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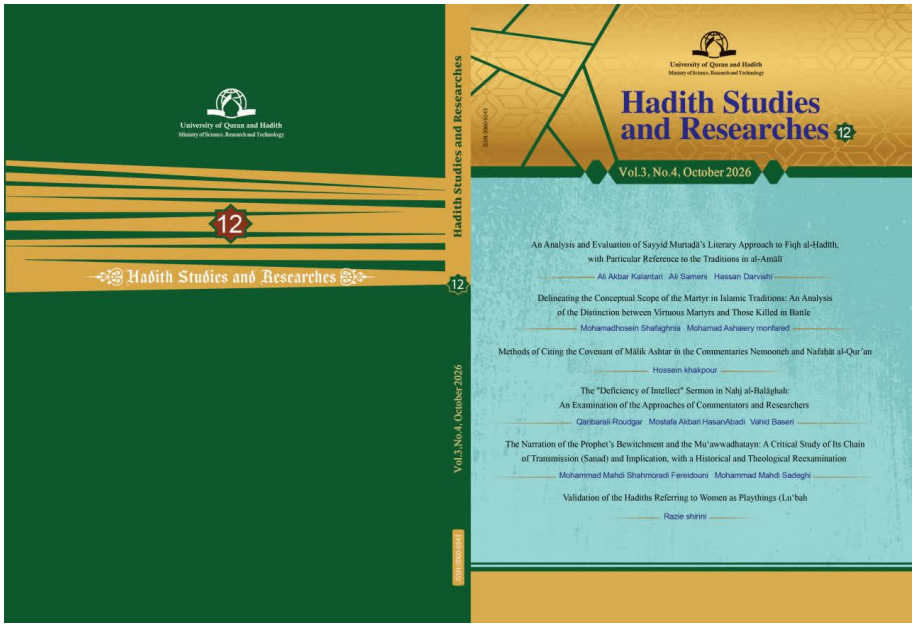

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An Analysis and Evaluation of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s Literary Approach to Fiqh *al-Ḥadīth*, with Particular Reference to the Traditions in *al-Amālī*

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Abstract

Al-Amālī by Sayyid *Murtaḍā* stands as a foundational exegetical and hadith text from the fifth century AH. In this work, the author consistently employs rational and literary methodologies to explain

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and interpret both Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions. Sayyid *Murtaḍā* is recognized for his significant contributions to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, utilizing diverse analytical tools to interpret and clarify hadith traditions. Within *al-Amālī*, alongside Qur'anic verses, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* references numerous hadiths that have been the focus of scholarly debate and lack a universally accepted interpretation. He systematically identifies contradictions and ambiguities in these reports, aiming to clarify obscure expressions and restore their intended meanings. His broad scholarly expertise allows for the application of multiple interpretive methods, rather than adherence to a single framework. These methodological approaches are evident throughout *al-Amālī* and are amenable to systematic scholarly analysis. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology and drawing on examples from *al-Amālī*, the present study examines Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach and assesses its significance in relation to his other interpretive methods. The findings indicate that, when addressing problematic traditions, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* extensively utilizes literary tools such as Arabic grammar and rhetoric, customary Arab usage, poetic citations, lexicographical opinions, explanations of unfamiliar hadith vocabulary, and proverbs and figurative expressions. This literary methodology not only resolves ambiguities within many traditions but also yields interpretations that align with the rational principles of Twelver Shiʿi theology.

Keywords: *al-Amālī*, Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, Literary Approach, Hadith Interpretation.

Introduction

The importance of correctly understanding and critically evaluating hadith is so great that one of the Imams (AS) advised his companions: "Consider carefully from whom you acquire your knowledge…" (Kulaynī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 1, 32; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 2, 92)

Accordingly, it may be said that if a hadith is not properly understood and its intended meaning is not discovered, it is as though it had never been read or benefited from at all (Masoudi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 10).

Elsewhere, an impeccable Imam state: "One hadith that you truly understand is better than a thousand hadiths that you merely transmit. None of you will attain genuine jurisprudential understanding until he recognizes the indirect expressions in our speech. A single statement may bear as many as seventy meanings, and each of those meanings has a valid explanation from us." (cf. Maʿaref, n.d.: 64) Proper understanding of hadith and discovering the intended meaning of the impeccable Imam constitute one of the most fundamental issues in hadith studies, for an incorrect understanding of the verbal and semantic implications of traditions may lead to doctrinal and theological error. This necessity becomes even more evident when dealing with difficult traditions, reports containing rare vocabulary, or apparently contradictory narrations, since such texts cannot be correctly understood or applied without careful analysis.

Among the most important works devoted to this type of tradition is *al-Amālī* by Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, compiled during the fifth century AH.

Alongside his interpretation of problematic Qur'anic verses, the work provides detailed analyses and interpretations of numerous complex and disputed hadiths. Owing to the diversity of its sessions, the breadth of its subject matter, and the precision of its interpretive methodology, *al-Amālī* occupies a distinguished position in both hadith studies and *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*.

As one of the foremost scholars of his age, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* presented original and influential ideas across numerous disciplines, including jurisprudence, legal theory, theology, Qur'anic exegesis, and hadith.

Despite the scholarly importance and lasting influence of his works, however, his literary approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* has rarely been examined independently and systematically. Most existing studies have concentrated on the theological or legal-theoretical dimensions of his thought (cf. Kalantari, et al., 2024 AD/1403 SH; ibid., 2025 AD/1404 SH), while the literary tools that he employs, such as rhetorical devices, syntactic and semantic analysis, the use of poetry and proverbial expressions, and attention to Arab custom and colloquial usage in the process of understanding and interpreting hadith, have not received focused scholarly investigation (cf. Hasoumi, 2011 AD/1391 SH).

A careful reading of *al-Amālī*, however, reveals that Sayyid *Murtaḍā* makes extensive use of the literary capacities of the Arabic language when interpreting difficult traditions. Approximately one-third of the disputed hadiths discussed in *al-Amālī* are analyzed primarily through literary methods, which he employs to resolve apparent contradictions and clarify their intended meanings.

The absence of focused research on this topic underscores the necessity of the present study. By identifying and analyzing the defining features of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* in *al-Amālī*, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature and clarifies his position within the broader Islamic tradition of hadith interpretation.

The importance of this issue is further highlighted by the fact that many traditions in *al-Amālī* exhibit both linguistic and conceptual ambiguity. Neglecting the literary dimension in their interpretation increases the risk of superficial or inaccurate understandings is the complete and faithful English translation of the provided text.

1. Criteria for Selecting the Narrations from *al-Amālī*

In this study, among the narrations contained in *al-Amālī* of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, those examples were selected in which Sayyid *Murtaḍā* clearly employed literary and linguistic elements, such as grammatical rules, rhetorical devices, figurative language, metaphor, conventional Arab usage, and Arabic poetry, in explaining and interpreting the narrations.

Conversely, narrations in which Sayyid *Murtaḍā* relied exclusively upon purely rational or theological arguments, without recourse to literary elements, have not been included among the samples examined in this article, despite their theological significance.

2. Research Method and Data Analysis

With This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach and relies on

library-based research for data collection. The research procedure was carried out as follows:

- First, narrations possessing literary potential were identified and extracted according to the aforementioned criteria;
- Next, Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s interpretive discussions concerning each narration were analyzed by focusing on their linguistic and literary components, including grammatical and rhetorical principles, figurative language, metaphor, simile, conventional Arab usage, poetic citations, and references to lexical sources.
- Subsequently, the various forms of Sayyid *Murtaḍā'*s literary approach, including grammatical, rhetorical, lexical, poetic, and customary-linguistic approaches, were classified and described.
- Thereafter, each relevant narration from *al-Amālī* was presented and examined, followed by Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s explanation and interpretation.
- The author's own description and analysis of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach to the interpretation of each narration was then provided in order to clarify both the surface and deeper dimensions of his literary methodology.
- Finally, at the end of each section, a table illustrating the application of that particular literary approach was presented to provide readers with a comprehensive and coherent overview of the research findings.

Accordingly, the central research question is to identify the components of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* in *al-Amālī* and to examine how these elements are utilized in the analysis and interpretation of complex narrations. Addressing this question clarifies

an underexplored aspect of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s methodology and establishes a methodological basis for the systematic application of literary analysis in *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* studies and critical hadith scholarship.

3. Literature Review

Numerous books, articles, and academic theses have been devoted to Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, examining his biography, contributions to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, Qur'anic exegesis, the history of hadith, his scholarly works, and his academic standing. However, only a limited number of studies have specifically addressed his book *al-Amālī* and its contribution to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*. The most significant of these include:

- Abbasi, Mehrdad, "The Personality of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, the Book *al-Amālī*, and Its Narrations," Hadith Sciences, 2002 AD/1380 SH, no. 22. In this article, the author introduces Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, presents an overview of *al-Amālī*, and discusses the interpretive narrations contained therein.
- Hasoumi, Valy Allah, "A Typology of the Interpretation and Explanation of Narrations in Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s *al-Amālī*," Critique and Idea, vol. 17, 2013 AD/1391 SH, no. 4. This study classifies Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s interpretive methods, including interpreting narrations according to their literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings, as well as considering the context of speech and the circumstances surrounding the narration's issuance.
- Khodayari, Ali Naqi, "Sources and Tools of *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* in Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s *al-Amālī*," Hadith Sciences, 2005 AD/1383 SH, pp. 54-68. As stated in the abstract, the author briefly examines

several of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s methodological tools in *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, including the citation of Qur'anic verses, the citation of other narrations, and the consideration of the circumstances under which hadiths were transmitted. Nevertheless, Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s distinctly literary approach in *al-Amālī* remains evident yet insufficiently examined. This study aims, through focused analysis, to more precisely and comprehensively demonstrate his contribution to the development of hadith interpretive methodology.

The novelty of this research is its comprehensive and systematic examination of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, with particular focus on the narrations found in *al-Amālī*. The present study extracts, classifies, describes, and analyzes in detail his literary and linguistic tools, including: "Arabic grammatical principles, rhetoric, conventional Arab linguistic usage, poetic evidence, the opinions of lexicographers, unfamiliar hadith vocabulary, proverbs, and figurative expressions and metaphors."

Consequently, this study offers a clear and comprehensive account of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary methodology in interpreting and explaining narrations, providing a unified and systematic perspective not previously available in the literature.

4. Definition of Key Concepts

4-1. Amālī

The term "*Amālī*" is the plural of "*Imlāʾ*" (dictation) (Ṭihrānī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 161). It also appears in the form "*Amilīyyah*," and

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denotes a particular category of scholarly works and literary compositions (Safarzadeh, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 508).

With the flourishing of scholarly literary gatherings from the late third century AH onward, a new academic practice emerged among Muslim scholars, known as the *Amālī* genre. The term *Amālī*, originally the plural of "*Imlāʾ*," corresponds in modern usage to the concept of dictation (Ibn Bābawayh, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 9). Within the Islamic scholarly tradition, it refers to works whose contents were dictated orally by a teacher and transcribed by students.

4-2. Fiqh al-Ḥadīth

The word "*Fiqh*" is derived from a single linguistic root and originally means "To understand something and gain knowledge of it." Thus, in the expression "*Afqahtuka al-Shayʾ*," the intended meaning is: "I explained and clarified that matter for you." (Ibn Fāris, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 4, 442)

Likewise, *Rāghib* defines *Fiqh* as "Attaining hidden knowledge through manifest knowledge," and therefore regards it as a concept that is more specific and restricted than mere knowledge (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 1, 384). *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* is one of the branches of the sciences of hadith. On the one hand, it examines the text, content, wording, and linguistic structure of hadiths; on the other, it analyzes their meanings, objectives, and implications. From this perspective, it may, in its original sense, be regarded as a branch of *Dirāyat al-Ḥadīth* (the science of hadith criticism and interpretation) (Soleimani, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 49).

In its broader sense, *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* simply means "Understanding Hadith," and some scholars have considered it synonymous with hadith commentary (Ṭihrānī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 8, 54).

5. The Principal Literary Approaches of Sayyid *Murtaḍā* in *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*: Interpretation of the Narrations in *al-Amālī*

5-1. Employing Arabic Language and Literary Principles (Hyperbole, Simile, Metaphor, etc.)

Sayyid *Murtaḍā* possessed such extraordinary literary expertise that some contemporary litterateurs regarded him as the most knowledgeable person of his age regarding the principles of the Arabic language and literature, and, in certain matters, even considered him superior to *Sībawayh* (cf. Mousavi Khansari, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 4, 303).

In interpreting and explaining Qur'anic verses according to the Imami school, he occupied the position of both an accomplished literary scholar and an eminent exegete, to the extent that he engaged in scholarly debates with the foremost grammarian of his time, *Abul Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā Rabaʿī* (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1970 AD/1391 AH: 268-278; Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 4, 300-306; Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 210)

Accordingly, one of the principal approaches that Sayyid *Murtaḍā* repeatedly employed in interpreting and explaining hadiths was the application of Arabic linguistic and literary principles. Because he was an outstanding literary scholar with exceptional mastery of Arabic, he was able to utilize these tools effectively in his interpretive work.

Indeed, he himself occasionally remarks in *al-Amālī* that anyone possessing even a modest familiarity with the style and usage of the Arabic language will readily grasp the intended meanings (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 6-7).

For example, in one passage he writes: "Arabic speech contains allusion, indication, metaphor, and figurative expression, and it is precisely because of these literary features that it enjoys such distinction and lofty status." (ibid: 4)

Regarding the rhetorical function of hyperbole in interpretation, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* explains: "Arabic employs particular constructions for exaggeration. Thus, concerning someone who sleeps excessively, it is said: "It is as though he was created only for sleeping." Likewise, regarding an extremely wicked person, one says: "So-and-so was created only for evil," meaning that evil constantly proceeds from him. Similarly, they say: "You are nothing but eating and drinking." (ibid: 465) For this reason, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* frequently relied on such literary devices to uncover the intended meanings of hadiths, repeatedly appealing to Arabic grammar and literary conventions throughout *al-Amālī*. The following narration illustrates this approach.

Example 1

In interpreting the hadith, "Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet God while being "*Ajdham*." (Maimed) Sayyid *Murtaḍā* cites and critiques the opinions of *Qāsim ibn Sallām* and *Ibn Qutaybah*, both of whom understood the word "*Ajdham*" literally as "One whose hand has been amputated."

Sayyid *Murtaḍā* rejects this interpretation. According to him, forgetting the Qur'an bears no intrinsic relation to the hand that would justify punishment being directed specifically at that limb.

He likewise rejects *Ibn Qutaybah*'s suggestion that divine punishment is inflicted only upon the bodily member through which the sin was committed. According to Sayyid *Murtaḍā*, "*Ajdham*" in this hadith does not signify either physical amputation or leprosy. Rather, it represents a rhetorical form of hyperbole and analogy. In his view, the Prophet (PBUH) intended to liken such a person to someone who has suffered a deficiency in perfection and deprivation of the beauty and excellence that the Qur'an could have bestowed upon him.

