

Sources of Authority in Islam - Supplementary Notes for Teachers

Slide 2 of 19 – Think. Pair. Share.

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Understand what is meant by a Source of Authority.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Ask Students what they understand by the term ‘Source of Authority’. Invite Students to share the Sources of Authority in their lives, e.g. teachers, books, parents, media. What makes something /someone a reliable source of authority?

Slide 3 of 19 – Aims and Objectives

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Understand the aims and objectives of this topic, as listed on the slide.

(B) Ideas and insights

- There are 3 main sources of Authority in Islam: The Holy Qur’an, Sunnah and Hadith. This Module will provide an overview of each Source and explain its significance for Muslims.
- Invite Students to share what they might already know about any of the 3 Sources of Authority. Can anyone explain the difference between the 3 Sources?

Slides 4-5 of 19 – Key Vocabulary

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Outline the Key vocabulary on slide 4.
- Introduce Students to the 3 main Sources of Authority in Islam: The Holy Qur’an, Sunnah and Hadith.
- Students should understand that the most important Source of Authority in Islam is the Holy Qur’an. Muslims (followers of Islam) believe that the Holy Qur’an is the Word of Allah as revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} by the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years.
- The Sunnah is the second most important Source of Authority for Muslims and describes the customs, practices and traditions of Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. It teaches the perfect path or model of how Muslims should live.
- Hadith refers to the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, as recorded by his family and companions.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Can students recall any Sources of Authority in other religions?
- Ask students to explain, in their own words, the distinction between Sunnah and Hadith. Note that a key distinction is that *Sunnah* is a continuous practice which was started by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} did not have the *Hadith* recorded in his presence, nor did he make any arrangement for its compilation.

Slide 6 of 19 – Sources of Authority – The Holy Qur'an

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an is the Word of Allah, relayed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} over a period of 23 years.
- Muslims believe that the Holy Qur'an contains a complete code of teachings and laws suitable to the needs of every age and provides the means for the spiritual and moral development of all mankind. It explains the true purpose for a person's existence, which Muslims believe is to worship and serve Allah, their Creator.
- The Holy Qur'an is organised into chapters and verses. There are one hundred and fourteen chapters in total. A chapter is called a "Surah"; each one having a specific name and a varying number of verses. Verses are called Ayah." There are in total 6,348 verses in the Holy Qur'an.
- The original text of the Holy Qur'an is Arabic and this text has remained unchanged over the past 1400 years. Translations of the Arabic text are available so Muslims around the world can benefit from its teachings. The Holy Qur'an has also been published in Braille.
- Millions of Muslims have memorized the Holy Qur'an in its entirety. Parts of the text are also read in the 5 daily prayers by Muslims throughout the world.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Allow Students to look at a copy of the Holy Qur'an, if available. Explain the etiquette of handling the Holy Qur'an: Before reading the Holy Qur'an Muslims cover their head, wash their hands and ensure the Holy Qur'an is placed either on a table/Qur'an Stand. It must never be placed on the floor and must be treated with utmost respect.
- Muslims turn to the Holy Qur'an for guidance on all aspects of their lives. Ask students to think about where they would look for guidance on different aspects of their life.
- Using an online Qur'an search engine, select either a couple of the school's values or your own values and look for them in guidance from the Qur'an, e.g. what does the Holy Qur'an say about kindness? Respect? Tolerance? Honesty?

<https://www.alislam.org/Qur'an/app/> "Search in the Qur'an"

Slide 7 of 19 – How was the Holy Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}?

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- The Holy Qur'an was revealed by Allah to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}
- The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} would often retire to the cave of Hira for several days at a time to engage in prayer. It was during such a visit that he received the first Qur'anic revelation.
- The revelations were conveyed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in small segments by the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years.
- The night of the first revelation occurred in the year 610 AD towards the end of the month of Ramadan (the month of fasting) and was later named *lailatul Qadr* or the Night of Power.
- Once a year during the month of Ramadan, the angel Gabriel would recite the entire revelation, revealed up to that time, with the Prophet^{pbuh}. During the last Ramadan, after the revelations had been completed, the angel Gabriel recited the entire Qur'anic revelation to the Prophet^{pbuh}.
- Muslims across the world try to complete a whole reading of the Holy Qur'an during the blessed month of Ramadan.
- The verse on the slide is not the first verse when you open the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, but then later compiled into its chapters in a different order as that was the sequence Muhammad^{pbuh} memorised it and taught it to his companions.
- From the very outset, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} used two main methods for preserving the revelations he received: memorisation and inscription. Islamic traditions record that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} employed four principal teachers whom he personally instructed in memorising the revelations. By this method, even the correct pronunciation of the message was preserved. These teachers would then help others in their memorisation of the revealed verses. Thus, the main mode of preservation and transmission of the Qur'anic revelations was through memorisation.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Can Students locate the Cave of Hira on a Map of Mecca – this is the place where the Holy Prophet received the first Quranic revelation. Have a look at the following: <https://mapcarta.com/N3732559985>
- Invite students to share how they memorise information. What methods do they use?

