



Validation of the Hadiths Referring to Women as Playthings (*Lu‘bah*)

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Abstract

"Human Identity," as the most important dimension of human existence, has been emphasized by the Holy Qur'an for both sexes (men and women). However, in some narrations, women are described as playthings for men, which convey the notion of women's sexual instrumental identity. This article, using a descriptive-analytical method, examines the narrations related to the notion of women as "Playthings" from both chain-of-transmission (*Isnād*) and textual perspectives. The study concludes that, from the standpoint of transmission, three narrations lack a chain of transmission, and only two possess a reliable chain. A content analysis of the narrations

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referring to women as playthings also shows that the notion of women having merely an instrumental identity contradicts the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Contextual analysis of the related narrations further indicates that these narrations were issued with the aim of supporting women and safeguarding them through their husbands. In these narrations, women's possession of sexual attractiveness and men's inclination toward them are specifically highlighted and expressed through the term "Plaything." The reference to women as a "Plaything" in these narrations is intended to draw attention to the role of women within the family environment and indicates the necessity of women for creating tranquility and achieving other objectives of family formation. The importance of this research lies in correcting misconceptions about the role of women and emphasizing their true status in Islam.

Keywords: Woman, Sexual Identity, Being a Plaything, Chain Analysis, Textual Analysis.

Introduction

Throughout history, except for a short period among some early societies (Will Durant, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 40), women have faced a crisis of identity, and their human dignity has often been vulnerable to harm. According to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, non-civilized nations treated women in a manner similar to animals; women were required, whether willingly or unwillingly, to obey men, either their fathers or husbands, without question, and they possessed no independence of opinion or action in any of their affairs (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 34).

A general rule of inheritance among the people of the pre- Islamic era was that only men, who were the warriors of the tribe, would inherit, while women and children were deprived of inheritance (Baghdādī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 324).

After the advent of Islam, this perspective was reformed, and women emerged from a dependent and subordinate identity to attain an independent personality. Unfortunately, remnants of this outlook remained in the minds of men and became the basis for mistaken perceptions regarding women's identity (cf. Azizi, 1973 AD/1394 SH). Based on such erroneous views, even hadiths criticizing women, such as narrations about women's deficiency in intellect, women being a source of temptation, and similar themes, were fabricated, thereby reinforcing a degrading attitude toward women (Nikzad, 2004 AD/1383 SH).

Among the narrations related to women's identity and recorded in hadith sources are those in which women are described as "Playthings" and instruments of amusement for men. The apparent meaning of these narrations strips women of their independent human identity and portrays them as beings with merely an instrumental identity. This type of perspective directly subjects half of human society to an identity crisis and indirectly affects the other half through women's influence in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, thereby creating a major social challenge.

The research question of this study is: What degree of validity do these narrations possess from the perspectives of chain of transmission and textual content? And can they legitimately be interpreted as implying the instrumentalization of women?

1. Background of the Study

Given the importance of defending women's identity and rights, Islamic scholars throughout history have sought to respond to doubts and misconceptions related to women, and various studies have been written in this field. Among them are the following:

- The article "A Group of Weak and Fabricated Hadiths and Their Effect on Distorting the Image of Muslim Women," authored by *Nihād 'Ubayd 'Abd al-Ḥalīm*, published in the Journal of the University of *Shāriq* for *Shar'īyyah* and Human Sciences (2006 AD). This study discusses the impact of weak and fabricated hadiths concerning women and their role in distorting the image of Muslim women. In contrast, the present study specifically focuses on narrations describing women as "Playthings" and critiques them through both chain-of-transmission and content analysis.
- The article "An Examination of Hadiths Prohibiting Consultation with Women in Sunni and Shi'i Hadith Texts," authored by Qasem Bostani, published in the scholarly-promotional quarterly *Shi'a Women Arguments*, no. 22, 2009 AD/1388 SH. This article evaluates hadiths concerning the prohibition of consulting women in Sunni and Shi'i sources from the perspectives of transmission and implication, concluding that they cannot be relied upon to prohibit consultation with women. In contrast, the present article examines narrations describing women as "Playthings" from both textual and chain-of-transmission perspectives.
- The article "The Hadith Collections of Both Sunni and Shi'i Traditions and the Proposition of Women's Deficiency in Intellect,"

written by Ali Rad and Zeynab Majlesi Rad and published in the Journal of Hadith Studies of the Seminary in 2013 AD/1392 SH, no. 7, also focuses on narrations concerning women's alleged deficiency in intellect. The authors examine the various forms of these narrations and identify the problems affecting them in terms of sources and chains of transmission. In contrast, the present study investigates narrations describing women as "Playthings" through both chain-of-transmission and textual analysis.

- The article "Validation of the Narrations Concerning Women as Temptation (*Fitnah*)," by Ali Rad and Zeynab Majlesi Rad, published in the scholarly journal *Hadith Sciences* in 2014 AD/1393 SH, no. 71, evaluates narrations portraying women as temptation from the perspectives of frequency, historical development, discourse analysis of issuance, source and chain validation, semantic criticism, and contradiction with other narrations. The findings of this research indicate that considering women as a "*Fitnah*" in these narrations does not equate to degrading women or portraying them as inauspicious; rather, the narrations merely point to the sensitivity of interactions with women and the degree to which men may be influenced by them.
- The article "A Reflection on the Hadiths of Women's Deficiency in Intellect," written by Mahdi Mehrizi and published in *Hadith Sciences*, no. 4, 1997 AD/1376 SH, argues, by pointing out the contradiction of these narrations with the Qur'an, rational self-evidence, and historical evidence, that such narrations are unsuitable as the basis for a theological or anthropological theory about

women. This is due to ambiguity in the concept of "Intellect," conflicting interpretations regarding "Deficiency in intellect," practical contradiction with abundant evidence of women's rationality, and the limited authority of solitary reports in matters of doctrine and anthropology.

- The article "Legitimizing Violence Against Women in Fabricated Hadiths," written by Abbas Nikzad and published in *Strategic Studies on Women*, no. 23, 2004 AD/1383 SH, selectively examines certain narrations, such as those concerning corporal punishment, the creation of woman from man, women as instruments of Satan's deception, prohibition of women's education, and confinement to the home, which are flawed both in transmission and meaning, and demonstrates their lack of authenticity.
- The article "A Chain and Content Analysis of the Hadith "Woman is Entirely Evil," by Maryam Modameli and Zahra Pir Balaei, published in *Hadith Sciences*, no. 4, 2021 AD/1400 SH, concludes that the weakness of the chains of transmission, the incompatibility of the hadith with the Qur'an and other narrations, and its contradiction with the practical conduct of the impeccable Imams (AS) prevent attributing this hadith to Imam Ali (AS).