Just as the hand is among the most valuable parts of the human body, and losing it deprives a person of numerous benefits and perfections, so too does the one who forgets the Qur'an become deprived of many virtues and divine rewards. Accordingly, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* concludes that the hadith should not be interpreted literally but rather understood through literary devices such as hyperbole, simile, and allegorical representation (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 7).

This example demonstrates Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s careful linguistic and literary methodology. He critiques the literal interpretation of the word "*Ajdham*," arguing that a superficial reading cannot uncover the Prophet's intended meaning.

Instead, by employing rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, simile, and allegory, he explains that "*Ajdham*" symbolizes the individual's loss of perfection, excellence, and spiritual beauty that could have been attained through adherence to the Qur'an, rather than referring to

literal amputation or the disease of leprosy. Three key methodological features are evident in this approach:

1) Critical evaluation of earlier scholars: Sayyid *Murtaḍā* carefully examines the interpretations of *Qāsim ibn Sallām* and *Ibn Qutaybah*, demonstrating through literary analysis the shortcomings of their understanding of the word.
2) Application of literary and linguistic analysis: By considering the functions of hyperbole and simile in Arabic rhetoric, he derives the precise meaning of the expression and shows that its use in the hadith constitutes a vivid and instructive metaphorical illustration, rather than a literal description.
3) Enhancing the conceptual understanding of the hadith: In light of this analysis, it becomes clear that a proper understanding of hadith requires familiarity with Arabic, its rhetorical devices, and careful attention to figurative expressions. A merely literal reading is insufficient to convey the true meaning of a prophetic tradition.

Overall, Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s analysis demonstrates that the Arabic language and its literary conventions constitute an effective tool for the interpretation and exegesis of hadiths, enabling a more accurate and profound understanding of the Prophet's (PBUH) intended meanings.

Example 2

In interpreting the hadith: "Indeed, the most beloved deeds to Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, are those that are performed consistently,

even if they are few. Therefore, perform only those deeds that you are capable of, for Allah does not grow weary until you grow weary."

Sayyid *Murtaḍā* argues that the intended meaning is that God becomes displeased with people and leaves them to themselves when their actions are no longer performed sincerely for His sake, and when they themselves become tired of seeking His assistance and supplicating Him.

According to this interpretation, God's abandonment of people and His displeasure with them is metaphorically described as "Weariness," although this does not signify actual fatigue. Thus, "Weariness," with respect to God is not to be understood literally. Rather, it represents an instance of the rhetorical devices of paired expression and lexical correspondence. Sayyid *Murtaḍā* notes that these rhetorical devices are well established in Arabic literature and are also employed in the Qur'an (ibid: 55-57).

In this narration, Sayyid Murtaḍā undertakes a detailed examination of the word "Weariness," and the notion of "God becoming weary." The principal aspects of his interpretation are as follows:

1) Attention to the literary and linguistic dimension: Sayyid *Murtaḍā* demonstrates that the term "Weariness," cannot denote literal fatigue, since fatigue is a physical and psychological condition that cannot be attributed to God.

2) Application of Arabic rhetorical devices: He explicitly identifies the rhetorical devices of paired expression and lexical

correspondence. Here, the word "Weariness" is used not to describe actual fatigue but to express God's response to human sincerity or negligence. This demonstrates that Sayyid *Murtaḍā* consistently considers Arabic's linguistic and literary capacities when interpreting hadiths, thereby arriving at more accurate explanations.

3) Reliance on Qur'anic interpretive tradition: Sayyid *Murtaḍā* further observes that the same rhetorical technique appears in the Qur'an, reflecting his concern to maintain harmony between Qur'anic and prophetic language. Accordingly, whenever the literal meaning of a word might lead to misunderstanding, literary conventions and Qur'anic usage should be employed to determine its intended meaning.

Thus, through his use of Arabic rhetoric and literary analysis, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* uncovers the semantic and psychological dimensions of the narration while preventing superficial or literalistic interpretations. His careful interpretation of figurative language demonstrates that a proper understanding of hadith is impossible without attention to its literary and rhetorical features.

Example 3

In interpreting the hadith: "The earth will vomit forth its liver-like pieces in the form of columns of gold and silver. Then the murderer will come and say: "For this I killed." The one who severed family ties will say: "For this I severed my kinship." The thief will say: "For this my hand was cut off." Then they will leave it and take nothing from it." Sayyid *Murtaḍā* argues that the Arabs possess a well-known and

distinctive style in employing metaphors and similes.

The expression "The earth vomits" is used because the earth expels its hidden contents, namely gold and silver, which constitutes one of the signs of the approaching Day of Resurrection. This is itself a metaphorical expression.

Likewise, calling what lies within the earth "Its Liver" (Kabid) is a simile comparing the precious metals hidden within it to a camel's liver (ibid: 97).

In analyzing this narration, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* focuses on the distinctive metaphors and similes characteristic of Arabic expression. His principal observations include the following:

1) Attention to Arabic literary style: He demonstrates that expressions such as "The earth vomits" and "Its liver-like pieces" belong to a distinctive Arabic literary style, and that they cannot be properly understood without familiarity with these rhetorical conventions.

2) The use of metaphor and simile to convey reality: "The earth vomits" serves as a metaphor for the earth bringing forth its hidden treasures, signifying one of the portents of the Day of Judgment. "Its liver-like pieces" compares gold and silver to the liver of a camel, emphasizing their preciousness and value. Thus, by relying upon classical Arabic rhetorical devices, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* not only explains the apparent wording of the narration but also reveals its deeper metaphorical and figurative dimensions, thereby facilitating a more accurate understanding of the hadith.

Table 1. Application of Arabic Literary and Rhetorical Devices in the Interpretation of the Narrations of *al-Amālī*

No.	Hadith	Key Expression	Literary Device Employed	Focus of Sayyid's Analysis	Interpretive Conclusion
1	"Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet Allah while being *ajdham*."	Ajdham	Hyperbole, simile, allegory	Critiques the interpretations of *Qāsim ibn Sallām* and *Ibn Qutaybah* and rejects the literal meaning (amputated hand/leprosy).	The expression denotes spiritual deficiency and deprivation from Qur'anic perfection, not literal bodily mutilation.
2	"Indeed, Allah does not grow weary until you grow weary."	Yamallu ("grows weary")	lexical correspondence, paired expression	Examines the meaning of *Malal* and rejects attributing literal fatigue to God.	"Weariness" is a figurative expression referring to God's displeasure with or abandonment of His servants, not actual fatigue.
3	"The earth will vomit forth its liver-like pieces."	Taqīʾu, Aflādh Kabidihā	Metaphor, simile	Analyzes the metaphorical style of Arabic in describing the signs of the Day of Resurrection.	The emergence of gold and silver is expressed metaphorically, emphasizing their value and significance rather than describing a literal physiological act.

5-2. Reliance on Colloquial Arabic and Arab Linguistic Usage

One of the general characteristics of the language of hadith is its reliance on common linguistic usage and everyday speech, just as this characteristic also applies to the language of the Qur'an. In Arabic lexicons, custom is defined as the opposite of that which is unfamiliar and is synonymous with that which is well known. It has been stated that "*al-ʿUrf wa al-ʿĀrifah wa al-Maʿrūf Wāḥid: Ḍidd al-Nakr*," that is, *ʿUrf, ʿĀrifah*, and *Maʿrūf* share the same meaning and stand in opposition to what is unfamiliar. It refers to that which is commonly recognized among people, such that when they encounter it, they do not regard it as strange or objectionable (Ibn Manẓūr, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 9, 237).

Khu'ī maintains that the Prophet (PBUH) undoubtedly did not devise a special method of concealing his intended meanings. Rather, he addressed people in the manner with which they were already familiar (Khu'ī, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 263-270). In "*al-Amālī*," Sayyid *Murtaḍā* frequently appeals to the colloquial language and customary expressions of the Arabs in order to interpret hadiths more accurately. As he himself states: "The Arabs possess, within their speech, subtle methods, allusions to intended meanings, and indirect indications. Whoever attempts to interpret and explain their speech without paying careful attention to these features has wronged both him and the text, and has departed from the proper framework of their discourse." (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 7)

The Imams likewise spoke in the ordinary language of the people. They employed the vocabulary and linguistic structures customary among their audience. Thus, when Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) was informed that some people claimed the Qur'anic references to wine, gambling, idols, and divining arrows actually referred to certain individuals, he replied: "God Almighty would never address His creation in a manner they could not understand." (ʿAyyāshī, n.d.: 1, 341, no. 188; Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 578, no. 513)

Through this statement, the Imam emphasizes that God revealed the Qur'an as guidance for humanity, intended for reflection, understanding, and practice. Since hadith likewise serves to guide and instruct people, it too must be expressed in language that people are capable of comprehending. Accordingly, Imam *Ṣādiq* also stated: "Express our traditions clearly, for we are an eloquent people." (Kulaynī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 1, 52, no. 13)

Another interpretive tool employed by Sayyid *Murtaḍā* in "*al-Amālī*" is his reliance on ordinary Arab speech and customary usage. In interpreting several traditions, he explicitly refers to this approach, describing it as the "Method of the people of the language." (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 406)

Example

Abū Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The best charity is that which leaves one self-sufficient. The upper hand is better than the lower hand. Begin with those whom you support."

Regarding the phrase "The upper hand is better than the lower hand," Sayyid *Murtaḍā* argues that the expression "Upper Hand" refers to abundant blessing or generous giving, because in common Arabic usage the word "Hand" is frequently used metaphorically to mean favor, bounty, or benefaction. Thus, according to him, the Prophet intended to convey that greater generosity is superior to lesser generosity, thereby encouraging charitable conduct.

He regards this interpretation as preferable to the common explanation that the giver's hand is simply superior to the receiver's hand. He argues that such an interpretation does not hold true in every case, since among those who receive charity are individuals whose spiritual rank before God exceeds that of many who give charity. He offers a similar criticism of the opposite interpretation, namely that the recipient's hand is superior to the giver's (ibid.).

This tradition illustrates Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s conviction that interpreting hadith requires close attention to Arab customary usage and everyday

linguistic practice. In his view, the literal meaning of words alone cannot always convey the true intention of the impeccable Imam. Proper understanding demands sensitivity to idiomatic expressions, customary speech, and the linguistic conventions of Arabic. His interpretation of "The upper hand" exemplifies this approach: "Rather than understanding it merely as the giver's hand, he takes it as a metaphor for abundant generosity, since the word hand commonly signifies favor and benefaction in Arabic usage."

Table 2. Application of Colloquial Arabic and Arab Customary Usage in Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s Interpretation of *al-Amālī*

No.	Discussion Topic	Key Concept	Sayyid's Interpretive Approach	Result and Function
1	Case Study: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand."	The meaning of "Hand" in Arab custom	Interprets "Upper Hand" as abundant blessing or generosity rather than merely the giver's hand	Aligns the meaning with Arab customary usage and critiques purely literal interpretations

5-3. Use of Classical Arabic Poetry

Another distinguishing characteristic of this eminent Shiʿi scholar was his refined literary sensibility. Thoroughly acquainted with both classical poetry and prose, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* occupied an eminent place among the great Arab litterateurs. His collected poems, published in the series "*Rawāʾiʿ al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī*," testify to his outstanding literary stature (Sulaymani, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 46).

Thaʿālibī writes in "*Tatimmat al-Yatīmah*": "His poetry is of the highest excellence." (ibid.)

Likewise, *Ibn Khallikān* remarks: "He possessed a large collection of poetry, and whenever he described dreams or apparitions, he excelled in doing so, employing this theme in many places." (Ibn

Khallikān, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 742)

Throughout *al-Amālī*, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* repeatedly relies upon the poetry of celebrated Arab poets to interpret traditions and clarify difficult expressions. In some cases, he cites several poetic verses to establish the meaning of a single word (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 45). Indeed, he considers poetry to possess such linguistic authority that, when lexicographical evidence is unavailable, he turns instead to poetic usage (ibid: 21). Across his interpretations, he cites the works of more than thirty renowned Arab poets.

The following example illustrates this approach.

Example 1

While interpreting the Prophetic tradition: "Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet God while being ajdham," Sayyid *Murtaḍā* cites the following verse by *Farazdaq*: "The mountain-like strength of the tribe of *Wāʾil* weakened after *Mālik*'s death, and its former glory became mutilated." That is: "The tribe of *Wāʾil* became weak and powerless after *Mālik*'s death, and its former strength and splendor disappeared."

He argues that the poet's use of *Ajdham* conveys the notion of being maimed or deprived, and employs this poetic evidence to explain the hadith. Accordingly, he interprets *Ajdham* as "One whose hand has been severed," not literally but as a striking and eloquent metaphor for severe deprivation (ibid: 7).

This example demonstrates Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s consistent reliance on classical Arabic poetry to elucidate the meanings of difficult words

and expressions found in hadith. By appealing to authoritative poetic usage, he uncovers the intended semantic force of the term *Ajdham*, illustrating how poetry functions as an essential interpretive aid in understanding the linguistic and rhetorical dimensions of Prophetic traditions.

1) Alignment of the Hadith's vocabulary with its meaning in poetry: Sayyid *Murtaḍā* demonstrates that the word *Ajdham* in Arabic poetry is used in the sense of "One whose hand has been severed," and he employs this poetic usage as the basis for a striking metaphor in his interpretation of the hadith, rather than understanding the word literally.
2) Appeal to the literary style of the Arabs: His use of poetry is not merely aesthetic; rather, it corresponds to the established Arabic rhetorical style, particularly in the use of simile and hyperbole. By citing poetry, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* explains the meanings of words and traditions within the framework of classical Arabic literary conventions, demonstrating that an accurate understanding of hadith requires familiarity with the rhetorical and poetic capacities of the Arabic language.

Example 2

In his commentary on the Prophetic tradition: "He is not one of us who does not "*Yataghanna*" with the Qur'an," after citing relevant Qur'anic verses, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* adduces several verses of Arabic poetry, including those of *al-Aswad ibn Yaʿfar al-Iyādī*: "Indeed, they lived there in the finest prosperity, beneath the shade of a firmly established kingdom" and *al-Aʿshā*: "For a time I ruled in Iraq,

possessing noble character and lofty dignity."

He also cites verses by *Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī*, arguing that the poet's expression "Around the grave of their father" refers to rulers who remained permanently settled and did not abandon their place of residence. Sayyid *Murtaḍā* concludes that the meaning of the hadith is: "Whoever truly remains within the boundaries of the Qur'an, does not transgress beyond it, and makes it his permanent abode and point of reference, only such a person belongs to us. Whoever does otherwise is not of us." (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 35)

In this tradition, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* employs the poetry of several Arab poets to clarify the concept of remaining steadfast within the limits established by the Qur'an. The principal observations are:

1) Conceptual clarification through poetry: The poetic citations enable the reader to grasp the intended semantic boundaries of the expression.

2) Harmony with Arabic rhetorical style: Poetry reinforces and deepens the meaning of the hadith in a manner consistent with classical Arabic literary taste and rhetorical conventions.

