy of sense-reporting. So, some of them have totally forbidden the sense-reporting, and some agree on its legitimacy.

1. A group of experts and jurists has completely prohibited the sense-reporting. This group consists of the personalities like Abdullah bin Umar, Qasim bin Muhammad, Muhammad bin Sireen, Raja bin Heva, Sufyan bin Uyaina, Abd-ul-Waris, Yazid bin Zuray, Wohaib, Yahya bin Mueen, Abu Bakr Razi.¹³

So, the above mentioned experts, jurists and their followers have absolutely forbidden the sense-reporting. It means that the hadiths narrated by them comprise the words uttered by the Prophet ﷺ.

2. A major group of the most of hadith-experts and jurists has declared the sense-reporting legal. The four Imams are also included in this group. They impose the ultimate trust in performing the meanings of hadith. Explaining it, Hafiz Ibn-us-Salah writes:

فَأَمَّا إِذَا كَانَ عَالِمًا عَارِفًا بِذَلِكَ، فَهَذَا مِمَّا خْتَلَفَ فِيهِ السَّلَفُ، وَأَصْحَابُ الْحَدِيثِ، وَأَرْبَابُ الْفِقْهِ، وَالْأَصُولُ، فَجَوَّزَهُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ وَلَمْ يُجَوِّزْهُ بَعْضُ الْمُحَدِّثِينَ، وَطَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الْفُقَهَاءِ، وَالْأَصُولِيِّينَ مِنَ الشَّافِعِيِّينَ، وَغَيْرِهِمْ. وَمَنْعَهُ بَعْضُهُمْ فِي حَدِيثِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَجَازَهُ فِي غَيْرِهِ¹⁴

“If a narrator has awareness of objectives and variations of the words, hadith-experts and jurists are divided regarding the sense-reporting. Majority has declared it legal, whereas a group of some experts and Shafi’ee jurists has declared it illegal. And some claim that it is prohibited in hadith of Prophet ﷺ and allowed while narrating the sayings of others.”

Allama Ibn-e-Rajab writes:

"رَأَى الْجُمْهُورُ عَلَى أَنَّ الرِّوَايَةَ بِالمَعْنَى جَائِزَةٌ وَقَدْ دَلَّ ابْنُ رَجَبٍ عَلَى جَوَازِهَا بِأَقْوَالِ بَعْضِ الصَّحَابَةِ وَالتَّابِعِينَ وَعُلَمَاءِ الْحَدِيثِ الْمُتَقَدِّمِينَ وَبَيَّنَّ اللهُ يَقِصَّ قِصَصَ الْقُرُونِ السَّالِفَةِ بِغَيْرِ لُغَاتِهَا وَقَدْ قَيَّدَ الْعُلَمَاءُ هَذَا الْجَوَازَ فَاسْتَرْتَبُوا فِيهِمْ يَرَوِي الْحَدِيثَ بِالمَعْنَى أَنَّ يَكُونُ عَارِفًا بِمَوَاقِعِ الْأَلْفَاظِ بِصِيرَايَدِ اللَّاتِهَاتِ لِإِحْيَالِ الْحَلَالِ حَرَامًا أَوْ يَضَعُ الدَّلِيلَ فِي غَيْرِ مَكَانِهِ"¹⁵

“Opinion of majority is that sense-reporting is lawful. Ibn-e-Rajab provided arguments on its lawfulness. Among them sayings of Sahaba and Tabi’een, former hadith-experts and Allah’s practice of describing the stories of ancient societies in other than their native language. The scholars have imposed some conditions that in this way of narration, the narrator must be aware of the situational usage and reasoning of the words. Nevertheless he would make the lawful thing unlawful and place the reason wrongly.”

Conditional Permission:

Although most of the scholars, hadith-experts, jurists and the fundamentalists declare the sense-reporting lawful, yet it was not a general permission. Each narrator

was not supposed to take the benefit from this permission, there were some conditions and limitations for it, without complying them, sense-reporting was not allowed. Explaining this, Ibn-us-Salah writes:

"وَالْأَصْحَحُ : جَوَّازُ ذَلِكَ فِي الْجَمِيعِ ، إِذَا كَانَ عَالِمًا بِمَا وَصَفْنَاهُ قَاطِعًا بِأَنَّهُ أَدَّى مَعْنَى اللَّفْظِ الَّذِي بَلَّغَهُ ؛ لِأَنَّ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الَّذِي تَشْهَدُ بِهِ أَحْوَالُ الصَّحَابَةِ ، وَالسَّلَفِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ، وَكَثِيرًا مَا كَانُوا يَنْقُلُونَ مَعْنَى وَاجِدًا فِي أَمْرٍ وَاجِدٍ بِالْقَاطِعِ مُخْتَلَفَةٍ ، وَمَا ذَلِكَ إِلَّا لِأَنَّ مَعْرَلَهُمْ كَانَ عَلَى الْمَعْنَى دُونَ اللَّفْظِ"¹⁶

"The most reasonable thing is that sense-reporting is lawful in all situations. If a narrator is a scholar, as we have described; he must be sure that he has conveyed the accurate sense of the word that he learnt. This is the situation on which the practice of Sahaba and first predecessors witness. Most of them used to present the meanings in different words, because they had trust in the meaning instead of the word."

Among the personalities who had talked about the conditional permission of sense-reporting are Imam Ghazali¹⁷, Imam Tirmidi¹⁸, Allama Aamdi¹⁹, Hafiz Ibn-e-Hajr Asqalani²⁰, Imam Ibn-e-Hazm²¹, Imam Razi²² etc.

The above discussion shows that the original narration of traditions is the word to word narration. Sense-reporting is a branch of narration that is conditionally allowed by some scholars. So, the saying of orientalist that sense-reporting is a general rule of hadith narration, is against the scientific facts.

The Conditions for Sense-Reporting:

There are some important conditions phrased by the scholars for sense-reporting, in the following:

The narrator must be a scholar of reasoning and minutes of words and their meanings²³. Hadith should not be concerning the worship matters, like *Takbeer*, *Salah*, *Tash'hud*, *Aqamah* etc²⁴. Hadith should not be related to the *Jawame-ul-kalim*²⁵. If hadith comprises Sharia meanings, the narrator should have the knowledge of Sharia²⁶. The narrator must be competent in his religion, true in his wording and must be well aware of what he is describing. The narrator must have complete knowledge of Arabic language and its addressing methods. The narrator must be having the insight of meanings and jurisprudence. The narrator must be aware of all those matters due to those change occurs in meanings and of the matters due to those change does not occur. After narrating the hadith, he should utter the words of *او كما* or *نحوه* or *يا شبه*. The narrator must explain while sense-reporting, that this is the meaning of Prophet's saying, not his words.²⁷

There are several more conditions except the conditions mentioned above. Allama Al-Jaza'iri has discussed them in detail²⁸. Hafiz Ibn-e-Rajab writes:

"ومقصود الترمذي رحمه الله بهذا الفصل الذي ذكره ههنا أن من أقام الأسانيد وحفظها وغير المتون تغييراً لا يغير المعنى أنه حافظ ثقة يعتبر بحديثه، وبنى ذلك على أن رواية الحديث بالمعنى جائزة، وحكاه عن أهل العلم. وكلامه يشعر بأنه إجماع، وليس كذلك، بل هو قول كثير من العلماء، ونص عليه أحمد، وقال: ((ما زال الحفاظ يحدثون بالمعنى)). وإنما يجوز ذلك لمن هو عالم بلغات العرب، بصيراً بالمعاني، عالماً بما يحيل المعنى وما لا يحيله، نص على ذلك الشافعي."²⁹

"The chapter which Imam Tirmidi has mentioned here, is for that which maintained the chain of the narrators and learnt it by heart but didn't make such a change in the

text that would change the meanings, such a person is preserver (hafiz) and competent. The hadith narrated by such a person can be used for reasoning. He has laid its foundation on the thing that sense-reporting is lawful, and he has copied it from the knowledgeable personalities. We come to know by it that there is consensus upon it, whereas it is not so. It is the opinion of most of the scholars, and Imam Ahmad has declared that the huffaz of hadith have been making sense-reporting. But this is permitted only to the person who would be a scholar of Arabic dictionaries, having the insight of meanings and having been aware of utilization and non-utilization of meanings. Imam Shaf'ie has declared it."