Slide 8 of 19 – Facts about the Holy Qur'an

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- The Arabic words of the Holy Qur'an have remained completely unchanged for over 1400 years. And this is not strange since Allah says in the Holy

Qur'an that He Himself will guard this book: *"Surely it is We Who have revealed the Exposition, and surely it is We Who are its Guardian"* (15:10)

- "There is probably in the world no work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text' - Life of Mahomet 3rd Edition by Sir William Muir.
- The Holy Qur'an claims its chapters and verses have been arranged in an order according to divine instruction "Those who disbelieve say, 'Why was not the Qur'an revealed to him all at once?' We have revealed it thus that We may strengthen thy heart therewith. And We have arranged it in the best form' (The Holy Qur'an Chapter 25 verse 33)
- The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} not only arranged for the Holy Qur'an to be written, he instructed his scribes to place each chapter and verse in a specific order. A companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, Usman, said: A long time might pass upon Muhammad^{pbuh} without anything being revealed to him, and then sometimes a chapter with numerous (verses) might be revealed. So, when something was revealed, he would call for someone who could write, and say "Put these verses in the chapter which mentions this and that in it". (Reference: Book of Hadith: Tirmidhi)
- Some of the teachings in the Holy Qur'an include Responsibilities to Allah, responsibilities to Mankind, not harming others, being truthful, giving charity and helping those who are oppressed: "And worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful" (The Holy Qur'an Chapter 4 verse 37)

(B) Ideas and insights

- Ask Students to make a class charter, or code of conduct. What moral/ethical qualities would each member need to adopt?

Slide 9 of 19 – What does the Holy Qur'an contain?

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- The contents of the Holy Qur'an fall into five main categories:
 1. Nature of the Spiritual World e.g. Chapter 13 Ar-Rad (Thunder) discusses Spiritual powers of the Prophet, Unity of God
 2. The Law and Commandments e.g., Chapter 4 An-Nisa (The Women) looks at safeguarding the rights of women, inheritance, and property.
 3. Historical Accounts e.g., Chapter 3 Al-E-Imran (Family of Imran) looks at the Battle of Badr in 624 AD. Chapter 19 Maryam looks at the birth of Prophet Jesus. Prophet Zachariah and Prophet Elijah are also mentioned.
 4. The Wisdom e.g., Chapter 23 The Believers looks at spiritual sustenance and man's physical needs.

5. The Prophecies e.g., Chapter 10 Yunus looks at revelation of the Qur’an and the coming of a messenger

<https://www.alislam.org/Qur'an/view/guide/?region=E3>

(B) Ideas and insights

- Listen to this verse of the Holy Qur’an being recited.
- Ask Students to find this Chapter and Verse in a copy of the Holy Qur’an: Chapter 16 verse 89/90 - <https://www.alislam.org/Qur'an/app/16:90>

Slide 10 of 19 – How is the Holy Qur’an used by Muslims today?

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Study of the translation and commentary of the Holy Qur’an is a regular practice. The Holy Qur’an contains many teachings on morality, ethics, and good character so is used as a guide for social matters e.g. guidance on marriage, divorce, birth.
- Whilst Muslims read and study the Holy Qur’an as part of their day to day lives, special attention is given to this practice during the Holy month of Ramadhan. Muslims use this month to gain a better understanding of the wisdom behind Allah’s commands and the importance of following His guidance. The Qur’an was first revealed during Ramadhan, so the month holds great significance for Muslims.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Can Students recall the names of Holy Books in other religions? What do Students know about the content of these Holy Books and how they are used today?

Slide 11 of 19 – Task - Create a mind map about the importance of the Holy Qur’an for Muslims

Slide 12 of 19 – Introduction to Sunnah and Hadith

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- The companions of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} took great care to record how he acted (Sunnah) and what he said (Hadith).
- The Holy Qur’an is the Word of Allah and the Sunnah is the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The third source of guidance is Hadith, which are the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and were compiled from the statements of diverse narrators a century and a half after his demise.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Some Muslims consider Hadith and Sunnah to be the same, others see them as quite distinct from each other.

Slide 13 of 19 – Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- The word Sunnah refers to the actions, deeds or customs practised by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.
- The distinction between *Sunnah* and *Hadith* is that *Sunnah* is a continuous practice which was started by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. As the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was commissioned for the propagation of the Holy Qur'an, he was also commissioned for establishing the *Sunnah*. Both these tasks were performed by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} as his duty. For instance, when the Prayer services were made obligatory, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} illustrated by his action how many *rak'as* [prescribed positions taken by Muslims during formal Prayer each standing up and bowing down etc. making up one 'Raka'a'] were to be performed in each Prayer service. In the same way, he illustrated the performance of the Pilgrimage. As such, he provided a practical demonstration of the Word of Allah and through his Sunnah, resolved matters of intricacy and difficulty.
- After directly observing the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, his actions were followed by his companions. These actions reached the *Tabi'in*, (those who were fortunate enough to have seen and met Companions of Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} but came after the time of the Prophet and did not meet him).