Example 3

While interpreting the Prophetic tradition: "The most beloved deeds to God, Mighty and Exalted, are those performed consistently, even if they are few. Therefore, perform only those deeds that you are able to sustain, for God does not become weary until you become weary." Sayyid *Murtaḍā* first cites a Qur'anic verse and then supports his interpretation by quoting the celebrated Arab poet *al-Nābighah al-*

Dhubyānī: "You will become wise, or reach your goal, when you grow old, or when the crow grows old."

He explains that the poet's real intention is to tell his audience: "You will never attain wisdom."

In other words, the condition mentioned (when the crow grows old) is impossible, making the entire statement a rhetorical device rather than a literal proposition. Sayyid *Murtaḍā* then presents a second interpretation of the hadith. According to this explanation, the Prophet intended to convey that God becomes displeased with people and abandons them only when their deeds are not performed sincerely for His sake and when they cease turning to Him in supplication and dependence. Thus, God's displeasure and abandonment are metaphorically described as "Weariness," although neither action constitutes actual fatigue.

He notes that this type of figurative expression is common in Arabic, where one thing is designated by the name of another because of a shared characteristic. To illustrate this convention, he cites the following poetic verses: "Then the play of Time began with them, and thus Time destroys men" and another by *Asadī*: "Ask us about *Ḥajar ibn Umm Qiṭām*, when the sharp and slender spears played with him." In both verses, the poets metaphorically attribute the act of "Playing" to Time and to spears, employing figurative language based upon metaphor and simile (ibid: 56). The principal observations are:

1) Clarification of the figurative meaning: Through poetry, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* demonstrates that "Weariness" cannot be literally attributed

to God; rather, it functions metaphorically.

2) Reliance on Arabic literary style: The poetic examples employ metaphor to explain the human condition and humanity's relationship with God, thereby illustrating broader rhetorical conventions in Arabic.

3) Strengthening the interpretive argument: The appeal to poetry lends authority and credibility to Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s interpretation while correcting overly literal readings of the tradition. Through his use of poetry, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* elucidates the meanings of hadith within the framework of Arabic rhetoric and metaphor, demonstrating that hadith cannot be properly understood without due consideration of its literary dimensions.

Table 3. Application of Arabic Poetry in Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s Interpretation of the Traditions in *al-Amālī*

No.	Hadith	Poet Cited	Function of the Poetic Evidence	Interpretive Conclusion
1	"Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet God while being *Ajdham*."	Farazdaq	Clarifies the meaning of *Ajdham* through its poetic usage.	Emphasizes the metaphorical and rhetorical meaning of the term, avoiding a superficial literal interpretation.
2	"He is not one of us who does not *Yataghanna* with the Qur'an."	al-Aswad ibn Yaʿfar al-Iyādī, al-Aʿshā, Ḥassān ibn Thābit	Explains the meaning of *Taghannī* and abiding within the boundaries of the Qur'an through poetic evidence.	Interprets *Taghannī* as steadfast adherence to and residence within the framework of the Qur'an, rather than merely melodious recitation.
3	"God does not become weary until you become weary."	al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī, al-Asadī	Demonstrates the figurative nature of "weariness" through metaphorical expressions found in poetry.	Negates any literal attribution of weariness to God and explains the hadith in accordance with classical Arabic rhetorical style.

5-4. Citing the Opinions of Lexicographers and Hadith Scholars

One of the most significant interpretive tools employed by Sayyid *Murtaḍā* in explaining traditions is his extensive reliance on the opinions of earlier lexicographers and hadith scholars. As one of the earliest influential scholars of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Motahhari, ibid: 26), he frequently cites authorities such as *Qāsim ibn Sallām* (d. 224 AH), *Ibn Qutaybah* (d. 276 AH), *Ibn al-Anbārī* (d. 304 AH), *Ibn al-Sikkīt*, and others. He maintains that: Interpreting a statement according to one of its possible meanings should not be considered far-fetched so long as that meaning is supported by the Arabic language and Arab usage (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 19).

According to *Murtaḍā*, anyone who undertakes the explanation of unfamiliar expressions must present all possible meanings that the language permits, since any of those meanings may have been intended by the original speaker. The commentator is not required to determine with certainty the speaker's precise intention, because the true intent ultimately remains known only to the speaker. Elsewhere in *al-Amālī*, he explicitly states that the opinions of lexicographers are trustworthy, as each is founded upon established linguistic evidence (ibid: 475). He repeatedly employs this methodology in al-Amālī. Two examples illustrate this approach.

Example 1

In commenting on the tradition: "Whoever loves us, the People of the House, should prepare himself for poverty as one prepares a cloak (or armor)."

Murtaḍā first presents the interpretations of *Qāsim ibn Sallām*, who argues that the hadith refers to poverty in the Hereafter, and *Ibn Qutaybah*, who rejects this interpretation and contends that the Prophet intended poverty in this world. *Murtaḍā* accepts both interpretations as linguistically possible but proposes a third interpretation based upon lexical evidence. He explains that one meaning of the Arabic root "*Faqar*" is to pierce a camel's nose until it reaches, or nearly reaches, the bone, then pass a rope through it to tame and control the animal. The verb "*Faqara*" is used for this practice, and the camel is consequently described as "*Mafqūr*." Likewise, anything that is pierced or deeply wounded may be described by derivatives of this root. Thus, severe calamities are called "*Fāqirah*," and a notched sword is termed "*Sayf Mufaqqar*."

On this linguistic basis, *Murtaḍā* interprets the saying of the Prophet to mean: Whoever loves the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) should discipline and restrain his soul, direct it toward obedience, prevent it from following its passions, remain patient in adversity, and train it just as a stubborn camel is brought under control (ibid: 18). Analysis

This example demonstrates how *Murtaḍā* employs lexicographical authorities to clarify the hadith.

1) Reliance on lexical authorities: He presents the opinions of *Qāsim ibn Sallām* and *Ibn Qutaybah* to illustrate the range of accepted interpretations.
2) Linguistic analysis: He examines the original lexical meaning of "*Faqar*" and proposes an additional interpretation grounded in authentic Arabic usage.

3) Moral application: From this linguistic analysis, he derives the ethical lesson of the hadith, namely, self-discipline, patience, and mastery over one's desires, analogous to taming a wild camel. Through lexical evidence, *Murtaḍā* not only presents multiple interpretive possibilities but also uncovers the hadith's ethical and spiritual significance.

Example 2

In explaining the Prophetic tradition: "The earth will disgorge pieces of its liver like pillars of gold and silver…" *Murtaḍā* again appeals to the opinions of leading lexicographers regarding the word "*Aflādh*."

He reports that *Yaʿqūb ibn al-Sikkīt* maintains that "*Faladh*" refers specifically to a piece of a camel's liver, and that this expression is not used for the liver of sheep or cattle. Thus, one says, "Give me a piece of liver," but not "*Faladhan min al-Shāh or Faladhan min al-Baqarah*."

Ibn al-Sikkīt further notes that one does not say: "Give me a "*Ḥazzah*" from the hump," or "Give me a "*Ḥazzah*" from meat," because "*Ḥazzah*" is specifically associated with the liver. If one intends a piece of hump or ordinary meat, different terms such as "*Ḥadhīyyah*" (a small piece) are used.

Ṭūsī, citing *Abū ʿUbaydah*, who in turn cites *Aṣmaʿī,* reports additional distinctions in Arabic usage. If meat has been cut lengthwise, one says: "Give me a "*Ḥazzah*" of meat," whereas for an uncut piece one says: "Give me a *Buḍʿah*" or "*Dhurrah* of meat." After surveying these opinions, *Murtaḍā* concludes that the hadith specifically mentions the liver because, in Arab culture, the liver was

regarded as one of the finest and most valuable parts of a sacrificial camel, alongside the hump and the back. Thus, the hadith likens the treasures concealed within the earth to its "Liver," emphasizing their value and preciousness, much like the Qur'anic description of the earth bringing forth all of its hidden treasures (ibid: 75).

In his treatment of the phrase "The earth will disgorge pieces of its liver," *Murtaḍā* conducts a careful lexical investigation of the word aflādh, drawing extensively on earlier linguistic authorities. The key features of his analysis include:

1) Precise lexical investigation: He demonstrates that "*Faladh*" properly denotes a piece of liver and is not generally applied to other bodily organs.
2) Synthesis of scholarly opinions: Rather than selecting a single authority, he compares and harmonizes the views of several lexicographers before arriving at his conclusion.
3) Integration of language and culture: By linking lexical usage to Arab cultural perceptions of the liver as a prized part of the camel, he offers a culturally grounded interpretation of the hadith. Through this methodology, *Murtaḍā* uses classical lexicography to establish both the precise meaning of individual words and a coherent cultural and rhetorical interpretation of the tradition.

Example 3

Murtaḍā also discusses the following Prophetic tradition: "The Prophet (PBUH) was on his way with his Companions and relatives to a banquet to which they had been invited. Along the way, he saw

Ḥusayn (AS), who was still a small child, playing with other children. The Prophet hastened ahead of his companions while the children scattered and ran about playfully. Smiling, he caught *Ḥusayn*, embraced him, placed one hand on the back of his head, lifted him up, kissed him, and said: "*Ḥusayn* is from me, and I am from *Ḥusayn*. O! God, love whoever loves *Ḥusayn*. *Ḥusayn* is one of my grandsons."

Murtaḍā makes every effort to interpret this tradition on the basis of the opinions of lexicographers and authoritative linguistic sources.

He cites *Ibn al-Anbārī*, who explains that the verb "*Istantala*" means "To Advance" or "To move forward." Thus, when a man steps forward quickly, the Arabs say "*Istantala al-Rajul Istintālan*." Elsewhere, early linguists state that when someone prepares himself to undertake a task, the expression "*Istantala al-Amr*" is used. Likewise, when a person separates himself from another, one may also say "*Istantala al-Rajul*." In addition, the verb can mean "To rise above" or "To become prominent." According to *Murtaḍā*, all of these meanings are closely related and compatible with the usage found in the hadith. He further explains that:

- "*al-Sikkah*" refers to rows of adjoining houses or rows of date palms.
- "Ṭafiqa" means "Continued" or "Kept on," as illustrated by the poetic verse: "She continued weeping, and I wept with her, while both of us were overcome with grief."
- "Ass al-Ra’s" denotes the back of the head.
- *Ibn al-Anbārī* explains that "*Aqnaʿahu*" means "He raised him up."
- The word "Asbāṭ" was originally used for the descendants of the

Prophet Isaac, just as "*Qabāʾil*" was used for the descendants of the Prophet Ishmael. *Ibn al-Anbārī* further states that "*Asbāṭ*" simply means offspring or children (ibid: 219).

In explaining the Prophet's interaction with *Ḥusayn* and expressions such as "*Istantala*" and "*al-Sikkah*," *Murtaḍā* relies extensively on the explanations of *Ibn al-Anbārī* and other philologists.

The principal features of his analysis are:

1) Lexical analysis within Arab culture: He demonstrates that "*Istantala*" may mean advancing, rising, or preparing for an action, while "*al-Sikkah*" refers to rows of houses or date palms.
2) Relating vocabulary to the narrative: These linguistic explanations clarify the Prophet's movements and the physical setting described in the tradition.
3) The importance of authoritative linguistic sources: By relying on established lexicographers, *Murtaḍā* determines the intended meanings of the expressions and avoids superficial interpretations.

Thus, the opinions of classical philologists constitute an essential tool in producing a precise and reliable interpretation of the tradition.

Table 4. Application of Quotations from Lexicographers and Hadith Scholars in the Interpretation of *al-Amālī*

No.	Hadith	Lexicographers / Hadith Scholars Cited	Al-Murtaḍā's Analysis Based on Their Opinions	Key Findings
1	*"Whoever loves us, the People of the House,*	*Qāsim ibn Sallām; Ibn Qutaybah*	Examines multiple meanings of "*Faqar*" and proposes a third	(1) Reliance on lexical authorities. (2) Clarification of lexical meanings. (3)

No.	Hadith	Lexicographers / Hadith Scholars Cited	Al-Murtaḍā's Analysis Based on Their Opinions	Key Findings
	should prepare himself for poverty..."		interpretation related to taming a camel.	Connection between language and ethical instruction.
2	*"The earth will disgorge pieces of its liver..."*	*Yaʿqūb b. al-Sikkīt; Abū ʿUbaydah; al-Aṣmaʿī*	Lexical analysis of "*Aflādh*," comparison of scholarly opinions, and selection of the most appropriate meaning.	(1) Precise lexical analysis. (2) Synthesis of scholarly opinions. (3) Harmony between the hadith and authentic Arabic usage.
3	The Prophet's encounter with *Ḥusayn* during the banquet	*Ibn al-Anbārī*	Explains *Istantala, al-Sikkah, Ṭafiqa, Ass al-Ra'*s, and *Asbāṭ* through lexical authorities and relates them to the narrative.	(1) Analysis of vocabulary in Arab usage. (2) Relationship between lexical meaning and the narrative context. (3) Importance of authoritative sources for accurate interpretation.

5-5. Attention to Rare and Unfamiliar Hadith Vocabulary

According to *Murtaḍā*, many interpretive difficulties arise from rare and unfamiliar expressions occurring in hadith literature. Such vocabulary often leads to misunderstanding and incorrect interpretation. To provide an accurate interpretation of the traditions contained in "*al-Amālī*," *Murtaḍā* consistently explains these obscure expressions, treating *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* as one of his principal interpretive methods. A substantial portion of his exegetical discussions focuses on rare vocabulary, and in doing so he generally draws upon two primary sources: the works of lexicographers and citations from classical

Arabic poetry (cf. Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 285, 630).

Typically, he begins by examining the opinions of authorities such as *Qāsim ibn Sallām, Ibn Qutaybah*, and other scholars who authored works on *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*. After evaluating their interpretations, sometimes accepting them and sometimes criticizing them, he presents his own preferred explanation and interprets the tradition accordingly.

Whenever additional interpretations remain possible, he explicitly notes them, often introducing the discussion with expressions such as: "As for the rare expression in this hadith…" (ibid: 79)

In other instances, he adopts the voice of a hypothetical questioner, asking: "What is its interpretation? How should its obscure expression be explained?" (ibid: 354).

He then answers this hypothetical question by referring to the *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* literature. Throughout "*al-Amālī*," *Murtaḍā* repeatedly employs this method in order to interpret obscure vocabulary. The following example illustrates this approach.

Example 1

In his commentary on the hadith: "He is not one of us who does not "*Yataghanna*" with the Qur'an." After reviewing three earlier interpretations, *Murtaḍā* argues that the obscure expression "*Lam Yataghanna*" derives from the expression "*Ghanīya al-Rajulu bil Makān*," meaning "A place made a person self-sufficient."

Accordingly, he interprets the verb "*Yataghanna*" as referring to remaining permanently or dwelling continually in a place (ibid: 34).