Allama Abd-ul-Ali Muhammad bin Nizam-ud-Din has discussed this matter on a different angle, he explains:

وتفصيل كلام هذا الامام أن الاقسام خمسة أن يكون المنقول متضح المعني غير قابل للتاويل أصلا كالمفسر والمحكم وما يكون محتملا للتاويل ظاهرا في الدلالة كالنص والظاهر، وما يحتاج فيه الي التاويل للعمل به كالمشكل والمشترك، وما لا يدرك بالتاويل بم يحتاج الي السماع كالمجمل، أو لا يدرك أصلا كالمتشابه وجوامع الكلم. فالأول يجوز نقله بالمعني لكل عارف باللغة اذ لا احتمال للغلط في فهم المعني لعدم قبوله التاويل والتخصيص أصلا، وأما الثاني فلا يجوز الا لفقهي، فانه يجوز أن يقيم غير الفقيه بدله مفظا لا يحتمل ذلك لتاويل ويكون هو مراد الشارع فيفوت الحكم وأما الفقيه فيعرف حق كل لفظ فلا يغير بحيث ينقلب من الظهور الي الاحكام وأما الثالث فلا يحل فيه النقل بالمعني أصلا لأن المعني لا يفهم فيه الا بتاويل واستعمال رأي والرأي يخطئ ويصيب فما هو غير واجب الاتباع يصير واجب الاتباع بالنسبة الي المعصوم صلوات الله وسلامه عليه وعلي اله وأصحابه. فان قلت لعله يعرف بالقرينة فلنا لو كانت القرينة مقرونة بحيث تجعله متضح المعني لغة فيدخل في أحد القسمين الاولين وأما الرابع فلا يحتمل نقل المعني فيه فان التشابه لا يعرف معناه وأما المجمل فقبل سماع البيان مثل المتشابه وبعده النقل نقل المجمل والبيان وهما حديثان متضحتا المعني وأما الخامس فلأن جوامع الكلم مخصوص بها اعطاء رسولنا صلي الله عليه وعلي اله وأصحابه وسلم كما يدل عليه الخبر الصحيح ولا يمكن اتیان مثله فلو نقل بمعناه نقل علي فهمه وعلي ما يتأدي من عبارته فيفوت أكثر الفوائد المشتملة عليها.³⁰

"There are five types of traditions; 1) Meanings of the narrated matter must be very clear and must not be originally able to be interpreted, as mufassar and muhkam 2) The type in which there would be probability of interpretation and whose reasoning would be obvious, as nass and zahir 3) The type the interpretation might be needed to act upon them, just as a mushkil and mushtarak. 4) The type that would not be able to understand through interpretation, rather hearing would be needed as mutashabih. 5) Jawame-ul-Kalim. First type of sense-reporting is lawful for the person who is expert in Arabic language. As it doesn't need the interpretation, so there is no probability in understanding its meanings. The second type of sense-reporting is lawful only for jurisprudent. May be other than a jurisprudent would use such an alternate word that would not fulfil the purpose of Prophet ﷺ. As for as the jurisprudent is concerned, he recognizes the place of the word. So, he will not make such a change which would change the obvious order. Third type of sense-reporting is absolutely not lawful because its meanings cannot be understood without utilizing the interpretation and opinion of its meanings, because there is possibility of mistake in opinion. Thus a thing which is not obligatory to follow, may become obligatory. If you say that it would be understood by the methodology, we'll say that if the methodology clears the meanings literally, then it would come under the first two types. In fourth type, there is no probability of sense-reporting because meanings of the similar words are not understood and opposite also seems to be like the similar before hearing the description. As

for as the fifth type is concerned, sense-reporting is also not lawful because according to a correct and authentic hadith 'Jawame-ul-Kilim are specified with the Prophet ﷺ. So such words may not be brought. The sense-reporting will be in accordance with the narrator's understanding and performing style of meanings of the words. So, a major part of these benefits would be spoiled on which that hadith comprises.'"

Tahir Aljazairi has described three following conditions in his book:

"يجوز نقل الخبر بالمعنى وهو مذهب الحسن البصري وأبي حنيفة خلافا لابن سيرين وبعض المحدثين ولكن بشرائط ثلاث: إحداهما أن لا تكون الترجمة قاصرة عن الأصل في إفادة المعنى. وثانيها أن لا يكون فيها زيادة ولا نقصان. وثالثها أن تكون الترجمة مساوية للأصل في الجلاء والخفاء لأن الخطاب يقع تارة بالمحكم وتارة بالمتشابه لحكم وأسرار استأثر الله بعلمها فلا يجوز تغييرها عن وصفها."³¹

"Unlike Imam Ibn-e-Saireen and some other hadith-experts, Imam Hassan Basri and Imam Abu Hanifah's thought is that sense-reporting is lawful. There are three following conditions:

1. The translation should not be unable to transmit the meanings of the wording.
2. There should be no fluctuation in it.
3. The translation should be equal to the original as per the inner and outer of the wording because while addressing the order is either described as final orders or as similarities. Or there are mysteries of Almighty Allah which are kept by Allah for His own knowledge. So their description may not be changed."