A review of the above studies demonstrates that each has validated certain narrations related to women; however, no research has yet been conducted specifically on the notion of women as "Playthings" in hadith literature, nor have the related narrations been systematically examined. This article therefore seeks, through chain-of-transmission

200 and textual analysis of the relevant narrations, to investigate whether

these narrations genuinely originated from the Infallibles and, if authentic, to clarify the intended meaning behind describing women as "Playthings."

2. Introduction of the Narrations Referring to Women as "Playthings"

The hadiths in which women are described as "Playthings" include the following:

1) "Woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should preserve her" (Ṭabrisī, 1995 AD/1412 AH: 219);

2) "Woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should not mistreat her" (Rāwandī Kāshānī: 36; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 100, 250);

3) "Woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should care for her" (Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 249; Ibn Ash'ath, n.d.: 91);

4) "Woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should protect her" (Laythī Wāsiṭī, n.d.: 177; Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 255; Tamīmī Āmidī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 255);

5) "Woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 11, 169; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 788; Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 167; Burūjirdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 428);

6) "I asked *Abū 'Abdillāh* (AS) what is permissible for a man from a woman while she is menstruating. He replied: "Everything except the private part." Then he said: "Woman is but a man's plaything" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 535; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1406, vol. 22, p. 736; Ḥurr

‘Āmilī, 1409, vol. 2, p. 32; Majlisī, 1404, vol. 20, p. 382);

7) "I wrote to *Riḍā* (AS) concerning a similar matter, and the response came: "You asked about one who approaches a female servant from behind. Woman is a plaything, so she should not be harmed, and she is a field [of cultivation], as ..." (Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 144);

8) "From *Abū ‘Abdillāh* (AS): "There is no harm in a man sleeping between two female slaves or two free women. Indeed, your women are like playthings" (Kulaynī, *ibid*: 5, 560; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 727; Ṭūsī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 7, 486; Burūjirdī, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 25, 436);

9) "Woman is her husband’s plaything; if he is able to treat his plaything well, he should do so." And *‘Āyishah* said: "Woman is but a man’s plaything, so a man should treat his plaything kindly." (Shāfi‘ī, 2000 AD/1417 AH: 1, 92; Daylamī Hamadhānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 4, 234)

3. Evaluation of the Hadiths

In this section, the above narrations will be analyzed from both chain of transmission and textual perspectives using a historical approach.

3-1. Evaluation of the Chains of Transmission

The hadith "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should protect her" is mentioned only in the book "*Makārim al-Akhlāq*." This work was authored by *Raḍī al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Faḍl Ṭabrisī*, a scholar of the sixth century AH. In this book, the chains of transmission of the hadiths are not provided. Therefore, the

202 aforementioned hadith lacks a chain of transmission and cannot be

evaluated from the standpoint of *Isnād* criticism.

The hadith "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should have intercourse with her" also lacks a complete chain of transmission. This narration appears in the book "*al-Nawādir Rāwandī*," and Allamah *Majlisī* later transmitted it from that book in "*Biḥār al-Anwār*." Accordingly, this hadith likewise cannot be subjected to *Isnād* evaluation.

The hadith "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should treat her well" is reported only in the book "*al-Ja'fariyāt*." *Muḥaddith Nūrī* also transmitted it in "*Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*" with the same chain as found in "*al-Ja'fariyāt*." Its chain of transmission is as follows:

"*ʿAbdullāh* informed us; *Muḥammad* informed us; *Mūsā* narrated to me; he said: "My father narrated to us from his father, from his grandfather *Ja'far ibn Muḥammad*, from his father, from his grandfather *ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn*, from his father, from *ʿAlī* (AS), who said: The Messenger of God said ..."

In this chain, the "*Muḥammad*" referred to is *Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath*, and the "*Mūsā*" from whom *Ash'ath* narrates is a grandson of Imam *Kāẓim* (AS). The "My father (*Abī*)" mentioned in the chain refers to *Ismā'il*, the son of Imam *Kāẓim*.

It should be noted that there is disagreement among Islamic scholars regarding the reliability of the book "*al-Ja'fariyāt*." Some scholars consider it unreliable (*Mūsawī Khu'ī*, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 1, 226; *Khānsārī*, 1976 AD/1355 SH: 11, 59; *Najafī*, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 21, 398), while others regard it as reliable (*Tehrani*, 1982 AD/1403

AH: 2, 109; Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 15; Ḥā'irī, n.d.: 880; Mousavi Khomeini, n.d.: 1, 294). Makarem Shirazi considers the narrations of this book, when taken alone, to lack probative value, though he accepts their use as corroborative evidence (Makarem Shirazi, 2003 AD/1424: 6, 68). According to some others, the narrations of this book are reliable only when they are also transmitted in "*al-Nawādir*" or other early works (Davari, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 2, 24). Examining the arguments of these scholars, however, falls outside the scope of this article.

The "*ʿAbdullāh*" mentioned at the beginning of the chain is not clearly identifiable and is therefore considered unknown status.

From the perspective of Sunni *Rijāl* scholars, *Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ashʿath* has been accused of transmitting rejected narrations (Ibn Jawzī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 3, 97), and some have even considered all the hadiths in his book to be fabricated (Ṭarābulusī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 247). *Najāshī* regarded him as trustworthy and noted that he authored a book concerning *Ḥajj* (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 379). If the general authentication of the narrators appearing in the book "*Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*" is accepted, then this narrator would also be considered generally authenticated due to his presence in the chains of transmission of that book.

Regarding *Mūsā ibn Ismāʿīl*, no specific authentication is mentioned in the *Rijāl* works; however, he too possesses general authentication because he appears in the chains of transmission of "*Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*," to the extent that Allamah *Khuʿī* considered him

204 reliable for this reason (Khuʿī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 5, 361).

Najāshī states that *Ismā'īl*, the son of Imam *Kāẓim*, was the author of a book (*Najāshī*, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 26), and *Qahpā'ī* regarded him as one of the scholars of the Imāmiyya (*Qahpā'ī*, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 1, 224). *Baḥr al-'Ulūm* also explicitly affirmed his knowledge, virtue, and trustworthiness (*Baḥr al-'Ulūm*, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 2, 120). Therefore, in the chain of this narration there is one narrator of unknown status, two narrators considered reliable through general authentication, and one narrator who is praised. Consequently, even if the book itself were assumed to be reliable, the chain of this narration would still be regarded as unknown and judged weak due to the unidentified *ʿAbdullāh*. If general authentications are not accepted, then, similar to the view of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, the absence of specific authentication for *Ismā'īl*, *Mūsā*, and the narrator who transmits from him (*Ibn Ash'ath*) would lead us to consider the narrations of this book unreliable (*Makarem Shirazi*, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 1, 25).