In interpreting this tradition, *Murtaḍā* first reviews the three explanations proposed by earlier scholars, then traces the expression "*Yataghanna*" to the root "*Ghaniya al-Rajulu bil Makān*."

This example demonstrates several important methodological features:

1) Precise lexical analysis: *Murtaḍā* interprets "*Yataghanna*" as denoting prolonged residence or abiding in a place, rather than simply vocal recitation.
2) Evaluation of previous opinions: He surveys earlier interpretations before determining which best reflects the intended meaning.
3) Consistency with the context of the tradition: By relating the lexical root to the broader message of the hadith, he provides a coherent and well-supported interpretation.

Thus, through careful philological analysis and critical evaluation of previous scholarship, *Murtaḍā* establishes a persuasive interpretation of the expression "*Yataghanna*."

Example 2

In interpreting the tradition: "Take this sword and go. If you find him with her, kill him…" the companion asks: "Should I carry out your command as an iron branding rod, proceeding exactly as instructed, or does the witness perceive what the absent person cannot?"

The Prophet replies: "Indeed, the witness sees what the absent does not."

The report then states: "He spread his legs…" *Murtaḍā* explains the obscure expression "*Shaghara bi Rijlayhi*" as meaning to raise and spread one's legs, likening it to the posture a dog assumes when urinating. He further explains that "*Nikāḥ al-Shighār*" refers to the

well-known pre-Islamic marriage arrangement in which two guardians exchange female relatives in marriage without a dowry. The term derives from the same root because of its association with sexual intercourse (ibid., p. 80).

Murtaḍā explicitly states that "*Shighār*" functions here as a euphemistic allusion to illicit sexual intercourse. He also rejects an earlier interpretation that took another word in the report to refer to a person with thin thighs. In his view, such an explanation is irrelevant to the context. Instead, the expression serves as an emphatic form related to "*Ajabb*," conveying the idea that the sexual organ had been completely removed a stronger expression than merely describing circumcision (ibid: 80).

This analysis demonstrates:

1) Careful lexical investigation reveals that "*Shaghara*" is interpreted as a figurative expression denoting sexual exposure.
2) Critical engagement with previous scholarship: *Murtaḍā* rejects interpretations that conflict with the context.
3) Contextual interpretation: The lexical meaning is harmonized with both the narrative setting and Arab linguistic conventions. Through philological analysis and critical assessment of earlier opinions, *Murtaḍā* arrives at a rigorous and convincing interpretation of the tradition.

Example 3

Regarding the Prophet's saying: "Indeed, this Qur'an is God's banquet, so learn from His banquet as much as you can. The emptiest of houses is the one whose interior is empty of the Book of God." *Murtaḍā* again introduces the discussion through a hypothetical

question: "If someone were to ask about the interpretation of this tradition and the explanation of its obscure vocabulary…"

He explains that "*Maʾdubah*" may also be called "*Madʿāh*" (an invitation), and that the word may be pronounced with either a *Fatḥah* or a *Ḍammah* on the letter *Dāl*. He further explains the expressions al-jaflā, which refers to a general invitation extended to everyone, and "*al-Nuqrā*," which denotes an invitation restricted to a select group. He cites verses from *Hudhalī* poetry in which these expressions occur, including: "As though the hearts of the birds within their nests were like dried dates cast down at some banquets."

Here, "*al-Maʾādib*" is the plural of "*Maʾdubah*." (ibid: 354)

Some scholars maintain that "*Maʾdabah*," pronounced with *Fatḥah*, derives from the root "*Adab*" (discipline or good manners). On this interpretation, the tradition's meaning is that God revealed the Qur'an to educate and guide humanity. Because Qur'an is grammatically masculine, the feminine ending is added here as an intensive stylistic device, similar to the poetic expression: "This is a drink that delights the soul." (ibid: 354)

Murtaḍā then proposes another interpretation. He argues that the Qur'an is compared to a "*Maʾdubah*" because, just as people gather around a banquet, the Qur'an gathers people together and calls them toward divine guidance. Likewise, he explains the expression: "The emptiest of houses…" as referring to houses most devoid of the Qur'an, noting that in Arabic the word "Empty" is used for anything devoid of content, whether a container or otherwise: "Among the Arabs, ṣafr denotes whatever is empty, whether a vessel or something else." (ibid: 358). This example highlights several methodological principles:

1) Detailed lexical analysis: *Maʾdubah* is understood both as a means of moral cultivation and as a gathering of people.
2) Comprehensive review of earlier scholarship: *Murtaḍā* compares the opinions of lexicographers and poets before selecting the interpretation most appropriate to the context.
3) Contextual coherence: The chosen interpretation accords with the hadith's emphasis on the Qur'an as a source of guidance and communal unity. By integrating lexical analysis with literary and linguistic evidence, *Murtaḍā* presents a nuanced and well-supported interpretation of the tradition.

Table 5. Application of Rare hadith

Vocabulary in *Murtaḍā*'s Interpretation of *al-Amālī*

No.	Tradition	Rare Expression	Al-Murtaḍā's Analysis	Key Features
1	"He is not one of us who does not *Yataghanna* by the Qur'an."	Yataghanna	Derived from *Ghaniya al-Rajul bil Makān*; interpreted as abiding permanently in a place.	(1) Precise lexical analysis; (2) Evaluation of earlier opinions; (3) Consistency with the meaning of the tradition.
2	"Take this sword and go..."	Shaghara	Means raising and spreading one's legs; figuratively associated with *Nikāḥ al-Shighār* and sexual exposure.	(1) Lexical and figurative analysis; (2) Critique of incorrect interpretations; (3) Contextual consistency with Arab linguistic usage.
3	"Indeed, this Qur'an is God's banquet..."	Maʾdubah	Understood as something that gathers people together and cultivates moral discipline; pronunciation does not alter the meaning.	(1) Detailed lexical analysis; (2) Synthesis of lexical and poetic evidence; (3) Consistency with the Qur'an's guiding function.

No.	Tradition	Rare Expression	Al-Murtaḍā's Analysis	Key Features
4	Other expressions: al-Jaflā, al-Nuqrā, Yantaqiru, Ṣafr	Rare vocabulary and poetic usage	Examined through classical Arabic literature and poetry to clarify their meanings.	(1) Philological and literary analysis; (2) Comparison of multiple interpretations; (3) Correlation with the meaning of the traditions.

5-6. Use of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Every language and culture possesses proverbs and idiomatic expressions that convey rich meaning in concise form. Such expressions embody the principle of rhetorical brevity, enabling speakers to convey extensive ideas without lengthy explanations (Qadami, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 39).

Some proverbs originated as poetry, while certain poetic verses became proverbial through frequent usage. In the discipline of *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*, failure to identify the intended meaning of these expressions can easily obscure the true intent of the Prophet or the Imams, particularly for non-Arab audiences. For example, the famous saying of Imam Ali: "I followed him as a young camel follows its mother" cannot be fully understood without recognizing its proverbial significance (ibid.). *Murtaḍā* repeatedly emphasizes in "*al-Amālī*" that many expressions found in the Qur'an and hadith reflect established Arab idioms. He remarks: "This is among the customary expressions of the Arabs, and elsewhere: "This is one of the ways in which the Arabs speak." (Alam al-Huda, 1998: 1, 88)

Consequently, he frequently employs well-known Arab proverbs and idiomatic expressions to interpret both Qur'anic verses and

prophetic traditions, using them as an important literary tool to explain difficult texts.

The following traditions illustrate this aspect of his methodology.

Example 1

In his interpretation of the Prophetic tradition: "Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet God while being *Ajdham* (mutilated)." After presenting a detailed explanation of the tradition, Sayyid *Murtaḍā* further supports his interpretation by appealing to a well-known Arabic proverb. He states that this expression belongs to the familiar rhetorical conventions of the Arabic language and reflects common Arab idiomatic usage. The Arabs would say of a person who had lost his supporter or protector: "So-and-so, after the loss of so-and-so, is *Ajdaʿ*," or "He remained *Ajdham* after him," meaning that he had become as though deprived of his hand, that is, left helpless after losing the one upon whom he relied (ibid: 7).

Example 2

Likewise, in interpreting the tradition narrated by *Anas ibn Mālik*, in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "There is no believer except that he has a gate through which his deeds ascend and another through which his provision descends; when he dies, these two gates weep for him."

Murtaḍā explains that the expression "Weeping" refers metaphorically to the change and disruption that occurs after the death of righteous individuals. To support this interpretation, he cites a familiar Arabic proverb: "The house of so-and-so wept after him." That is, after his death, his house became desolate and empty of the

life and blessing he had brought to it (ibid: 53).

Table 6. The Use of Arabic Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions in *Murtaḍā*'s Interpretation of *al-Amālī*

No.	Tradition	Proverb / Idiom	al-Murtaḍā's Analysis	Key Points
1	"Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it will meet God while *Ajdham*."	"So-and-so became *Ajdaʿ* after so-and-so"; "He remained *Ajdham* after him."	*Ajdham* signifies one who has become helpless after losing his supporter; it is an idiomatic expression rather than a literal description.	(1) Analysis of the proverb; (2) Reliance on Arabic linguistic convention; (3) Consistency with the meaning of the tradition.
2	"There is no believer except that he has a gate through which his deeds ascend..."	"The house of so-and-so wept after him."	"Weeping" signifies the disruption and desolation that follow a person's death.	(1) Analysis of the proverb; (2) Appeal to Arabic idiomatic usage; (3) Correlation with the reaction to the death of a believer described in the tradition.

Table: Components of Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s Literary Approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* in *al-Amālī* Component Description Representative Examples

Component	Description	Representative Examples
1. Employing Arabic literary devices and grammatical principles	Using rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, simile, metaphor, metonymy, and allegory to interpret traditions. Mastery of Arabic language and literature is regarded as indispensable for understanding the intended meaning.	• "Whoever learns the Qur'an and then forgets it..." (*Ajdham* as a simile for deprivation). • "The most beloved deeds to God..." (use of *Mushākalah* and figurative naming). • "The earth will vomit forth its liver..." (Metaphorical imagery of the Day of Resurrection).

Component	Description	Representative Examples
2. Reliance on colloquial Arabic and customary usage	Interpreting traditions in light of common Arabic idioms and everyday linguistic practice.	• "The upper hand is better than the lower hand" (*al-Yad al-ʿUlyā*) interpreted as abundant generosity rather than merely the giving hand.
3. Citation of classical Arabic poetry	Employing poetry to clarify vocabulary and substantiate interpretations; *al-Murtaḍā* cites more than thirty renowned poets.	• The poem of *Farazdaq* on *Ajdham*. • Poems by *Aswad ibn Yaʿfur*, *Aʿshā*, and *Ḥassān ibn Thābit* on *Yataghannā bil Qurʾān*. • Poems of *Nābighah al-Dhubyānī* and *Asadī* regarding "God does not become weary."
4. Reliance on earlier lexicographers and ḥadīth scholars	Drawing upon authorities such as *Qāsim ibn Sallām, Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn al-Anbārī*, and *Ibn al-Sikkīt* to explain vocabulary and meanings.	• Interpretation of *Faqar* in "Whoever loves us, the People of the House..." • Lexical analysis of "The earth will vomit forth its liver..." using *Ibn al-Sikkīt*, *Ṭūsī*, and *Abū ʿUbaydah*.
5. Attention to rare (*Gharīb*) ḥadīth vocabulary	Explaining obscure expressions to avoid misunderstanding and to establish the intended meaning.	• *Yataghannā* interpreted as abiding in the Qur'an. • Lexical analysis of *shaghara* and other obscure expressions.
6. Use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions	Employing Arabic proverbs and idioms to communicate intended meanings within their cultural context.	• "Even if the Qur'an were placed in a hide, the Fire would not touch it" (hyperbolic illustration). • "The earth will vomit forth its liver..." (Metaphorical and idiomatic usage).

Table: Analytical Summary of *Murtaḍā*'s Literary Method in *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth*

Central Tradition / Expression	Key Features	Analytical Conclusion
Ajdham, Malal, "The earth will vomit forth..."	• Critique of literal interpretations by earlier scholars (*Qāsim ibn Sallām, Ibn Qutaybah*).• Attention to rhetorical devices (hyperbole, simile, allegory, *Mushākalah*).• Extensive use of metaphor.	Deepens conceptual understanding of the traditions and avoids purely literal readings by uncovering their figurative dimensions.
al-Yad al-ʿUlyā	• Reliance on Arab custom and idiomatic usage. • Critique of superficial interpretation. • Understanding *Yad* as "Blessing" or "Generosity."	Aligns the interpretation with Arab linguistic convention and prevents misunderstanding by situating the tradition within its cultural context.
Ajdham, "He is not one of us who does not *Yataghannā* by the Qur'an," "The most beloved deeds..."	• Citation of poems by *Farazdaq, Nābighah, Asadī*, and others. • Clarification of vocabulary through poetic evidence.	Strengthens exegetical reasoning, explains figurative meanings, and reflects the rhetorical taste of classical Arabic.
Faqar, Aflādh Kabidihā, Istanṭala	• Reliance on lexical authorities (*Qāsim ibn Sallām, Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn al-Sikkīt, Ibn Anbārī*). • Comparative analysis of lexical possibilities. • Synthesis of differing scholarly opinions.	Produces precise lexical meanings while avoiding superficial interpretation and revealing the ethical and educational dimensions of the traditions.
Yataghannā, Shaghara, Maʾdubah	• Detailed lexical analysis of obscure expressions. • Critical evaluation of earlier scholarship. • Rejection of weak interpretations.	Produces academically grounded interpretations based upon authoritative Arabic lexicography and linguistic tradition.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that Sayyid *Murtaḍā*'s literary approach to *Fiqh al-Ḥadīth* in *al-Amālī* extends well beyond literal exegesis. His interpretive methodology represents an integrated framework that combines linguistic, lexical, literary, poetic, cultural, and customary analyses. The findings indicate that when confronted with difficult, obscure, or seemingly contradictory traditions, he consistently employs a broad range of literary tools to develop accurate, well-substantiated interpretations.

Murtaḍā frequently draws upon the opinions of earlier lexicographers and *ḥadīth* scholars, carefully examining the various semantic possibilities of words and expressions. By presenting competing interpretations before offering his preferred reading, he not only documents scholarly disagreement but also develops reasoned interpretations consistent with rational principles. His sustained attention to *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* further enables him to correct earlier misunderstandings and to provide precise and academically rigorous interpretations.

In addition, his extensive use of classical Arabic poetry, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions clarifies not only the literal meanings of words but also the ethical, educational, and cultural dimensions of the traditions. By situating prophetic reports within the broader linguistic and cultural environment of classical Arabic, he makes their intended meanings more accessible and intelligible. This multifaceted approach demonstrates that Murtaḍā never confines himself to dictionary definitions alone; rather, he draws on the full rhetorical, literary, and

cultural resources of the Arabic language to produce richer, more comprehensive interpretations. The study further shows that *Murtaḍā*'s literary methodology is simultaneously scholarly, rational, cultural, and literary. His interpretations not only resolve textual ambiguities but also remain fully compatible with the rational principles of Imami Shiʿi theology.