These are the conditions which are imposed by the scholars and experts of different juristic schools of thought. Keeping in view these conditions, if sense-reporting of hadith is allowed, it is hard to imagine any change or distortion in the meanings of hadith. On this, Dr. Muhammad Abu Shabbah writes:

إذا علمنا كل ذلك أيقنا أن الرواية بالمعنى لم تكن علي الدين، وأنها لم تدخل علي النصوص التحريف والتبديل كما زعم بعض المستشرقين ومن لف لفهم، وأن الله الذي تكفل بحفظ كتابه قد تكفل بحفظ سنة نبيه من التحريف والتبديل، وقبض لها في كل عصر من يفنون عنها تحريف الغالين وانتحال المبطلين، وتأويل الجاهلين، فذهب الباطل الدخيل، وبقي الحق موردا صافيا للشاربين.³²

"When we had known all the things, so we were sure that sense-reporting had neither made loss to Din nor made any changes in its ultimate texts as orientalisists and their followers think. As Allah has Himself taken the responsibility of the security of His Book, in the same way He has taken the responsibility of keeping the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ secure from any kind of distortion and changing. For this purpose, He appointed such people in every age who defended the Sunnah from all distorters, the false sects and the interpretations of ignorant people. So the false went away and the right was remained for its seekers."

Another important aspect is that the whole discussion on sense-reporting is about age before the compilation of hadith. When hadiths were compiled and the books were arranged, taking care of the words got necessary. Sense-reporting may be made during the public speeches and while preaching but while reasoning and approaching the origin, narrating word to word is compulsory.³³ Hafiz Ibn-us-Salah writes:

"ثُمَّ إِنَّ هَذَا الْخِلَافَ لَا نَرَاهُ جَارِيًا - وَلَا أَجْرَاهُ النَّاسُ فِيمَا نَعْلَمُ - فِيمَا تَصَمَّنْتَهُ بَطُونُ الْكُتُبِ، فَلَيْسَ لِأَحَدٍ أَنْ يُعَيِّرَ لَفْظَ شَيْءٍ مِنْ كِتَابٍ مُصَنَّفٍ، وَيُثَبِّتَ بَدْلَهُ فِيهِ لَفْظًا آخَرَ بِمَعْنَاهُ، فَإِنَّ الرَّوَايَةَ بِالْمَعْنَى رَخَّصَ فِيهَا مَنْ رَخَّصَ، لِمَا كَانَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي ضَبْطِ الْأَلْفَاظِ، وَالْجُمُودِ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الْحَرَجِ وَالنَّصَبِ، وَذَلِكَ غَيْرُ مَوْجُودٍ فِيمَا اسْتَمَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِ بَطُونُ الْأُزَاقِ، وَالْكُتُبِ، وَلِأَنَّهُ إِنْ مَلَكَ تَغْيِيرَ اللَّفْظِ، فَلَيْسَ يَمْلِكُ تَغْيِيرَ تَصْنِيفِ غَيْرِهِ."³⁴

"It should be kept in mind that we don't think that the disagreement is no more continued. And as for our knowledge in hadith books this disagreement about hadiths is no more continued. So, it is not lawful for anyone to make changes or to add substitutes of the words in the words of hadith of published books. Whoever allowed the sense-reporting, it was given to him who had the ability to learn by heart and to preserve it. It is no problem now because the words are preserved on pages and in books. If someone attempts to change the words, he will not be able to change the whole book. So, now there is no capacity of sense-reporting."

Conclusion:

It is now very clear after the above detailed discussion on sense-reporting that the actual rule of narrating hadiths near hadith-experts was that it should be narrated with its original words uttered by the Prophet ﷺ. However the exceptional situation of sense reporting exists which is allowed in some specific circumstances. This permission was not for all the narrators. Although some hadith-experts have absolutely declared the sense-reporting unlawful, yet most of the jurisprudents and hadith-experts allowed it under some hard conditions. If sense-reporting is made, keeping these conditions in view, there is no problem near the experts. The reason behind this 'no problem' is that this permission was limited and conditional. And secondly the conditions were so hard to make any problem with the hadith. Despite of this, if somebody makes reasoning of being hadiths uncertified due to sense-reporting, how can it be declared the scientific honesty?

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