(B) Ideas and insights

- Read the excerpt from the slide. Invite Students to explain the meaning of Sunnah, using the example of Salat (which means prayer) from the excerpt.
- <https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Seal-of-Prophets-Vol-1.pdf> Pg 38 Pdf page 62

Slide 14 of 19 - Hadith - The sayings of Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Hadith refers to recorded sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and therefore an important source of authority in Islam.
- Muslims are commanded to be very careful with presenting examples and accepting reports as authentic. The Holy Qur'an guides: 'O ye who believe! if an unrighteous person brings you any news, ascertain the correctness of the report fully, lest you harm a people in ignorance, and then become repentant for what you have done' -The Holy Qur'an Chapter 49 verse 7

- “A reason sufficient to determine an individual’s dishonesty is that he begins forwarding the narrations he hears without investigation.” – Book of Hadith: Muslim
- The most famous collections of narrations are compiled in the books of the scholars Bukhari and Muslim.
- The best collectors were so meticulous in analysing Hadith that they would only deem a very small number to be certain and authentic enough to include in their collections. It is recorded that a teacher of Imam Bukhari named Yahya bin Main possessed 600,000 hadith in his personal collection. As such Bukhari had at least 600,000 sayings available to him, yet only deemed 4,000 worthy of inclusion in his final collection.
- There are many other weaker sources and categories of Hadith.
- There are Hadith on all matters pertinent to the lives of a Muslim e.g. cleanliness, treatment of others, prayers, modest dress, rituals at birth and death
- Muslim children are encouraged to learn and practise Hadith from a young age. Below are some Hadith that many Muslim children will be familiar with:
 - 1) ‘One who is not grateful to mankind is not grateful to Allah’. (Tirmidhi)
 - 2) ‘Verily deeds are [judged] by intentions and for everyone is a reward, according to his intention’. (Bukhari)
 - 3) "Whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement should not put his neighbour to inconvenience. Whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement should treat his guests with respect. Whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement should only say that which is good or else remain quiet." (Bukhari)

(B) Ideas and insights

- Refer to the Task on the next slide (Slide 15).

Slide 15 of 19 – Task

- Make a link with students, have them whisper a message to each other- is it easy to get the complete message? What factors determine how easy/difficult it is to convey a message accurately?

Slide 16 of 19 - What is a chain of narration in a Hadith?

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Each Hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} would be tested for its authenticity by the using the following methods:
 - (i) The narration should not be contradictory to any reliable and authentic historical record. In accordance with this principle any narration which contradicts the Holy Qur’an, must be disregarded.
 - (ii) The narration should not clash with any evidently proven fact.
 - (iii) The narration should not be contradictory to any narration of greater authenticity.

- (iv) The narration should not be of an incident which, if true, should have a greater number of people to testify to it, yet only one narrator exists; and
- (v) The narration should not have such elements as can be negated or considered ambiguous by common sense.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Suggested Task for Students: Imagine you are a news reporter and have been asked to report on an incident. What factors would you need to consider to determine the true facts of the incident? What questions would you ask/information would you need? Discuss in pairs/write down a list/draw a mind map/share with the class.

Slide 17 of 19 - Hadith - Conditions of reliable narration

(A) Knowledge and understanding

- Each hadith collected by the early scholars was expected to contain a complete chain of narration which linked the final narrator directly to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The *muhaddithin* (a person dedicated to the preservation and analysis of any report directly from or related to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}) would test the chain by the following method:
 1. The narrator should be well-known.
 2. The narrator should be truthful in speech and honest.
 3. The narrator should possess the ability to comprehend and rationalise.
 4. The narrator should possess a sound memory.
 5. The narrator should not be one to habitually exaggerate, summarise or sway original reports in any way.
 6. The narrator should not have a personal interest in the narration that is related, lest one may categorise the narrator as biased.
 7. The encounter of two narrators who come after one another must be acceptable, based on their time periods and circumstances.
 8. All the links of the narration should be fully preserved, and no narrator should be missing from the top, middle or bottom.
 9. As per the above-mentioned characteristics, the solidity of any narration increases with an increase in the credibility and trustworthiness of its narrators.
 10. In the same manner, the strength and authenticity of a narration multiplies as the number of credible narrators increases.

(B) Ideas and insights

- Refer to the task on the next slide (Slide 18)

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| Slide 18 of 19 – Task |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 1: The Holy Qur’an is the primary source of guidance for Muslims, can you explain why? Recap that Muslims believe that The Holy Qur’an is the direct, unaltered word of Allah and thus the primary source of guidance. • Question 2: Can you recall the conditions needed for a reliable narration? • Recap that such conditions include ensuring the trustworthiness and reliability of the narrators and that there were no missing links in the chain of narration. Most importantly, The Holy Qur’an must not be contradicted. |
| Slide 19 of 19 – Topic Recap – Test Your Knowledge Quiz |
| <p>Further Information on this topic can be found in the following resources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.alislam.org/library/books/Seal-of-Prophets-Vol-1.pdf 2. https://www.alislam.org/quran/app/ |
| <p>Notes - After saying/writing the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, as a sign of respect, Muslims say or write ‘peace and blessings of Allah be upon him’. The words ‘pbuh’ are used throughout this presentation to represent this phrase.</p> |