Overall, *Murtaḍā*'s interpretive method in *al-Amālī* exemplifies the close relationship among *ḥadīth* studies, Arabic lexicography, and Arabic literature. His simultaneous use of poetic, lexical, and cultural sources produces interpretations that are not only philologically sound and academically reliable but also capable of revealing the ethical, educational, and social dimensions of prophetic traditions. Consequently, his methodology offers a valuable model for contemporary scholars of ḥadīth and Islamic studies seeking a comprehensive, linguistically informed, and culturally sensitive understanding of religious texts.

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Delineating the Conceptual Scope of the Martyr in Islamic Traditions: An Analysis of the Distinction between Virtuous Martyrs and Those Killed in Battle

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Abstract

In Islamic religious literature, the concept of the martyr is typically associated with Muslims killed in legitimate battle. However, analysis of the verses and traditions reveals that the term's scope extends beyond this conventional application to include individuals who die outside the battlefield. The present study examines the traditional and

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hadith-based foundations for the semantic expansion of martyr, aiming to delineate its limits and categories. It specifically investigates whether the legal rulings and spiritual virtues of martyrdom are exclusive to those killed in battle or also apply to other cases identified in the traditions. Previous scholarship has not sufficiently clarified the range of individuals to whom the title martyr applies or the criteria for its attribution within Islamic textual tradition. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical methodology based on library research, this study analyzes relevant narrations and demonstrates that, while exclusive legal rulings for those killed in battle do not extend to other cases, the hadith corpus applies the designation martyr to a broader spectrum of individuals whose deaths are marked by spiritual merit and virtue. Simultaneously, Qur'anic evidence suggests that those killed in the path of God possess a higher spiritual rank, as the Qur'an consistently employs derivatives of the root (*q-t-l*) in this context rather than the term martyr.

Keywords: Martyr, Martyrdom, *Jihād*, Virtue, One Killed in Battle.

Introduction

The Islamic scriptural sources emphasize the exalted station of the martyr before God. The Messenger of God described being killed in the path of God as the noblest of deaths (Ibn Bābawayh, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4, 402). The elevated status of the martyr is so widely recognized that even in non-Muslim societies, individuals who sacrifice their lives in defense of their homeland are accorded profound respect.

The term martyr appears in hadith literature across diverse contexts, leading to conceptual overlap and ambiguity. Therefore, a precise clarification of its meaning, grounded in the instances found in the traditions, is necessary. Within the Islamic legal tradition, the immediate understanding of martyr refers to an individual killed on the battlefield under specific legal conditions, for which the obligations of ritual washing and shrouding are waived according to Islamic law.

On the other hand, numerous individuals are described as martyrs in the traditions despite having died a natural death or having passed away outside the battlefield. One example is *Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh*, who was wounded during the Battle of "*al-Aḥzāb*" but died later from his injuries. The Messenger of God performed the ritual washing for him (Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 327), and additional narrations concerning this category will be discussed in detail below. In this second category, traditions may explicitly designate individuals as martyrs or describe them as occupying the rank of a martyr or receiving the reward of a martyr. Examples include individuals killed while resisting oppression or women who die during childbirth (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 5, 52; Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah, 1997: 2, 380). These observations underscore the necessity of clarifying the conceptual scope of martyrdom.

Despite the widespread application of the title martyr, the precise boundaries of its meaning and the criteria for its attribution remain inadequately clarified. Some narrations explicitly identify specific persons or groups as martyrs, while others use expressions such as

"The rank of a martyr" or "He shall have the reward of a martyr." The central question is whether the application of martyr in these cases constitutes a literal usage within the traditions or whether distinctions should be made between literal, analogical, and honorific or virtue-based applications. Additionally, it is necessary to determine whether these categories differ in spiritual rank and merit. Additionally, the term martyr refers to individuals who were not killed in the literal sense. This demonstrates the legitimacy of employing the word martyr in a broader meaning that includes both those who are killed and those who are not. An example is the woman who dies in childbirth, described as a martyr (Ibn Bābawayh, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 3, 561). Nevertheless, from the perspective of spiritual status, it remains possible that actually being killed constitutes an essential criterion for attaining the highest degree of martyrdom, and evidence supporting this possibility will be presented.

The present study, utilizing a library-based examination of primary sources and a descriptive, juristic-analytical methodology, aims to clarify the concept of martyrdom and its various categories as presented in the Qur'an, hadith literature, and the works of Muslim jurists.

1. Research Background

In surveying the literature on the concept of the martyr and martyrdom in Islamic jurisprudential and hadith sources, it is evident that most studies have focused either on the legal rulings concerning the martyr killed in battle or on the Qur'anic concept of martyrdom. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to defining the extent

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to which the title martyr is expanded in the hadith literature or to distinguishing between its various degrees and applications.

Among the notable works, the late Sayyid *Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm*, in "*Mustamsak al-ʿUrwah,*" (Hakim and Yazdi, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 7, 278-279; see also: Ṭūsī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 7, 278-279; Najafī, n.d.: 4, 86-90) primarily explains the legal rulings relating to martyrs with particular emphasis on those killed in battle. Likewise, the article "A Re-examination of the Jurisprudential Rulings Concerning the Martyrdom of *Ḥamzah,*" (Bani Hasan & Rafiei, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 11, 7-19) examines detailed legal questions relating to battlefield martyrs without addressing the broader semantic scope of the term martyr in the hadith literature.

Within the field of semantics, studies such as "A Critical Examination of the Hadith-Centered Approach to Establishing a Semantic Relationship Between Martyr and One Killed in the Path of God in the Qur'anic Text," (Khakpour & Shahandeh, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 88, 144-165) "The Characteristics of the Martyr from the Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith," (Jafari & Rezaei, 2024 AD/1403 SH: 59, 10-25) and "The Semantic Development of the Word Martyrdom in the Qur'an" (Islami, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 2, 97-136) have concentrated primarily on analyzing the Qur'anic concept of martyrdom or describing the characteristics of the martyr.

Other studies have approached the subject from cultural or jurisprudential perspectives, including "The Role of Promoting the Culture of Self-Sacrifice and Martyrdom from the Perspective of the Noble Qur'an and the Traditions," (Safari Garayli, n.d.: 431-445)

"Subject Classification and Jurisprudential Rulings of the Martyr According to the Schools of Islamic Law," (Teymourifar, 2017 AD/1397 SH) and "The Rulings Concerning the Martyr in the Jurisprudence of the Islamic Schools." (Jannati, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 25, 70-83)

These studies likewise focus predominantly on the martyr in its conventional legal and social sense. Despite these valuable contributions, none has independently and systematically examined the full scope of the application of the title martyr in the hadith corpus, distinguished between its literal, analogical, and virtue-based usages, or analyzed the differences in spiritual rank among these categories. This gap in the literature underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to provide a precise clarification of the limits and gradations of the title martyr within the hadith tradition.

2. The Lexical Meaning of Martyr

One of the primary meanings attributed to the root (*sh-h-d*) by Arabic lexicographers is knowledge and awareness. This meaning is used in contexts where nothing remains hidden from the knowledge of the one described as martyr (Azharī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 6, 47; Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: 3, 238).

A second meaning refers to a person who not only possesses knowledge but also declares, testifies to, or makes that knowledge known. An example appears in the Qur'anic verse: "…The testimony between you, when death approaches one of you at the time of making a bequest, shall be given by two witnesses…" (al-Mā'idah 106) (Ibn

Sīdah, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 4, 181)

Some lexicographers have also understood martyr to mean "One who is living." According to this interpretation, the reason for this designation is that the souls of the martyrs are present in the "Abode of Peace" and enjoy its blessings, unlike other souls that have not attained such a rank. In support of this interpretation, they cite the Qur'anic verse: "Do not think of those who have been killed in the way of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision." (Āli 'Imrān: 169)

The Qur'an thus describes those killed in the path of God as living and sustained by divine provision (Azharī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 6, 47). Accordingly, it has been argued that the title martyr is applied to them in light of this distinctive form of life. Evidence from major Arabic dictionaries indicates that the root (*sh-h-d*) fundamentally conveys the meanings of presence, awareness, witnessing, and declaration. Consequently, in its earliest usage, the word martyr denoted a witness or one who possesses knowledge, and was used in reference to God, the angels, and the prophets (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: 3, 238; Azharī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 6, 47; Ibn Sīdah, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 4, 181).

Nevertheless, in the Islamic religious texts, particularly the Noble Qur'an, the word also came to be associated with those who are killed in the path of God. Over time, within Islamic religious discourse, martyr became established as the standard designation for one who is killed in God's cause. It therefore appears that this technical usage developed gradually through an expansion of the word's original lexical meaning within the context of the Qur'an, the hadith literature,

and the broader Islamic tradition.

3. The Technical Meaning of Martyr in the Qur'an and Hadith

In conventional jurisprudential terminology and in the understanding of the religious community, the term martyr refers to one who is killed in the path of God during jihad. This definition forms the basis of the legal rulings concerning martyrs in many classical works of Islamic jurisprudence (Najafī, n.d.: 4, 86-90; Ḥakīm, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 7, 98).

A study of the hadith literature, however, demonstrates that the designation martyr is not confined solely to those killed in the path of God. Rather, a number of traditions apply this title to other categories of people as well, for example, a person killed while defending his property or family, or individuals who die as a result of certain hardships or afflictions (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 5, 52). This broader usage makes it necessary to carefully investigate the limits and extent of the title martyr's application in both the Qur'an and the hadith literature.

The technical concept of martyrdom encompasses several categories. In the Noble Qur'an, however, only one of these categories is explicitly presented, namely, being killed in the path of God. This concept is consistently expressed through derivatives of the root (*q-t-l*), as in the following verse: "Let those who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in the way of God. Whoever fights in the way of God and is killed or achieves victory, We shall grant him a tremendous reward." (al-Nisā': 74)

Other Qur'anic verses convey essentially the same idea and do not

introduce additional points directly relevant to the present discussion.

The hadith literature, however, presents a broader picture. Numerous traditions concerning the martyr have been transmitted, and they may be classified into three principal categories:

1) The first category consists of traditions referring to individuals who are killed during the course of battle and who, upon fulfilling certain legal conditions, are exempt from the rites of ritual washing and shrouding.
2) The second category comprises traditions that designate individuals as martyrs even though they did not die in combat. These include persons who die outside the battlefield, whether through natural causes or through the shedding of their blood. Within this category, some narrations explicitly employ the word martyr, while others use expressions such as "Having the rank of a martyr" or "Like a martyr."
3) The third category includes traditions that further broaden the concept of martyrdom, encompassing additional cases that may not constitute a separate category alongside the previous two. Rather, these traditions are cited insofar as they support the permissibility of extending the application of the term martyr beyond those killed in battle, or even beyond those killed in general.

A different classification of the traditions concerning martyrdom may also be proposed, one that arguably corresponds more closely to the Qur'anic presentation and may explain the differing degrees of spiritual rank among martyrs:

1) The first group consists of traditions referring to martyrdom in cases where the designation of being killed genuinely applies,

whether the individual is killed on the battlefield, on its periphery, or even in circumstances where no formal battle has taken place, provided that the person's blood is shed in the cause of God.

2) The second group consists of traditions concerning individuals who die natural deaths but to whom the title martyr is nevertheless applied, or who are counted among the martyrs, by virtue of some special characteristic, such as love for the Family of Muḥammad, or because of a particular place or time in which they died.

In some jurisprudential works, the traditions relating to martyrs have generally been examined under two broad headings: those concerning the battlefield martyr and the legal rulings applicable to him, and those in which the title martyr is applied to persons other than one killed in battle (cf. Hakim, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 7, 98-110). Since the present study seeks to clarify the scope of the term martyr's application in the hadith literature, a more detailed threefold classification is preferable. Accordingly, the traditions may be organized into:

- Traditions concerning those killed in battle, to whom specific legal rulings apply;
- Traditions in which the title martyr is applied to individuals outside the battlefield, whether their deaths involve bloodshed or not;
- Traditions in which the concept of martyrdom is expanded in a virtue-based sense, referring primarily to spiritual reward and elevated rank.

This first classification will serve as the analytical framework for the present study. Nevertheless, an alternative classification based on

the manner of death, whether by killing or by natural causes, may also be advanced. Such a classification is particularly useful in analyzing the differing spiritual degrees and merits of the various categories of martyrs and will be discussed in the concluding section of this article.

4. Traditions Concerning the Battlefield Martyr

There is no dispute that a Muslim who is killed in battle in the presence of the Prophet or an Imam is regarded as a martyr, and the traditions clearly affirm this point. None of the Imami jurists has disagreed with this principle, except with respect to certain conditions and details. Indeed, it has been claimed that there is a consensus among all Muslim scholars on this matter, with the exception of *Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib* and *al-Ḥasan* (Baḥrānī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 413; Ḥillī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 371).

The more significant question concerns the conditions necessary for a person to qualify as one killed in battle. The jurists have identified several conditions that, upon their fulfillment, exempt such a person from ritual washing and shrouding. These conditions may be summarized under three principal headings.

4-1. Being Killed While Fighting under the Leadership of the Impeccable Imam

Some jurists maintained that the individual must be killed while fighting under the banner of the infallible Imam (Ṭūsī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 84; Fāḍil Hindī, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 84; Mufīd, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 84). The majority of jurists, however, reject this restriction. Certain traditions also indicate that anyone killed in a legitimate battle,

even during the period of the Imam's occultation, is entitled to the special legal rulings applicable to the battlefield martyr (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 210).

It is therefore plausible that the requirement of fighting alongside the Imam is not itself an essential condition for these legal rulings but rather serves as an evidentiary indicator of the legitimacy of the struggle. Consequently, the rationale underlying the relevant evidence may reasonably be extended to situations in which Islam itself is under threat and access to the Imam or his representative is impossible, provided that the legitimacy of the armed struggle is otherwise established (Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 1, 311).

Nevertheless, this extension would not encompass situations such as fighting ordinary bandits or highway robbers, since such encounters do not constitute *Jihād* or defense of the religion. Accordingly, a person killed under those circumstances remains subject to the ordinary requirements of ritual washing and shrouding.

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4-2. The Combatant Must Die on the Battlefield

The second condition is that the combatant must die at the battlefield itself. The term "Battlefield" refers to a situation in which two opposing military forces are engaged, with injury and death occurring within that setting. Accordingly, if a combatant is wounded but subsequently removed from the battlefield and dies elsewhere, doubt arises as to whether the designation "*Qatīl fī al-Maʿrakah*" still applies. In "*Tadhkirat al-Fuqahā'*," Allamah *Ḥillī* reports a consensus among Imami jurists regarding this condition (Ḥillī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 371).