The hadith "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should cover her" has been transmitted from Imam *ʿAlī* (AS) without mentioning any chain of transmission. No source provides a complete chain for this narration.

The hadith "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her" first appears in the book "*al-Kāfī*." Later, *Fayḍ Kāshānī* and *Shaykh Ḥurr ʿĀmilī* also cited this hadith from "*al-Kāfī*."

This hadith has the following chain of transmission:

"*ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm* from his father from *al-Nawfalī* from from *Abū ʿAbdullāh* (AS), who said: "The Messenger of God said ..."

According to the explicit statements of *Rijāl* scholars, *ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm* was trustworthy, reliable in transmission, dependable, sound in doctrine, and one of the prominent teachers of *Shaykh Kulaynī* (Baṣrī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 5, 35).

Ibrāhīm, the father of *ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm*, was also among the *Mashāyikh al-Ijāzah* (authorities who granted transmission licenses) and was the first person to disseminate the hadith of *Kūfa* in Qum (Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 16). He is described as prolific in narration, possessing wide transmission routes, accurate in reporting, and accepted in hadith (Baḥr al-ʿUlūm al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1734 AD/1155 AH: 1, 424).

An examination of *al-Nawfalī* in the books of *Rijāl* indicates that his condition has been described as good, portraying him as a hadith transmitter whose narrations are acceptable (Borūjerdī, 1979 AD/1410 AH: 1, 337; 1975 AD/1406 AH: 1, 421). However, *Najāshī* and *Allamah Ḥillī* accused him of exaggeration (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 38; Allamah Ḥillī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 216).

There is also disagreement regarding the reliability of *al-Sukūnī*. Sunni scholars of *Rijāl* have strongly weakened him in their biographical works. *Ibn Ḥibbān* referred to him as a "Deceptive Shaykh," (Bustī, 1976 AD/1396 AH: 1, 129) while others described him as a narrator whose reports are rejected (Jurjānī, 1978 AD/1409 AH: 1, 314; Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 1, 261; Dhahabī, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 1, 250).

Shiʿi *Rijāl* scholars have also differed regarding him. Some have
206 described him as "An Imami hadith transmitter, trustworthy, of great

standing, virtuous and learned," (Shabistarī, ibid: 1, 152), while others have weakened him (Ḥillī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 2, 31; Kalbāsī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 2, 31).

Shaykh Ṭūsī and *Ibn Idrīs* considered him to be Sunni in doctrine (Ṭūsī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 149; Ibn Idrīs, 1979 AD/1410 AH: 3, 290). In a recent study, Akbari and Qandehari concluded that *Shaykh Ṭūsī*'s opinion is correct and that *Sukūnī* was indeed Sunni in his doctrinal affiliation (Akbari and Qandehari, 2021 AD/1400 SH).

In the book "*al-Kunā wa al-Alqāb*," however, the accusation of *Sukūnī*'s weakness is entirely rejected (Qummī, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 73, 12), and in "*Buḥūth fī Fiqh al-Rijāl*" arguments have been presented for his reliability (Makkī 'Āmilī, n.d.: 1, 170).

Imam Khomeini, in "*Kitāb al-Ṭahārah*," after noting that scholars such as Allamah *Majlisī* considered *Nawfalī* to be unknown, states that after examining the narrations of *Sukūnī* from *Nawfalī*, comparing them, and considering the practice of the scholars in acting upon their narrations, the stronger view is the reliability of both *Nawfalī* and *Sukūnī* (Mousavi Khomeini, n.d.: 2, 16).

According to recent research, the content and style of *Sukūnī*'s narrations, the fact that the Imams did not practice dissimulation in transmitting hadith to him, the large number of trustworthy Shi'i narrators, some of whom are counted among the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'*, who narrate from him, and the abundance and acceptance of narrations transmitted through him in major hadith compilations and their influence on Shi'i legal sources are among the indicators and evidences supporting both his Imami affiliation and his reliability

(Naeini Manouchehri and Hakim, 2016 AD/1396 SH). It should also be noted that according to *Majlisī*'s criteria in "*Mir'āt al-'Uqūl*," this hadith is considered correct (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 20, 323).

Hadith no. 6: "I asked *Abū 'Abdillāh* (AS): "What is lawful for a man from a woman while she is menstruating?" He replied: "Everything except the private part." Then he said: "Indeed, a woman is a man's plaything."

This narration is recorded in the books "*al-Wāfi*, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*," and "*Mir'āt al-'Uqūl*." All of them transmit it from "*Kāfi*" with the chain:

"*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā* from *Salamah ibn al-Khaṭṭāb* from *Alī ibn al-Ḥasan* from *Muḥammad ibn Ziyād* from *Abān ibn 'Uthmān* and *al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī Yūsuf* from *Abd al-Malik ibn 'Amr*."

The "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā*" referred to here is "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-'Atṭār*," who is among the trustworthy narrators of the Imami community. *Najāshī* praised him with the phrase: "The shaykh of our companions in his time, trustworthy." (*Najāshī*, ibid: 353) In his time he was the leading figure among our companions and a reliable individual.

Salamah ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is recorded in *Rijāl* works under the name *Abū al-Faḍl al-Barāwustānī al-Azḍurqānī*. Shaykh *Ṭūsī* merely mentioned his books without indicating either authentication or criticism (*Ṭūsī*, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 200). *Ibn Ghaḍā'irī* weakened him, and later *Rijāl* scholars likewise referred to the weakness of his hadith transmissions in their works: "He was weak in his hadith; he had several books ..." (Tafreshi, n.d.: 2, 292; Mūsawī Khu'ī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 9, 148; Burūjirdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 223; Ḥillī,

The "*Alī ibn al-Ḥasan*" mentioned in the chain refers to *Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭāṭarī*, who was among the companions of Imam *Kāẓim* (AS). *Ṭāṭarī* was a jurist, a hadith transmitter, and one of the prominent and well-known figures of the *Wāqifiyya*. His narrations are considered reliable (Najāshī, n.d.: 255).

Muḥammad ibn Zīyād is the same as *Ibn Abī 'Umayr*, who was trustworthy, the most reliable and most ascetic person of his time, and unparalleled in all matters in his era (Shaykh Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 86).

Abān ibn 'Uthmān was among the companions of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) and Imam *Kāẓim* (AS) (Qahpā'ī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 25; Mūsawī Khu'ī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 157). He was one of the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'* and is considered trustworthy (Ibn Dāwūd, n.d.: 12). *Khu'ī* rejected the attribution of the *Nāwūsīyya* sect to him (Najāshī, ibid: 13; Qahpā'ī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 25) on the grounds that he was among the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmā'* (Khu'ī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 161).