Among the traditions cited in support of this principle is the following narration:

Abū Khālid narrated: "…Except for one who is killed between the two battle lines. If there remains any sign of life in him, he should be washed; otherwise, he should not be washed." (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 213)

If this narration were the sole evidence available, it would not be sufficient to establish the ruling, first because of weakness in its chain of transmission owing to *ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Dihqān* (Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 231), and second because its indication is not entirely unambiguous. However, additional traditions corroborating this principle will be presented below.

4-3. The Muslims Must Be Unable to Recover Him Before Death

The third condition concerns the time at which death occurs. Specifically, the combatant's soul must depart during the course of the battle itself, rather than before hostilities commence or after they have ended.

This condition is based on the observation that Muslims ordinarily gained access to the bodies of the slain only after the fighting had concluded, whereas during the battle itself they were generally unable to reach or attend to the wounded. Several of the traditions relied upon by the jurists concerning the battlefield martyr will now be examined.

1) *ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm* narrated from his father, from *Ḥammād*, from *Ḥarīz*, from *Ismāʿīl ibn Jābir* and *Zurārah*, from *Abū Jaʿfar* (AS), who said: "I asked him: What is the ruling concerning the martyr…?" (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 211)

From the perspective of hadith *Rijāl*, the chain of transmission is authentic, since all of its transmitters have been declared trustworthy (Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 377, 260, 16, 142, 175; Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 161).

The narrator states: "I asked the Imam how a martyr should be treated. Is he buried in the condition in which he was killed, with his blood upon him? The Imam replied: Yes. He is buried in his bloodstained clothing. He is neither washed nor anointed with camphor; rather, he is buried in that state. The Imam then explained that the Messenger of God buried his uncle *Ḥamzah* in his bloodstained garments at the time of his martyrdom. A cloak was wrapped around him, although it was too short to cover his feet completely. The Prophet then requested fragrant vegetation and placed it over him. He also performed the funeral prayer over him and invoked blessings for him seventy times."

2) And narrated from *Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh*, from *Hārūn ibn Muslim*, from *Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah*, from *'Ammār*, from *Ja'far*, from his father (AS), that: "Ali (AS) did not wash *'Ammār ibn Yāsir*…" ((Ṭūsī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 1, 213)

In light of the preceding narration in "*al-Istibṣār*" and the generation of *Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qummī*, the omitted beginning of the chain is understood to refer back to *'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Bābawayh* (Ṭūsī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 1, 213).

Upon close examination, the chain is reliable. Although *Mas'adah ibn Ṣadaqah* lacks an explicit individual declaration of reliability, several later scholars have accepted his narrations as reliable

(Shubayri Zanjani, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 180).

The narration states that Imam Ali (AS) did not wash *ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir* or *Hāshim al-Mirqāl,* but instead buried them in their own garments and did not perform the funeral prayer over them. The fact that they were not washed supports the legal ruling that ritual washing is waived for the battlefield martyr. Their burial in their ordinary clothing may likewise indicate that their garments replaced the customary burial shroud as a matter of legal concession and facilitation. The statement that no funeral prayer was performed, however, raises several interpretive possibilities: The narrator may simply have erred in transmitting this portion of the report; the text may have undergone scribal corruption, such that "Did not" originally read "Although." In that case, the intended meaning would be that although they were not shrouded, the funeral prayer was nevertheless performed.

It is possible that Imam Ali himself did not personally lead the prayer while another person performed it instead. This explanation, however, does not appear to accord with the historical sources and would require independent investigation (Ibn Saʿd, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 198).

Shaykh Ṭūsī explains the narration on the basis of prudential dissimulation (Ṭūsī, 1945 AD/1365 AH: 6, 168). Under this interpretation, either the Imam did not order the funeral prayer because he was occupied with other matters, or someone else had already offered it and the Imam therefore saw no need to repeat it.

Finally, it is possible that the word "Prayer" in this context refers not

to the funeral prayer but to supplication, meaning only that no special invocation was made for them (Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 2, 508).

3) *ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm* narrated from his father, from *Ibn Maḥbūb*, from *Ibn Sinān*, from *Abān ibn Taghlib*, who said: "I heard *Abū ʿAbd Allāh* (AS) say: "One who is killed in the path of God is buried in his own clothing…" (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 212) The chain of transmission is authentic, as all of its transmitters are recognized as trustworthy (Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 260, 16, 354, 214, 10).

The narrator reports that Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) said: "A person killed in the path of God is buried in his own garments and is not washed, unless the Muslims reach him before he dies."

This clause admits two possible interpretations:

- That he is removed from the battlefield before dying; or
- That he survives until after the battle ends, even if he remains physically at the site of the fighting. In either case, the individual must be washed, shrouded, and anointed with camphor. The Imam further explained that the Messenger of God shrouded *Ḥamzah* in his own garments, did not wash him, but did perform the funeral prayer over him. From the foregoing discussion it becomes apparent that a person who is killed on the outskirts of the battlefield or outside the battlefield altogether must undergo ritual washing and shrouding, since such cases do not satisfy the conditions outlined above. Examples of these cases will be discussed in the following sections. One important question, however, appears to have been largely overlooked in the existing

literature: ‘Why are the obligations of ritual washing and shrouding waived for the battlefield martyr?’ ‘Does this legal exemption itself indicate a higher spiritual rank, or does it serve some other legal purpose?’ Answering this question would require a separate and detailed investigation beyond the scope of the present study.

5. Traditions Concerning "Virtuous Martyrs"

The principal focus of the present article, and one that has received comparatively little scholarly attention, is the body of traditions that may appropriately be designated as those concerning "Virtuous Martyrs." The traditions discussed in the following section likewise complement this category.

There is virtually no disagreement among Muslim scholars regarding the application of the title martyr to one who is killed on the battlefield or, under certain circumstances, on its periphery. The traditions considered here, however, concern situations in which no battle is involved at all. Rather, they describe individuals who die under various circumstances, yet are nevertheless referred to in the hadith literature as "Martyrs" or as "Having the status of a martyr." This raises two fundamental questions:

- Can the collected evidence of these traditions be taken to establish the legitimacy of applying the term martyr to persons other than those killed on the battlefield?
- Is it possible to identify a difference in spiritual rank between these categories of martyrs and those who are killed in battle?

The following traditions will be presented and analyzed with these questions in mind.

5-1. Being Killed While Defending a Just Right

A number of traditions regard being killed while seeking the restoration of one's lawful rights as constituting martyrdom, or at least as conferring the status of a martyr.

A) *Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā* narrated from *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā*, from *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Najrān*, from *ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sinān*, from *Abū ʿAbd Allāh* (AS), who said: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Whoever is killed while defending himself against injustice is a martyr." (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 5, 52)

Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) narrates that the Messenger of God declared: Whoever is killed while seeking redress for an injustice committed against him is indeed a martyr.

B) Through this same chain of transmission, from *Abū Maryam*, from *Abū Jaʿfar* (AS), who said: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Whoever is killed while defending himself against an injustice is a martyr." Then he said: "O! *Abū Maryam*, do you know what is meant while defending against an injustice?" I replied: "May I be your ransom. It refers to a person who is killed while defending his family, his property, or similar matters."

The Imam responded: "O! *Abū Maryam*, indeed, part of true jurisprudence is recognizing the truth." (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 5, 52)

Abū Maryam narrates that Imam *Bāqir* (AS) reported the Messenger of God as saying: "Whoever is killed while seeking redress for an injustice is indeed a martyr. The Imam then asked *Abū Maryam* whether he understood the meaning of the expression while defending against an injustice. *Abū Maryam* answered that it referred to a person killed while defending his family, his wealth, or similar interests. The Imam replied: "O! *Abū Maryam*, part of jurisprudence is the recognition of what is truly right."

Commenting on this final statement, *Fayḍ Kāshānī* suggests that the Imam may have intended to describe the true jurist as one who possesses the discernment to distinguish between situations in which resistance and confrontation are justified and those in which conflict ought to be avoided (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 15, 191-192).

C) From him, from *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad*, from *ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥakam*, from *al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*, who said: "I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh (AS) about a man who fights in defense of his property. The Imam replied: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Whoever is killed while defending his property has the status of a martyr." (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 5, 52)

The substance of this narration is essentially the same as that of the previous two traditions. One noteworthy difference, however, is that here the Prophet does not explicitly describe such a person as a martyr, but rather says that he possesses "The rank (or status) of a martyr." This wording indicates a distinction between this type of death and either martyrdom on the battlefield or being killed in the

path of God in the fullest sense (Muḥaqqiq Karakī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 365).

Another important point is that the narrator asks the Imam whether, under such circumstances, actively resisting the aggressor is preferable to refraining from confrontation. The Imam replies that were he personally in such a situation, he would prefer to avoid conflict.

This explicit statement may suggest that, in the Imam's view, this form of death carries a lesser spiritual reward than battlefield martyrdom. A possible explanation is that the individual sacrifices his life for the protection of worldly possessions or similar interests, whereas the battlefield martyr gives his life solely in the cause of God, seeking only His pleasure and the exaltation of the religion of Islam.

5-2. Death at a Particular Time or Place

Certain traditions regard dying at a particular time or place as constituting martyrdom or conferring martyr status.

ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, from *Sahl ibn Zīyād*, from *Ibn Abī Naṣr*, from *Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā* (AS), who said: "The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Indeed, Friday is the master of all days…Whoever dies during its day or night dies as a martyr." (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 3, 414)

The chain of transmission is authentic, and the narration indicates that a person who dies on Friday is regarded as having died a martyr. This distinction, however, is understood as arising from the special virtue associated with certain sacred times and places, and it pertains only to believers. It cannot reasonably be extended to an individual steeped in sin or openly hostile to God, for whom death at such a

blessed time would not in itself constitute a divine favor or spiritual achievement.

5-3. The Death of a Believer

Some traditions describe the death of a believer itself as martyrdom.

A) The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "Whoever dies while loving the Family of Muḥammad dies a martyr." (Tabari Amoli, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 197) This tradition is widely known and has been transmitted in numerous Shiʿi and Sunni sources (Irbilī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 1, 107; Ṭabarī, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 197; Thaʿlabī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 8, 314). Nevertheless, when evaluated solely on the basis of its chain of transmission, it is considered weak.

B) From *Abū Jaʿfar* (AS): "Every believer is a martyr, even if he dies in his bed." (Ṭūsī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 676) This narration possesses an authentic chain of transmission. Its wording clearly indicates that even a believer who dies peacefully in bed is regarded as a martyr. The tradition further likens such a death to dying among the army of the Imam *Mahdī* (AJ).

5-4. Death Following the Performance of Righteous Deeds

Some traditions regard death following the performance of certain righteous acts as constituting martyrdom.

a. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever dies after making a righteous testament dies a martyr." (Rāwandī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 231; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 100, 200) This narration is *Mursal* (its chain is incomplete). It refers to a person who departs this life after

leaving behind a righteous final testament, indicating metaphorically that such an individual receives the reward and recompense of a martyr.

b. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever says every morning: "I seek refuge in God, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from Satan, the accursed," and then recites the last three verses of Surah *al-Ḥashr*, God appoints seven thousand angels to guard him and invoke blessings upon him until nightfall. If he dies on that day, he dies a martyr." (Shuʿayrī, n.d.: 48) This tradition presents another instance in which martyrdom is attributed not to death in battle but to perseverance in a particular devotional practice. The designation of such a person as a martyr therefore appears to emphasize the extraordinary spiritual reward attached to this act of worship rather than to indicate the application of the legal rulings specific to one killed in battle. The narration is *Mursal*. Nevertheless, it states that whoever recites the last three verses of Surah *al-Ḥashr* and dies on that day will receive the reward of a martyr. In interpreting this category of traditions, two possible understandings may be proposed. The first possibility is that the application of the title martyr to these individuals is figurative or analogical. According to this interpretation, they are not martyrs in the literal sense but are likened to martyrs in terms of their reward and spiritual rank. This understanding finds support in traditions employing expressions such as:

"Whoever is killed while defending his property has the status of a martyr." The second possibility is that the word martyr, as used in

the hadith literature, has undergone a genuine semantic expansion, extending beyond the battlefield martyr to include the categories described above. Determining which of these two interpretations is preferable requires examining a third group of traditions.

6. Traditions Demonstrating the Expanded Usage of Martyr

After examining the various categories of martyrs, including the battlefield martyr, the martyr who dies outside the immediate battlefield, and those described above as "Virtuous Martyrs," an important question remains: "Are these traditions merely intended to place certain deceased believers in the same category as martyrs with respect to their heavenly reward, or are they actually expanding and defining the concept of martyrdom itself?"

A contextual analysis of these traditions suggests that their principal purpose is to explain and broaden the meaning of the term martyr rather than simply to equate certain deceased individuals with martyrs in terms of reward.

This interpretation is reinforced by another group of traditions indicating that, within the language of the hadith literature, martyrdom is not confined exclusively to those killed on the battlefield. Rather, under certain circumstances other than death in combat, a person may also attain a degree of martyrdom.

1) *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī* narrated from his father, from *Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Jaʿfarī*, from *Jamīl ibn Darrāj*, from *ʿAmr ibn Marwān*, from *al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥaṣīrah*, from *Zayd ibn Arqam*, from *al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī* (AS), who said… (Barqī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 1, 163).

Imam *Ḥusayn* (AS) said: "There is no Shiʿi except that he is both truthful and a martyr. The narrator asked: "May I be your ransom! How can this be, when most Shiʿis die in their beds? The Imam replied: "Have you not read the Book of God in Surah *al-Ḥadīd*: "Those who believe in God and His messengers, they are the truthful ones and the martyrs in the sight of their Lord." The narrator says: "It was as though I had never noticed this verse before." The Imam then continued: "If martyrdom were limited to what you imagine it to be, then the number of martyrs would indeed be very small."

2) Imam Ali (AS) narrated from the Messenger of God (PBUH), in a report concerning the Prophet's visit to *ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah* during his illness… (Ibn Ḥayyūn, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 1, 226).

Imam Ali relates that while the Prophet was visiting *ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah* during his final illness, someone expressed surprise that *ʿAbd Allāh* had not attained martyrdom but was instead dying in his bed. The Messenger of God asked: "Whom among my community do you regard as a martyr?" They replied: "Is a martyr anyone other than one who is killed in the path of God while advancing against the enemy without turning his back?" The Prophet answered: "If that were so, the martyrs of my community would indeed be very few." He then explained: "A martyr is not only the person you have described, but also one who dies from plague, one who dies from severe intestinal illness, one who dies beneath a collapsed structure, one who drowns, and a woman who dies during childbirth." They asked: "O! Messenger of God, what does it mean for a woman to die in childbirth?" He replied: "It refers to a woman whose child

becomes lodged in her womb, resulting in her death."