Abd al-Malik ibn 'Amr is trustworthy (Ibn Dāwūd, n.d.: 1, 126), Arab, Kufan, and among the companions of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (Mūsawī Khu'ī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 12, 16). Therefore, the chain of this narration is weak due to the presence of *Salamah ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*.

The hadith: "I wrote to *Riḍā* (AS) concerning a similar matter, and the reply came: "You asked about one who approaches a slave-girl in her anus, and a woman is a plaything, so she must not be harmed, and she is a *ḥarth*, as ..." is a letter written by *al-Faṭḥ ibn Yazīd al-Jurjānī* to Imam *Riḍā* (AS). This narration appears in *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī* and was later cited in *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* from that book. The chain of this

narration is *Mursal* (lacking a complete chain).

Regarding *al-Fath ibn Yazīd al-Jurjānī*, no explicit praise or criticism has been reported by *Rijāl* scholars. *Ibn Ghaḍā'irī* described him as unknown (*Ibn Ghaḍā'irī*, ibid: 1, 84), while *Shaykh Ṭūsī* mentioned that he authored a book (*Ṭūsī*, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 206), which *Najāshī* named "*al-Masā'il*." Allamah *Hillī* referred to the (disagreement) concerning whether *al-Masā'il* should be attributed to *Abul Ḥasan al-Riḍā* (AS) or *Abul Ḥasan al-Hādī* (AS) (*Hillī*, n.d.: 247).

The hadith: "He said: There is no problem if a man sleeps between two slave women or two free women; indeed, your women are like playthings" is recorded in "*Kāfī*" with the chain:

The chain "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā from Ghiyāth ibn Ibrāhīm from Abū 'Abd Allāh*" is reported in "*al-Kāfī*," (*Kulaynī*, ibid: 5, 560) and the same narration with the same chain has been cited in other books from "*al-Kāfī*." (*Ṭūsī*, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 7, 486; *Fayḍ Kāshānī*, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 727; *Burūjirdī*, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 25, 436)

The "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā*" mentioned at the beginning of the chain refers to *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-'Aṭṭār al-Qummī*, since he belongs to the generation of *Kulaynī*'s teachers. *Najāshī* writes about him: "He was the leading scholar of our companions in his time; a trustworthy figure, distinguished, and prolific in hadith transmission." (*Najāshī*, ibid: 250)

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad: In "*Kāfī*," when the name "*Aḥmad*"
210 appears in the chain, it can usually refer to one of two individuals:

- 1) *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd al-Barqī*;
- 2) *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā Ashʿarī*.

However, considering the slight chronological differences and the variations that sometimes exist between the teachers and students of these two figures, in this narration the intended person is *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā Ashʿarī*, who was among the leading scholars of the Imami community. He was the chief and foremost authority of the people of Qum in his time. He met Imam *Riḍā* (AS), Imam *Jawād* (AS), and Imam *Hādī* (AS), and authored numerous books (Ḥillī, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 13).

The second *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā* refers to *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Khazzāz*, who narrates from *Ghīyāth ibn Ibrāhīm*. He was from Kufa, considered reliable and transmitted narrations from Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (Najāshī, ibid: 359).

Ghīyāth ibn Ibrāhīm: "According to *Najāshī*, he was trustworthy (Najāshī, ibid: 305), although *Shaykh Ṭūsī* described him as belonging to the Batari sect (Ṭūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH). In his advanced jurisprudence lectures, Professor Abedi also cited evidence indicating that he adhered to the Batari doctrine (Abedi, 2020 AD/1399 SH).

However, it should be noted that most of *Ghīyāth*'s narrations from Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) refer to him with the title "*Abū ʿAbdillāh*." As for why in some narrations he refers to him simply as "*Ja far*," Shubayri Zanjani explains that adherence to specific honorific expressions had not yet become firmly established during that period. Even up to the time of *Shaykh Ṭūsī*, narrators often mentioned the blessed name of the Imam without adding the phrase "Peace be upon him." In one

manuscript of *Tahdhīb* that was compared with the original copy, many instances of "Peace be upon him." had been omitted (Shubayri Zanjani, session 10).

The hadith "A woman is her husband's plaything; if he is able to treat his plaything well, he should do so" is not recorded in any Shi'i hadith sources. In Sunni sources, it appears only in the book "*al-Fawā'id al-Shahīr bil Ghaylāniyyāt*" with the following chain of transmission:

"*Yusr ibn Anas Abul Khayr from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yazīd ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Yazīd ibn Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Farawī from 'Isā ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī from his father from his grandfather from the father of his grandfather from 'Alī that the Prophet (PBUH) said...*"

The hadith is also recorded in "*al-Firdaws bi Ma'thūr al-Khiṭāb*" without mentioning the chain of transmission, attributed to Imam 'Alī (AS).

It should be noted that due to the weakness of its chain, this narration has been classified in books on fabricated hadith as a fabricated report (Ibn Jawzī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 3, 106; Suyūṭī, n.d.: 2, 160; Fattanī Hindī, n.d.: 1, 1421; Kinānī, 1981: 2, 226). However, since the authors of these books often rejected narrations and labeled them fabricated merely because of weak narrators, it is not possible to decisively declare this narration fabricated solely based on their judgments. There is a difference between a fabricated and a weak hadith, and mere weakness does not necessarily imply fabrication. Therefore, the chain of this narration must be evaluated.

212 "*Yusr ibn Anas Abū al-Khayr*" is praised in Sunni biographical

works and described as trustworthy (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, n.d.: 14, 361; al-ʿAnsī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 3, 400).

ʿĪsā ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī was a Shiʿi hadith transmitter and among the narrators from Imam Ṣādiq (AS) (Ṭūsī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 259). Allamah Ḥillī also noted that he held a special position with Imam Ṣādiq (AS) (Ḥillī, 1961 AD/1381 SH: 123). However, Sunni *Rijāl* scholars consider him weak (Ibn Jawzī, 1998 AD/1415 AH: 3, 106). It has been reported about him that he transmitted fabricated hadiths from his father from his forefathers, and therefore relying upon him is not valid. In "*Tadhkirat al-Mawḍūʿāt*" (Fattanī al-Hindī, n.d.: 1, 1421), without mentioning the specific narrators in the chain, it is stated that a liar and fabricator exists in the chain of this hadith (Kinānī, 1981: 2, 226).

Within this chain, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yazīd is considered weak (Zahedi Bakestani, n.d.: 1, 47). In *Tārīkh Baghdād*, nothing is said about his reliability; only his narrators and his place of residence (Baghdad) are mentioned (Khaṭīb Baghdādī, n.d.: 5, 53).

Regarding *Ishāq ibn Muḥammad*, differing opinions exist: "Some consider him weak (Ḥanafī, 1422 AH, 2:109), while others regard him as truthful and trustworthy." (Suyūṭī, 1969 AD/1389 SH: 1, 17; Bustī, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 72)

In "*Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*," regarding the differences of opinion among *Rijāl* scholars about this person, it is stated: "Abū Ḥātim said: "He was truthful ... and on another occasion he said: "He is inconsistent." Ibn Ḥibbān mentioned him in his book "*al-Thiqat*." Nasāʾī said: "Abandoned." Dārquṭnī said: "Weak." (Ibn Ḥajar

‘Asqalānī, 1896 AD/1326 AH: 3, 240)

Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is described as:

- "Trustworthy" (Ḥanafī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 283),
- "Among the most virtuous of his household" (Bustī, 1959: 1, 62),
- "Possessing abundant knowledge and piety" (Ibn Khallikān, n.d.: 4, 169).

It should be noted that in some books, the aforementioned statement is recorded as a saying of ‘Āyisha (Ṭarhūnī, 1, 233). Therefore, it is possible that the phrase was originally the statement of ‘Āyisha and was intentionally or unintentionally attributed to the Prophet (PBUH).

Given the close similarity in wording among the phrases: "*Falyaṣunhā*, *Falyubḍi hā*, *Falyuṣni hā*, *Falyughatṭihā*, *Falā Yuḍayyi hā*" in the aforementioned narrations, it is possible that textual corruption occurred. Considering the authority and antiquity of "*Kāfī*," the original wording may have been:

"Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her."

This wording first appears in "*Kāfī*" (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 11, 169), and *Fayḍ Kāshānī* and Shaykh Ḥurr ‘Āmilī have transmitted it from "*al-Kāfī*" (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 788; Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 167).

3-2. Textual Analysis of the Hadiths

In this section, the narrations are examined from a textual perspective.

3-2-1. The Meaning of the Word "*Lu bah*" (Plaything)

214 For textual analysis of these hadiths, it is first necessary to clarify the

meaning of "*Lu'bah*." The word derives from the root (*l- 'b*). The related word "*al-Lu'āb*" originally means "Flowing Saliva," referring to something that comes forth from the mouth (Tāj al-'Arūs, 2, 405; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 739).

The expression "*La'iba Fulān*" (so-and-so played) is used when someone performs an act without a proper purpose or sound objective (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 741). The term has been defined as:

- Play (Qarashī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 7, 191),
- A statement or act not intended for any beneficial purpose and not desired by a rational person (Muṣṭafawī, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 10, 197),
- The opposite of seriousness (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 739).

Ibn Manẓūr also emphasizes the element of repetition in this action (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 739). According to Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the word "*La'ib*" refers to an ordered or structured form of play, in which both participants are familiar with its framework, similar to how children engage in play to attain an imaginary goal (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 19, 288).

Thus, the concept of "*La'ib*" contains the following elements:

- Repetitiveness,
- Lack of rational or beneficial purpose,
- Transience and impermanence,
- Absence of real substance,
- A metaphorical (rather than literal) dimension.

3-2-2. The Semantic Connotation of the Word "*Lu'bah*"

In the Noble Qur'an, this word, along with its nominal and verbal derivatives, is generally mentioned in a blameworthy context. Below

are selected examples in both verbal and nominal forms:

- "And if you ask them, they will surely say: "We were only conversing and playing." Say: "Was it Allah and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking?" (al-Tawbah: 65)
- "So leave them to engage in vain talk and play until they meet their Day which they are promised." (al-Zukhruf: 83)
- "Say: Allah, then leave them in their vain discourse, playing." (al-An'ām: 91)
- "And this worldly life is nothing but diversion and play." (al-'Ankabūt: 64)
- "Do not take those who have taken your religion in mockery and play..." (al-Mā'idah: 57)

A contextual examination of these noble verses, as well as the association of the word "*Laʿb*" with terms such as "Mockery," "Diversion," and "Vain discourse," shows that in these verses "Play" is presented as something irrational and blameworthy.

Accordingly, if in these narrations a woman is described as an instrument of play, this could be interpreted as a form of disrespect toward her and as undermining her identity, both by implying that she is a source of corruption and by reducing her to an instrumental role.

However, examining hadith sources shows that, unlike the Qur'anic usage, "Play" (*Laʿb*) does not always carry a negative connotation in every context. In some cases, it is not only unblameworthy but may even be regarded as commendable.

For example:

- 216** - The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have encouraged recreation, saying:

"Engage in amusement and play, for I dislike harshness to be seen in your religion." (Bayhaqī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 5, 247)

- In some narrations, playful interaction with one's wife is described as a right and as a form of permissible recreation for a believer (Shaykh Mufīd, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 1, 161; Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 50).
- It is even reported that a man's playful intimacy with his wife is praiseworthy and that angels are present during it (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 554).

Nevertheless, even in such cases, a person should not become so absorbed in amusement and play that he loses his dignity or undermines his character. Rather, moderation must be observed (Ṭarhūnī, *ibid*: 1, 233).

These narrations demonstrate that "*Lahw*" (diversion) and "*La' b*" (play) do not always carry a negative evaluative meaning.

Activities such as: "Enjoying one's spouse, conversing with fellow believers, performing the night prayer, horse training and archery," have been described as forms of diversion or play. Outwardly, they may resemble recreation and bring pleasure to human nature. However, due to their purposefulness and benefit, such as preparing for defense against enemies (horse training and archery), attaining closeness to God (night prayer), fostering social bonds (conversation with fellow believers), fulfilling emotional and sexual needs, and strengthening the family (playful intimacy), they are considered legitimate and even recommended.

Therefore, play and diversion, when they function as means that

assist in spiritual growth and human flourishing, are neither forbidden nor blameworthy; indeed, they may even be praiseworthy.

Considering the above narrations, along with other narrations of similar content cited as supporting evidence, it can be concluded that play and amusement (*La'b* and *Lahw*) are not inherently blameworthy in all matters, and with respect to women they do not necessarily carry a negative connotation that would support the hypothesis of demeaning women's identity.

After setting aside this hypothesis, however, the notion of women having an instrumental identity still remains and therefore requires further analysis.

3-2-3. Examining the Idea that Women Are "Playthings"

In this section, the concept of women being described as playthings is examined. For this purpose, the analysis draws upon Qur'anic verses, hadith narrations, and the internal context of the narrations themselves.

3-2-3-1. The Conflict between the "Plaything" Concept and the Qur'anic View of Women

In textual and jurisprudential analysis of hadith, the first criterion is conformity with the Qur'an. According to narrations from the impeccable Imams (AS), any report that contradicts the Qur'an must be set aside (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 69). Therefore, these narrations should be compared with the general spirit of the Qur'an.