3) From him, from his father, from *al-Naḍr ibn Suwayd*, from *Yaḥyā ibn ʿImrān al-Ḥalabī*, from *Ibn Muskān*, from *Abū Baṣīr*, from *Abū ʿAbd Allāh* (AS), who said: "The Imam said to me: "O! *Abū Muḥammad*, whoever among you dies while adhering to this cause is a martyr." I asked: "Even if he dies in his bed?" He replied: "Yes, by God, even if he dies in his bed. He is alive with his Lord and is provided for." (Barqī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 1, 164) Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) tells *Abū Baṣīr*: "O! *Abū Muḥammad*, whoever among you dies while remaining steadfast upon this faith is a martyr." *Abū Baṣīr* asked whether this also applied to someone who died peacefully in bed. The Imam replied: "Yes, by God. Even if he dies in his bed, he is alive with his Lord and receives His provision."

The first narration is weak in terms of transmission because *Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd Allāh* is an unknown narrator. His name does not appear in the standard biographical works, and this is the only narration in which he transmits from *Jamīl ibn Darrāj* (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 2, 68).

The second narration, found in "*Daʿāʾim al-Islām*," is likewise *Mursal*, since its complete chain of transmission is not provided (Ibn Ḥayyūn, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 1, 226).

The third narration, however, is authentic. Every transmitter in its chain has been declared reliable, and the same report also appears in *al-Kāfī* (Kulaynī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 8, 146; Najāshī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 76, 427, 230, 214, 441; Ṭūsī, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 363).

Moreover, the substance of the first two narrations is corroborated

by numerous other textual evidences, which, for the sake of brevity, will not be reproduced here. Various explanations have been proposed as to why the ordinary death of a believer is described as martyrdom.

One interpretation is that the believer is constantly prepared for death, just as the battlefield martyr enters combat fully aware of the possibility of being killed and with complete presence of heart and spiritual readiness.

Another explanation is that the believer continually awaits the uprising of Imam Mahdi (AJ) and hopes to attain martyrdom while fighting alongside him. According to this understanding, one who sincerely desires and is content with participating in a righteous cause is regarded as sharing in that cause, even if circumstances prevent its actual realization (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 5, 803).

7. The Degrees of Martyrdom According to the Traditions

From the body of traditions examined above, a new classification of martyrdom may be inferred. According to this analysis, the highest degree of martyrdom belongs to those who are killed in the path of God, whether on the battlefield itself or outside its immediate confines. The Qur'an's emphasis on the word "Killing" and the traditions' repeated use of the term "One who is killed" may indicate the superior spiritual rank of those who shed their blood for the sake of God.

The second rank may be assigned to those designated as martyrs who were not killed in battle.

An important point to emphasize here is that, although the

battlefield martyr differs from one killed outside the battlefield with respect to certain legal rulings, such as exemption from ritual washing and shrouding, this distinction does not necessarily imply a higher degree of martyrdom. Rather, the battlefield martyr is subject to different legal rulings due to the unique circumstances of his death.

Several considerations support treating those killed outside the battlefield on an equal footing with those killed in battle.

First, both categories share the common characteristic of being killed, unlike those who merely receive the designation or reward of a martyr while dying natural deaths.

Second, Islamic history contains numerous eminent figures who were killed outside the battlefield, and there is little basis for denying that their spiritual rank is at least equal to, and perhaps even greater than, that of those killed in battle. Admittedly, there may also be exceptional cases in which a person dies a natural death yet receives a reward equivalent to that of one who was killed in the path of God. At the same time, it should not be assumed that every instance of being killed automatically confers martyrdom. The traditions concerning one who is killed while defending himself against injustice contain an implicit warning against losing one's life in pursuit of purely worldly objectives. Furthermore, a number of the traditions that speak of the reward of martyrdom or expand the concept of martyrdom employ expressions of comparison rather than identity, such as: "…He is like one who was killed beneath the banner of *Qāʾim*." (Astarabadi, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 640)

On the basis of the traditions analyzed in this study, two elements

appear to play a decisive role in determining an individual's place within the hierarchy of martyrdom: "The manner of death, and the person's intention and purpose." Moreover, the concept of being killed is not restricted to warfare. Both the hadith literature and Islamic history contain numerous examples of individuals who were killed outside formal military conflict, several of which have been discussed above.

Conclusion

This study set out to clarify the conceptual scope of the term martyr in the Islamic hadith literature and to analyze the distinction between virtuous martyrs and those killed in battle. The principal findings may be summarized as follows:

1. The semantic expansion of martyrdom in the hadith literature. While the Noble Qur'an predominantly employs the vocabulary of being killed when referring to those who die in the path of God, the hadith literature extends the concept of martyrdom to numerous additional categories. This semantic expansion demonstrates that applying the title martyr to individuals outside the context of direct military combat is firmly rooted in the Islamic textual tradition and cannot be regarded as an unwarranted innovation.
2. The distinction between the spiritual ranks of martyrs. The findings indicate that although the title martyr is applied to all of the categories mentioned in the traditions, those who shed their blood in pursuit of divine objectives occupy a higher spiritual station. Their superiority derives not merely from participation in battle but from the sacrifice of their blood in the cause of God.

3. The principal criterion for classifying martyrs. The analysis suggests that being killed in the path of God should be regarded as the primary criterion in classifying the various forms of martyrdom. This criterion encompasses both those killed on the battlefield and those killed outside it, while distinguishing both groups from the virtuous martyrs, who die natural deaths yet are described as martyrs because of their faith, deeds, or exceptional spiritual merit. These findings have significant implications for a renewed understanding of the jurisprudential concept of martyrdom, for a more precise delineation of the various spiritual degrees of martyrs, and for a more comprehensive appreciation of the exalted status of the martyr within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Finally, although the precise determination of the spiritual ranks of martyrs ultimately belongs to God's exclusive knowledge, the evidence of the hadith literature provides sufficient grounds for affirming that different categories of martyrs occupy different degrees of spiritual excellence, even though all are included, in one sense or another, under the honorific title of martyr. Below is an academic English translation of the bibliography. Arabic titles have been transliterated, while Persian article titles have been translated into English. Standard scholarly transliteration has been used where appropriate.

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Methods of Citing the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* in the Commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an*

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Abstract

One of the most significant letters of Imam Ali (AS) preserved in *Nahj al-Balāghah* is his letter to *Mālik Ashta*r *Nakha'ī*, composed upon *Mālik*'s appointment as governor of Egypt. This letter, widely recognized as the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, has been cited by Muslim scholars in diverse ways throughout history. Among contemporary Qur'anic commentaries, *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an*, both supervised by Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi and authored by a team of scholars, frequently reference the Covenant. This study seeks to identify and classify the methods by which the

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Covenant is cited in these two commentaries, employing a descriptive-analytical approach. The findings demonstrate that commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* utilize the Covenant from a hermeneutical perspective, such as specifying the scope of general Qur'anic statements, clarifying qualifications attached to Qur'anic verses, and resolving textual ambiguities. Additionally, the Covenant is employed in semantic analysis, including the explanation of rare Qur'anic vocabulary and the expansion of the semantic range of Qur'anic terms.

Keywords: *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, Commentary Nemooneh, Commentary *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an*, Citation.

Introduction

The eloquent sayings of Imam Ali (AS) represent a significant intellectual and spiritual legacy for Muslims and humanity at large. His rhetorical excellence, literary beauty, and comprehensive teachings have been acknowledged by both scholars and the general public. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, compiled by *Sharīf Raḍī*, preserves a substantial portion of these teachings through selected sermons, letters, and aphorisms.

One of its most significant texts is Letter 53, commonly known as the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, which Imam Ali (AS) addressed to *Mālik Ashtar*. Among the most significant texts within *Nahj al-Balāghah* is Letter 53, commonly referred to as the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, addressed by Imam Ali (AS) to *Mālik Ashtar*. This letter articulates foundational principles and directives concerning political leadership, judicial administration, governance, and the establishment

of a just society. Analysis of the Covenant indicates that its guidance extends beyond the administration of Egypt, offering a model of governance relevant to diverse societies and historical contexts of *Nahj al-Balāghah* as a whole, the selection, structure, and ordering of its contents, was the work of *Sharīf Raḍī* (Pour Ezzat, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 7). Furthermore, the Covenant possesses a highly reliable chain of transmission. Shaykh *Ṭūsī* records its complete chain of narration under the biography of "*al-Aṣbagh ibn Nubātah*." (Ṭūsī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 88)

The profound meanings of the Covenant, together with its harmony with the Covenant's alignment with Qur'anic revelation and monotheistic teachings, have motivated scholars to explore its deeper meanings through various scholarly approaches. Among contemporary commentaries, *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an*, both produced under the supervision of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, frequently cite the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* in multiple contexts.

1. Research Background

To date, no independent article, book, or academic thesis has specifically examined the methods by which commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* cite the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*. Nevertheless, several studies have addressed related topics in a broader context.

- Nabhan (2013 AD/1393 SH) in the thesis "Imam Ali (AS) letter to *Mālik Ashtar* and Its Qur'anic Corroborations," examines the close relationship between this remarkable letter and the Holy Qur'an.
- Karimi and Zarei (2010 AD/1389 SH), in their article "The Status of

Imam Ali's Covenant to *Mālik Ashtar* in Islamic Sources," examine the Covenant's position and significance in Islamic literature.

- Mohammadi (2000 AD/1379 SH), in "A Bibliography of Imam Ali's Covenant to *Mālik Ashtar*," provides a comprehensive bibliography of studies devoted to the Covenant.
- Esmaeili (2022 AD/1401 SH), in "The Influence of Egypt's Cultural Context on the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*: A Faircloughian Discourse Analysis," examines the ideological formation and intellectual foundations of the Covenant in light of its social context.
- Eslami et al. (2014 AD/1393 SH), in "A Phenomenological Study of Imam Ali's Techniques for Peace: A Case Study of the Written Covenant Addressed to *Mālik Ashtar*," analyze the Covenant from a phenomenological perspective.
- Abd Khodaei et al. (2021 AD/1400 SH), in "An Examination of Imam Ali's Covenant to *Mālik Ashtar* from the Perspective of the Functions of Political Jurisprudence," analyze the Covenant through the lens of Islamic political jurisprudence.
- Ramezani (2021 AD/1400 SH), in "The Conceptual and Ethical Framework of Leadership and Governance from the Perspective of *Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib* (AS): Based on a Content Analysis of the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar al-Nakha'ī*," explores the ethical values of leadership articulated in the Covenant. Accordingly, the present article aims to identify and classify the methods and patterns by which the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* is cited in commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an*, thereby providing a focused contribution to the scholarship on these commentaries.

2. Methods and Types of Citation of the Covenant of *Mālik*

In numerous instances, commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* cite the Covenant of *Mālik* to clarify the meaning of Qur'anic verses or to resolve their ambiguity. These citations function at various levels, including textual indication (hermeneutical or semantic) and semantic analysis, among other approaches discussed below.

2-1. Clarifying and Elucidating the Qualification of a Qur'anic Verse Through the Covenant of *Mālik*

In several instances, the two aforementioned Qur'anic commentaries clarify and explicate the qualifying phrase of a Qur'anic verse by citing the Covenant of *Mālik*. For example, in Surah *al-Nisā'*: 59, obedience to God, the Messenger, and those vested with is stated in absolute terms. However, in Surah *al-Mumtaḥinah*: 12, the expression "And that they will not disobey you in what is right" implies that obedience to the Prophet is conditioned upon what is recognized as right, whereas in the earlier verse obedience appears unconditional. Since the Prophet (PBUH) is infallible and never commands wrongdoing, the question arises: 'Why does the verse include the qualification, "And that they will not disobey you in what is right"?' In commentary Nemooneh, Makarem Shirazi argues, on the basis of the Covenant, that this qualification serves as a model for all Islamic rulers who are not impeccable. Accordingly, obedience to a ruler or governor is obligatory only so long as his commands do not contradict the commands of God. He writes: "Although obedience to the Prophet (PBUH) is qualified by the phrase "In what is right," despite the fact

that the Prophet is impeccable and never commands evil, this expression may serve as a model for all commands issued by Islamic rulers. Such commands deserve respect and are binding only insofar as they conform to the teachings of the Qur'an and the principles of Islamic law, thereby falling within the meaning of "*Wa lā Yaʿṣīnaka fī Maʿrūf*." For this reason, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS), in his famous letter to the people of Egypt concerning *Mālik Ashtar*'s governorship, after praising him in the highest terms, concluded by saying: "Listen to him and obey his commands in whatever accords with the truth, for he is one of the swords of God." (Makarem Shirazi, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 24, 50) Analysis and Discussion: By citing the Covenant, Tafsir *Nemooneh* explains the function of the qualification contained in the verse. According to this interpretation, obedience to Islamic rulers is obligatory only when their commands align with those of God. The view that every command of any ruler is unconditionally binding, regardless of its nature or source, is inconsistent with both reason and Islamic law. The phrase "*Wa lā Yaʿṣīnaka fī Maʿrūf*" thus establishes an objective criterion: "A ruler should be obeyed only when his commands are consistent with the Qur'an and reason. If he commands otherwise, obedience is no longer obligatory."

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2-2. Clarifying the Ambiguity of a Qur'anic Verse through the Covenant

Some verses are ambiguous and a commentator clarify the verses ambiguity using the verses and traditions. In the terminology of

Qur'anic sciences, a *Mujmal* (ambiguous expression) is one whose intended meaning cannot be understood without further explanation, whereas a *Mubayyan* (clear expression) is one whose meaning is explicit (Zarkashī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 2, 184; Suyūṭī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 1, 385).

For example, Islamic teachings strongly encourage believers to maintain a favorable opinion of fellow Muslims, while unfounded suspicion is condemned in many Qur'anic passages (e.g., Yūnus: 36). On the other hand, the Qur'an states: "If they incline toward peace, then you should also incline toward it." (al-Anfāl: 61) This verse encourages accepting a ceasefire and ending armed conflict, even when the enemy proposes peace. The question therefore arises: 'After concluding a peace agreement or ceasefire, should Muslims maintain a favorable opinion of the enemy, or should they remain cautious and suspicious?' Furthermore, the verse continues with the command, "And put your trust in God." 'Does this imply that one may simply trust the enemy while relying solely upon God?'

Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an, in clarifying this ambiguity and explaining the prohibition against excessive trust in the enemy after peace has been concluded, cites the Covenant. It states: "Not every peace agreement is legitimate; rather, only a peace that preserves the dignity of the Muslims and establishes justice is valid. Imam Ali (AS) warned *Mālik* that after making peace with the enemy, he should remain vigilant and should not place excessive trust in them." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2005 AD/1426 AH: 10, 298)

It is evident that reliance upon God does not mean abandoning

sound management or acting negligently. As this discussion demonstrates, the verse is ambiguous about proper conduct toward an enemy after peace has been established, which is a particularly sensitive issue. Imam Ali (AS), with notable wisdom and foresight, advises *Mālik Ashtar* as follows:

"However, after concluding a peace treaty, remain exceedingly vigilant against your enemy, for he may have sought peace only to take you by surprise. Therefore, do not abandon prudence and foresight, and do not place your trust in him in this matter." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53)

According to Imam Ali's guidance, concluding a peace agreement should never lead to unquestioning trust in the enemy or to granting illegitimate concessions. History provides numerous examples in which excessive trust in adversaries has inflicted serious harm upon the Muslim community. Peace benefits the Islamic community only when it is accompanied by prudence and freedom from unwarranted optimism regarding the enemy. Such vigilance enables society to neutralize threats and safeguard its security. Consequently, even after negotiations succeed and a peace agreement is reached, complete trust in the opposing party remains inappropriate, since the possibility of deception and treachery always exists. Following an agreement, the opposing party's actions should continue to be carefully monitored, and any violation of the agreement should be met with a firm and decisive response.