When comparing this concept with Qur'anic verses, several
218 conflicts emerge.

3-2-3-2. The Conflict Between the Instrumental View of Women and the Qur'anic Description of Women

An examination of the Qur'an shows that no verse refers to women with the term "Plaything" (*Lu'bah*). Instead, the Qur'an describes women using expressions such as:

- "Your wives are a tilth for you; so come to your tilth however you wish..." (al-Baqarah: 223);
- "And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find tranquility in them..." (al-Rūm: 21).

Both verses indicate the independent identity of women and their essential role within the family. The expressions used in these verses are meaningful in light of the important purposes of marriage.

Marriage between a man and a woman has multiple aims for both partners, such as satisfying sexual needs, attaining psychological tranquility, and the development and completion of one's personality. Thus, women are not to be regarded merely as tools through which men achieve these goals. A one-dimensional interpretation of these aims solely for men is inconsistent with the Islamic understanding of marriage.

The phrase "He created for you from yourselves" indicates that men and women share the same human identity.

The tranquility mentioned in the verse is also mutual: "Both men and women can attain peace and stability alongside one another. A woman possesses an identity through which she can bring tranquility to her husband while at the same time attaining tranquility herself through their companionship."

Exegetes have explained this verse as referring to the mutual affection and companionship between spouses (Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 8, 470; Jazāyirī, 2008 AD/1388 SH: 4, 11). Makarem Shirazi, emphasizing the complementary nature of men and women, interprets tranquility here as the flourishing, vitality, and development of both sexes (Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 16, 391).

Thus, according to the views of these commentators, the verse refers to both genders (men and women), not exclusively to men. According to *Ālūsī*, men are mentioned in the verse only due to the rhetorical convention of *Taghlīb* (addressing the dominant group in speech) (*Ālūsī*, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 11, 31).

Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyah critiques the interpreter who defines "Affection" in the verse as sexual intercourse and "Mercy" as children, rejecting this interpretation. Instead, he identifies these terms as referring to mutual love and kindness, justice, and equality (Mughnīyah, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 6, 126).

In the verse: "Your wives are a tilth for you; so come to your tilth however you wish...", (al-Baqarah: 223) women are metaphorically likened to cultivated land that sustains the continuation of humanity. In reality, the Qur'an seeks to emphasize the necessity of women in human society: "A woman is not merely a tool for satisfying male desire but a means for preserving human life and ensuring the survival of the species. This statement serves as a warning against those who view women as toys or instruments of lust." (Makarem Shirazi, 1995

3-2-3-3. The Conflict of This Notion with the Human Dignity of Women in the Qur'an

Describing women as "Playthings," a purposeless diversion, contradicts the overall spirit of the Qur'an, which upholds the dignity and honor of women. From God's perspective, the essence of humanity lies in the soul (al-Ḥijr: 29), and both women and men possess inherent dignity (al-Isrā': 70).

Neglecting a woman's individual independence and reducing her to an instrumental role is invalid, for the family, like its dependence on men and masculine roles, equally relies on women and feminine roles, motherhood, childbearing, managing the household, and companionship. According to the Qur'an, the criterion for superiority is piety (al-Ḥujurāt: 13), not gender; thus, men hold no inherent superiority over women.

3-2-3-4. The Contradiction between This Notion and Women's Independence and Agency in the Qur'an

Freedom and agency are the foundation for human development toward fulfilling the purpose of creation, a goal shared by both men and women. God has granted equal freedom and choice to both genders (al-Rūm: 30), without discrimination. The Qur'an addresses both men and women as responsible moral agents, commanding them to turn to the "Pure religion of your Lord," (al-Rūm: 30) a duty incumbent upon both.

In numerous verses, women are explicitly addressed alongside men as obligated to faith and righteous deeds (al-Tawbah: 71). God holds

every soul accountable for its actions, stating: "Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained." (al-Muddathir: 38) Women, like men, are granted the right to spiritual growth and perfection, and are described with attributes of excellence: "Obedient women, believing women, devout women, truthful women, patient women, humble women, charitable women, and chaste women." (al-Taḥrīm: 5)

The freedom of will and independence of action mentioned in the verse show that a woman is not a subsidiary or dependent being; rather, she possesses an independent identity. The verses of promise and warning addressed to women, just as they are to men, indicate women's independence in choosing the right path.

In the Qur'an, when God describes the qualities of believers, He places women and men side by side, assigns equal reward to both, and in other verses (al-Ḥadīd: 12-13; al-Ghāfir: 40) promises equal spiritual ranks for both in Paradise and Hell. Therefore, a woman cannot be regarded as having merely an instrumental identity.

3-2-3-5. Considering the Contextual Clues of the "Women as Playthings" Narrations in Clarifying Their Meaning

The contextual indications of the narrations that describe women as "Playthings," with the exception of the narration:

"A woman is her husband's plaything; if he is able to treat his plaything well, he should do so" and the report attributed to *Āyishah*:

"A woman is only a man's plaything, so a man should treat his plaything well," show that the intention behind referring to women as

222 playthings is not to demean them or deny their human identity. On the

contrary, in all these cases a form of support and protection for women is evident.

For example, in the hadith: "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should protect her."

The phrase "He should protect" instructs men to safeguard their wives. The term "*Yaṣunhā*," derived from the root (*ṣ-w-n*), means to preserve or protect (Ṭurayḥī, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 6, 274; Ṣa'īdī and Mūsā, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 2, 1366).

This narration aligns with another report: "Protecting a woman is more pleasant for her condition and more lasting for her beauty."

Both narrations point to the necessity of protecting and caring for women by their husbands. In the narration under discussion, the reason for protection (the woman being described as a plaything) is mentioned, while in the supporting narration the effects of protection (her comfort and the preservation of her beauty) are highlighted.

The juxtaposition of "Plaything" and "Protection" indicates that the narration is referring to a particular characteristic or function of women, rather than diminishing their worth. It is as if the statement means: since women are companions whose presence brings comfort and joy, it is necessary to protect and care for them.

Similarly, Javadi Amoli interprets the expression *Lu'bah* as referring to women's delicacy and sensitivity, writing: "The intention is that a woman is delicate and sensitive like a basil leaf; therefore, one must not allow this delicate petal to be neglected or harmed." (Javadi Amoli, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 338)

The context of the narration "Indeed, a woman is but a plaything; whoever takes her should protect her capital" draws men's attention to the idea that women are the capital of a man's life, which evokes the necessity of safeguarding one's capital. According to *Ṭurayḥī*, the term "*Biḍ*" (with kasra on the *bā*) refers to a portion of wealth (*Ṭurayḥī*, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 4, 300), while "*Biḍā'ah*" denotes a significant amount of property prepared for trade or storage (*Rāghib Iṣfahānī*, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 1, 279). Thus, according to the meaning conveyed by the hadith, just as a man protects his financial capital, he should regard a woman as the capital of his life and strive for her wellbeing and protection. Likewise, *Sadeqi Tehrani*, citing the hadith "Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her," emphasizes the necessity of a man safeguarding a woman (*Sadeqi Tehrani*, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 7, 38).

The context of the narration "Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should treat her well" instructs the husband to honor his wife and treat her kindly. This meaning corresponds with the Qur'anic verse "Then retain them in kindness" (*al-Baqarah*: 231) and with the narration "Whoever takes a wife should honor her." (*Ibn Ash'ath*, n.d.: 157; *Nūrī*, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 249) The phrase "Living together in kindness" implies a reciprocal relationship: according to the verse, men must treat women according to what is socially recognized as good, and women likewise should interact with men in the same manner (*Rashīd Riḍā*, n.d.: 4, 456).

The word "*Ṣun*" is used when someone produces or makes
224 something well, and the expression "*Rajulun Ṣun*" refers to a man

who possesses skill in crafting or making things (Ibn Fāris, n.d.: 3, 313). The term "*Iṣṭinā'*," the *Ifti'āl* form derived from "*Ṣanī'ah*," carries the meanings of gift, generosity, honor, and beneficence (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 8, 208). Therefore, from the phrase "*Fal Yuṣni'hā*" one may derive not only the meaning of protecting and attending to a woman, but also honoring her, showing beneficence, and treating her with kindness.

The juxtaposition of the expression "Woman as a plaything" with the obligation of kindness toward her indicates that a woman holds such a significant position within the family that the man is obliged to honor her. If a woman truly possessed merely an instrumental identity, there would be no need to command the man to treat her kindly; since she would be nothing more than a tool, a man could treat her however he wished.

The context of the narration "Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should cover her" indicates the necessity of covering, protecting, and safeguarding a woman. The word "*Fal Yughatṭihā*," derived from the root (*gh-t-y*), means to cover (Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 6, 2447) and also to protect or safeguard (Ḥusaynī Zabīdī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 20, 20). Like the previous narrations, this hadith conveys the concept of protecting women. It can be understood as aligned with the Qur'anic verse: "...They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them," (al-Baqarah: 187) which implies mutual covering and protection between spouses, as well as the verse: "O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire..." (al-Taḥrīm: 66) which instructs men to safeguard their

families, including their wives.

Khansari interprets the reason for the instruction to cover women as stemming from men's desire and inclination to exploit women, which could lead to harm against them (Khansari, 1975 AD/1355 SH: 3, 88). Therefore, a man has the responsibility to protect a woman by ensuring her covering.

The context of the narration "Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her" draws men's attention to not neglecting or wasting a woman's rights. It is as if women are a divine trust placed in the hands of men, and men must not betray that trust. Rather, they should recognize this divine blessing, appreciate it, and honor and protect women.

A similar meaning can also be derived from the narration: "I asked *Abī 'Abdillāh* (Imam *Ṣādiq*) about what is lawful for a man from a woman when she is menstruating. He said: "Everything except the private part." Then he said: "Indeed, a woman is a man's plaything."

Likewise, in the narration: "I wrote to Imam *Riḍā* (AS) regarding a similar matter and the reply came: "You asked about one who approached a slave woman from behind. A woman is a plaything, so she must not be harmed, and she is a tilth..."

In this narration, harming a woman is explicitly prohibited, and the reason given for this prohibition is precisely that she is described as a "Plaything" and a "Tilth."

These two expressions refer to the sexual functions of a woman. It is as if the statement means: "A woman, who serves as a field (*Ḥarth*)

226 for procreation and a source of your pleasure, should not be subjected

to sexual harm, such as anal intercourse, but rather must be protected and treated with care."

The apparent meaning of Hadith No. 8 may seem compatible with the concept of women as "Playthings," as it states: "There is no harm if a man sleeps between two slave women or two free women." However, this narration does not negate women's independent identity or inherent dignity, even if its chain of transmission is deemed reliable. This is because:

1. The narration grants permission only under specific conditions: It assumes mutual consent and does not imply unrestricted exploitation. If the intent were to reduce women to mere tools, there would be no need for such conditional rulings.

2. Contradictions with other narrations: If the Infallible Imams intended to endorse the instrumentalization of women, they would not have criticized practices like sleeping with two free wives simultaneously (Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 249). Additionally, Islamic jurisprudence prohibits a woman from viewing another woman's private parts (Fazel Lankarani, n.d.: 73), reinforcing the sanctity of personal boundaries.

This permission should not be interpreted as disregarding the private sanctity of spouses or enabling their degradation. Instead, it emphasizes that women, as sources of companionship and tranquility, may be enjoyed in ways that align with mutual benefit and respect. The hadith highlights women's sexual roles but does not imply instrumentalization. For such instrumentalization to be valid, sexual relations would need to benefit men exclusively, which contradicts the

mutual nature of intimacy in Islam. Women, like men, derive satisfaction from marital relations, and men are obligated to fulfill their wives' sexual needs (Ṣadūq, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 3, 405). This duty extends even to slave women (Ḥurr 'Amilī, *ibid*: 21, 178).

Moreover, sleeping together serves emotional needs, a principle emphasized in Islamic teachings. Women are not treated as mere instruments here, as they themselves benefit emotionally. According to narrations, a man is duty-bound to sleep beside his wife every four nights, even if he has no intention of intimacy (Ḥurr 'Amilī, *ibid*: 21, 342).

Reflecting on the hadiths that refer to women as "Playthings" shows that the intention behind describing women in this way is to point to the enjoyment and pleasure that men derive from women, through which they find amusement and companionship. Similarly, in the Qur'an, women are introduced as a source of pleasure and attraction for men:

"Beautified for people is the love of desires, of women and children ..." (al-Nisā': 14)

In narrations as well, the greatest pleasure is described as occurring in sexual relations with women (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 321). For this reason, men are reminded in the traditions that, since they benefit from women, they must protect them and not ignore their rights according to pre-Islamic customs.

Thus, describing women as *Lu'bah* is in fact a warning to men: that this delicate jewel, which is a source of warmth, joy, and serenity in their lives, must not be neglected, and that the divine mission of

In the hadith: "A woman is her husband's plaything; if he is able to treat his plaything well, he should do so," and in the statement attributed to *Āyishah*: "A woman is a man's plaything, so a man should treat his plaything well," the woman is presented as a means of play and enjoyment for the man. Since the purpose of a plaything is to bring pleasure and delight to the user, men are instructed to choose the most beautiful and best plaything in order to achieve that aim. Thus, the hadith implies that men should choose beautiful women so that they may gain greater enjoyment from this "Play." From the meaning of this narration, where a woman is described as a plaything and men are advised to select a beautiful one, the idea of sensual and physical enjoyment from women is evoked.

Unfortunately, the perspective of some scholars toward women as means of men's amusement and pleasure is based on the assumption that the creation of women and their existential purpose is for the continuation and benefit of men. For example, *Ṭabarī*, in his commentary on surah *al-A'raf*: 189, states that Eve was created from Adam's rib so that the man would turn toward her, find tranquility with her, and satisfy his sexual needs and pleasures (*Ṭabarī*, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 10, 618).

Similarly, *Fakhr Rāzī* considered the creation of women to be a blessing for men, believing that women were created for men. He even regarded the assignment of duties to women as something intended to complete and perfect the blessings granted to men (*Rāzī*, 1998 AD/1420 AH: 25, 110).

Therefore, the context of the narration: "A woman is her husband's

plaything; if he is able to treat his plaything well, he should do so." And the statement attributed to *Āyishah*: "A woman is a man's plaything, so a man should treat his plaything well," draws attention to a woman's beauty on account of her being described as a "Plaything." In this reading, a woman's sexual identity may appear to be treated instrumentally.

However, reflection upon numerous narrations shows that attention to a woman's beauty is presented as a relative criterion, alongside other important criteria such as: "Religiosity (Ḥimyarī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 77), good character (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 324), virginity (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 334), ability to bear children (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 324), family background and traits (Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 14, 29)."

Although attention to a spouse's beauty is indeed mentioned in narrations (Ṣadūq, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 2, 394; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 73, 289), religiosity is emphasized as the foremost and primary criterion. It is clearly stressed that one should not marry a woman solely for her beauty while neglecting her faith (Mishkini, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 282; Muttaqī Hindī, 1998: 16, 304).

According to the Qur'an, Muslims are prohibited from marrying beautiful polytheist women, and even a believing slave woman without beauty is preferable to such women (al-Baqarah: 221). The phrase "Even if she pleases you" in the verse may refer to a woman's beauty or wealth.

Thus, although beauty is acknowledged as a consideration in Islam to the extent that it contributes to the purpose of marriage, namely, attaining psychological and spiritual tranquility in pursuit of nearness

230 to God, it is not the primary or exclusive criterion.

Accordingly, interpreting the narration as promoting a purely instrumental view of women does not align with the broader objectives of family formation in Islam.

Table of Hadith Authentication

Hadith	Source	Chain Authenticity	Textual Evaluation
Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should protect her.	(Ṭabrisī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 219)	No chain of transmission (not evaluable)	The context "Plaything + protection" points to safeguarding and preserving the woman, not instrumentalizing her.
Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should invest in/maintain her.	(Rāwandī Kāshānī, n.d.: 36; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 100, 250)	Incomplete chain (not evaluable)	Contextual emphasis on not neglecting the woman and recognizing her value within the family.
Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should treat her well.	(Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 249; Ibn Ash'ath, n.d.: 91)	Weak chain (unknown narrator)	<i>Iṣṭinā'</i> means honoring and beneficence; indicates the necessity of protecting, caring for, and showing kindness to the woman.
Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should cover her.	(Tamīmī Āmidī, n.d.: 409; Laythī Wāsiṭī, n.d.: 177; Nūrī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 255)	No chain (not evaluable)	Indicates covering, safeguarding, and protecting women by men; supports a protective interpretation.
Indeed, a woman is a plaything; whoever takes her should not neglect her.	(Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 11, 169; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 788; Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 167; Burūjerdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 428)	Reliable chain	Woman as a divine trust; emphasizes the man's responsibility, honoring, and protecting women.
I asked <i>Abū 'Abd</i>	(Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407	Weak chain	Addresses regulation of

Hadith	Source	Chain Authenticity	Textual Evaluation
<i>Allāh</i> about what is lawful for a man from a menstruating woman. He said: everything except intercourse.	AH: 5, 535; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 736; Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 32; Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 20, 382)	(weak narrators)	marital relations and the avoidance of sexual harm to women.
I wrote to <i>Riḍā</i> ... regarding one who approaches a slave woman from behind... a woman is a plaything, so she must not be harmed, and she is a tilth...	(Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 144)	Weak chain (Mursal)	Explicit prohibition of harming women; a clear ethical indicator.
There is no problem if a man sleeps between two slave women or two free women; your women are like playthings.	(Kulaynī, ibid: 5, 560; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 727; Ṭūsī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 7, 486; Burūjerdī, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 25, 436)	Reliable chain	The description of women as "Playthings" functions as a warning to men not to neglect women's sexual rights.
A woman is her husband's plaything; if he can treat his plaything well, he should do so. (Attributed also to ‘Āyishah)	(Shāfi‘ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 1, 92; Daylamī Hamadānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 4, 234)	Weak chain (weak narrators)	The apparent meaning suggests instrumentalization of women, but it conflicts with Qur’anic verses and the broader Prophetic tradition.

Conclusion

In response to the research question, "To what extent are the
232 narrations describing women as ‘playthings’ reliable in terms of

chain of transmission and meaning?," the findings of this study can be summarized in two dimensions: "*Isnād* (chain) analysis and textual analysis."

From the perspective of chain authenticity, these narrations are not uniform in reliability. Three of them lack a chain of transmission and are therefore not usable as evidence in legal or theological reasoning, while only two narrations were found to possess a reliable chain.

From the perspective of textual analysis, interpreting these narrations as implying an instrumental identity for women or reducing their status to that of a consumable object is inconsistent with the teachings of the Qur'an and the broader framework of Islamic knowledge. The Qur'an portrays men and women as equal in human dignity, situated within a shared sphere of moral and spiritual responsibility, and within the family as sources of tranquility, affection, and mercy.

A contextual and purposive analysis of these narrations shows that the use of the term "*Lu'bah*" (plaything) refers to the natural sexual and emotional attraction between the sexes and the intensity of men's inclination in this dimension, rather than defining the essence of women as mere "Means." The primary intention of these statements is to prevent men from adopting a careless or irresponsible attitude toward such a powerful bond. Instead, men are instructed, within the framework of marriage and family formation, to protect women, respect their rights, and provide emotional and financial support.

In other words, this expression serves a warning and regulatory

function. Through this wording, the narrations aim to draw attention to the natural physical and psychological attractions present in women, which themselves become a basis for men's inclination toward women and ultimately lead to the bonding of the two sexes within the institution of marriage and the formation of the family.

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