2-3. Restricting the General Meaning of a Qur'anic Verse through the Covenant

At times, a Qur'anic verse conveys a general and all-inclusive

meaning, in contrast to verses that express a specific and limited ruling. One of the essential tasks of a Qur'anic exegete is to identify general and specific verses and interpret them in relation to one another (cf. Khakpour, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 45).

For example, in the verse: "If they incline toward peace, then you also incline toward it," (al-Anfāl: 61) God speaks of accepting a peace proposal from the enemy in general and unrestricted terms. The question arises whether accepting the enemy's offer of peace and placing one's trust in God constitute the entirety of the divine intent. A reference to the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* demonstrates that this is not the complete meaning; rather, the general wording of the verse is qualified. Several exegetes have relied upon the Covenant to establish this qualification. In Tafsir *Nemooneh*, the authors cite the Covenant while distinguishing between two categories of peace: "Legitimate Peace" and "Inappropriate Peace." The former is a peace agreement that fully safeguards the interests of the Muslim community, whereas the latter is one proposed by weak and hesitant Muslims when they are on the verge of victory. Referring to Imam Ali's instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*, the commentary states: He says: "Whenever your enemy invites you to a peace in which God's pleasure is secured, do not reject the proposal." The fact that the proposal originates from the enemy on the one hand, while at the same time being conditioned upon God's pleasure on the other indicates that peace is of two distinct types, as described above (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 21, 491).

Analysis and Discussion: Imam Ali's statement in the Covenant

serves as a specification of the general wording of the verse. He emphasizes that even after concluding peace; Muslims must remain alert to the enemy's deception. At times, an offer of peace is merely a tactical maneuver designed to create favorable conditions for launching a devastating attack against the Muslim community. Furthermore, Muslims must avoid both inappropriate peace agreements and those that neither secure God's pleasure nor protect the interests of the Muslim community. Constant vigilance against enemy deception is therefore required. Accordingly, the continuation of the verse itself addresses the possibility of enemy treachery. One of the most important principles in dealing with an adversary is to avoid trusting outward displays of peaceful intentions, since in many cases such negotiations have served merely as instruments for deception and for weakening the Muslim front.

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2-4. Explaining Rare Qur'anic Vocabulary through the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*

The semantic analysis of Qur'anic vocabulary occupies a position of great importance in Qur'anic studies. Since the Qur'an was revealed in the language of the Prophet's people, the correct meanings of its words must be determined in light of the meanings they carried in the Arabian milieu at the time of revelation. In this context, the significance of explaining Qur'anic vocabulary through the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* becomes evident, since its author, Imam Ali (AS) was among the foremost interpreters of the Qur'an during the period of revelation.

1) The Word "*Ghanam*" (Semantic Expansion)

 The term "*Ghanam*" in surah *al-Anfāl*: 41 is one example in which

Makarem Shirazi employs the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* to demonstrate the semantic expansion of the word: "And know that whatever (*Ghanimtum*) you acquire as gain, one-fifth of it belongs to Allah, the Messenger…"

This verse was originally revealed concerning the spoils of the Battle of *Badr* in the third year after the Hijrah in order to determine the distribution of one-fifth (*Khums*) of those spoils. Subsequently, however, scholars cited this verse as evidence that *Khums* applies not only to the spoils of *Badr* but also to other forms of gain. *Khums* is due on everything from which people derive benefit, whether the amount is small or large. As can be seen, although the immediate context concerns war booty, the specific reference to military spoils is set aside in light of the general expression "Whatever" (*Mā*) and the broader meaning of "*Ghanam*," which denotes any form of gain or benefit. Consequently, the general legal ruling is derived directly from the wording of the verse (Maʿrifat, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 93). From this discussion, it becomes clear that "*Ghanam*" possesses a broad semantic scope, encompassing all forms of profit or income.

Accordingly, based on the Qur'anic injunction, a portion of people's income should be allocated to the Prophet's Household (Ahl al-Bayt) and his relatives.

To demonstrate that this term also denoted income and general profit during the time of revelation, the authors of *Tafsir Nemooneh* cite the following passage from Imam Ali's (AS) letter to *Mālik al-Ashtar*: "Do not be like a ravenous beast toward the people of Egypt, considering the devouring of them as a source of income for yourself."

(Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53)

Tafsir Nemooneh further states: "In ordinary usage, "*Ghanīmah*" (gain) is mentioned in contrast to "*Gharāmah*" (loss or liability). Just as "*Gharāmah*" has a broad meaning encompassing every form of loss or liability, "*Ghanīmah*" likewise has a broad meaning and refers to any significant income or profit. This term is employed in *Nahj al-Balāghah* on numerous occasions with precisely this meaning. For example, in Letter 53 to *Mālik Ashtar*, Imam Ali (AS) states: "Do not be like a ravenous beast toward the people of Egypt, considering the devouring of them to be a gain (*Ghanīmah*) and a source of income for yourself." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 7, 177)

As demonstrated above, Tafsir *Nemooneh* relies on Imam Ali's use of the verb "*Taghtanim*" (to regard something as gain) in his address to *Mālik Ashtar* to explain the meaning of *Ghanam* as an uncommon Qur'anic term. Moreover, the commentary not only clarifies the word's lexical meaning but also demonstrates its semantic expansion by reference to the Covenant.

Consequently, "*Ghanimah*" is interpreted to encompass all substantial forms of income or profit, thereby establishing a broad semantic range for the term.

2) The Meaning of the Word "*Maqt*"

One of the less common Qur'anic terms is "*Maqt*." In verse 3 of Surah *al-Ṣaff*, God says: "Grievously hateful (*Kabura Maqtan*) in the sight of Allah is that you say what you do not do."

This verse identifies one of the defining characteristics of true

believers as the harmony between their words and their deeds. Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* explains: "There is a difference between saying something that one never intends to do and failing to do something that one had said one would do. The former is evidence of hypocrisy, whereas the latter indicates weakness of will. Sometimes a person makes a statement while already intending not to fulfill it; this is a form of hypocrisy. At other times, one sincerely intends to act but later changes one's mind; this reflects weakness of determination." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 19, 421)

Drawing upon Imam Ali's statement in the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, Tafsir Nemooneh further explains: "In any case, the above verse encompasses every form of violating a covenant, agreement, or promise, and according to some scholars, it even includes vows." Thus, in his instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*, Imam Ali (AS) said: "Beware of reminding people of your favors, exaggerating what you have done for them, or making promises that you fail to fulfill. For reminding others of your favors nullify your benevolence, magnifying your own deeds extinguishes the light of truth, and breaking promises provokes the anger of both God and the people." God, the Exalted, says: "Grievously hateful in the sight of Allah is that you say what you do not do." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53; Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 24, 63)

Analysis and Discussion: A careful reading of Imam Ali's words makes the meaning of "*Maqt*," namely, intense anger and profound abhorrence, entirely clear. Moreover, after employing the concept of "*Maqt*" in the sense of divine wrath, Imam Ali himself directly cites

the same Qur'anic verse. It is noteworthy that he invokes this verse specifically as a warning against breaking one's covenant. Tafsir *Nemooneh* derives an additional implication from Imam Ali's statement: "Violating covenants and failing to honor promises are themselves instances of saying what one do not do. Accordingly, the commentary concludes that the verse encompasses every breach of a covenant, agreement, promise, and even a religious vow, since a vow likewise constitutes a binding commitment."

2-5. Demonstrating the Absence of Abrogation through the Covenant

Knowledge of the abrogating and abrogated verses is one of the essential qualifications of a Qur'anic exegete, enabling him to avoid interpretive error. In the technical terminology of Qur'anic sciences, abrogation refers to "The repeal of a previous legal ruling through the enactment of a new ruling, where the earlier ruling appeared to be permanent, such that the new ruling replaces the former and reconciliation between the two becomes impossible." (Khu'ī, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 377; Ma'rifat, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 184)

Among the passages discussed in relation to abrogation are surah *Muḥammad* : 35 and surah *al-Anfāl*: 61. Both verses concern peace. In surah *Muḥammad*, God commands the believers not to call for peace when they are in a position of superiority, whereas in surah *al-Anfāl* instructs them to accept peace if the enemy inclines toward it and to place their trust in God, who is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. After a detailed discussion of these verses, Tafsir *Nemooneh* argues that no abrogation exists between them. It writes: "Following the preceding

verses concerning jihad, this verse highlights an important principle: "Those who are weak and lacking in faith often raise the issue of peace merely to escape the burdens of jihad and the hardships of the battlefield. Peace is undoubtedly desirable, but only in its proper place: "A peace that secures the lofty objectives of Islam and preserves the dignity, honor, and prestige of the Muslim community, not a peace that leads to humiliation and disgrace." Therefore, having heard the previous commands, do not become weak and do not invite the enemy to peace while you hold the upper hand: "So do not lose heart and call for peace while you are superior." (Muḥammd: 35) That is, when the signs of your victory and superiority have already become manifest, why should you nullify your achievements by proposing a peace that signify retreat and defeat?" (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 21, 489)

The commentary continues: "Each of these two verses relates to a distinct circumstance. One refers to reasonable (legitimate) peace, while the other concerns inappropriate (misplaced) peace. The first describes a peace that fully safeguards the interests of the Muslim community, whereas the second concerns a peace proposed by weak and hesitant Muslims when they stand on the verge of victory. Accordingly, the following verse 62 states that if the enemy seeks to deceive you through an offer of peace, you should never surrender to their deception or become anxious, for God is your supporter." (Makarem Shirazi et al., ibid: 21, 490)

Tafsir *Nemooneh* then traces this distinction between the two

categories of peace to Imam Ali's instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*: "The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS), referred to both kinds of peace in his instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*, saying: "Whenever your enemy invites you to a peace in which God's pleasure is secured, do not reject the proposal." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53; Makarem Shirazi et al., ibid: 21, 490)

Accordingly, Tafsir *Nemooneh* argues that, in light of the Covenant, each of the two Qur'anic verses addresses a separate legal and practical situation rather than one abrogating the other. One concerns legitimate and beneficial peace, while the other addresses misplaced and harmful peace. The former protects the interests of the Muslim community, whereas the latter reflects weakness and timidity at the threshold of victory. Consequently, the two verses should not be understood as constituting a case of abrogation.

2-6. Citing the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* to Explain the Wisdom and Philosophy of Matters

In several instances, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi cites the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar* to explain the underlying wisdom and rationale of certain Qur'anic injunctions and ethical principles.

1) The Wisdom and Philosophy of Faithfulness to Covenants and Agreements

One of the defining characteristics of true believers is fidelity to covenants and promises, a virtue strongly emphasized in both the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "He who does not honor his covenant has no religion."

(Rāwandī, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 39) To explain the philosophy behind remaining faithful to one's promises, Tafsir *Nemooneh* cites Imam Ali's instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*. The commentary infers that Imam Ali regarded the observance of covenants as one of the most important and universally accepted moral principles. It states that: "Imam Ali considered faithfulness to agreements to be among the most fundamental and universal ethical obligations. He emphasized that even the polytheists adhered to this principle because they had come to recognize the disastrous consequences of breaking agreements." The commentary further adds: "Islamic laws governing warfare state that even if a single ordinary Muslim soldier grants safe-conduct to one or more enemy combatants, all Muslims are obliged to honor that guarantee." (Makarem Shirazi et al., ibid: 21, 489)

2) The Wisdom of Honoring and Caring for the Poor and the General Public

According to Islamic teachings, an individual's status before God is determined by piety, righteousness, and moral worth rather than wealth or social standing. Accordingly, the Qur'an declares: "The believers are but brothers. Therefore, reconcile your brothers, and be mindful of God so that you may receive His mercy." (al-Ḥujurāt: 10)

Those who possess genuine faith are therefore brothers and sisters in religion, a relationship that requires mutual respect and affection regardless of wealth or social class. Among all members of society, Islam places particular emphasis on respecting and caring for the poor and the ordinary people because of the profound wisdom underlying this principle. Drawing upon Imam Ali's instructions in the Covenant, Tafsir

Nemooneh explains: "This divine admonition clearly demonstrates that Islam and the Qur'an attach special importance and respect to those who sincerely seek the path of truth, particularly among the oppressed and disadvantaged classes. Conversely, they adopt a firm stance toward those who have become intoxicated and arrogant because of abundant worldly blessings. God is not pleased that, in order to satisfy the wealthy and powerful, even the slightest hurt should be inflicted upon these sincere and oppressed seekers of truth. The reason is evident: throughout history, this group has always been the devoted supporters of Islam, the loyal defenders of the great religious leaders during times of hardship, and the self-sacrificing participants on the battlefields and in martyrdom." (Makarem Shirazi et al., ibid: 26, 123)

The commentary then traces this interpretation directly to Imam Ali's famous instructions to *Mālik Ashtar*: "The backbone of religion, the collective strength of the Muslims, and the reserve force against the enemy are none other than the masses of the people. Therefore, let your attention and affection be directed toward them." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53)

Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī explains these words of Imam Ali by identifying three characteristics of the common people:

1. They are the pillar of religion. The expression "Pillar" is used metaphorically, just as a building stands upon its columns; religion is upheld by the people.
2. They constitute the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community, forming the main body of society.

3. Owing to their large numbers, they are the primary source of military strength against external enemies, particularly since they comprised the fighting force of the Muslim community during Imam Ali's time. These characteristics, according to *Ibn Maytham*, justify Imam Ali's instruction that rulers should cultivate the affection of the general public and give priority to their interests over those of the privileged elite (Ibn Maytham, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 5, 242). Similar explanations are also found in *Khu'ī*'s "*Minhaj al-Barā'ah.*" (Khu'ī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 20, 186)

From this passage it becomes clear that the Qur'anic theme under discussion concerns showing respect and concern for the poor and the general populace. Imam Ali emphasizes that winning the affection of ordinary people and giving precedence to their support over that of the elite constitutes a fundamental principle of sound governance. Tafsir *Nemooneh* employs the Covenant to explain both the rationale and the wisdom underlying this principle.

3) Explaining the Reason for Fearing Other than God

One of the reprehensible moral traits in Islam is fear of anything other than God. Fear itself assumes different forms. Some forms, such as fear of God and fear of committing sin, are praiseworthy, whereas blameworthy fear refers to fear of created beings, such as fear of participating in jihad or fear of public opinion. Tafsir *Nemooneh* writes: "Because these weak believers or hypocrites are naturally timid and comfort-loving individuals who instinctively avoid warfare and every form of confrontation, their interpretation of events bears no resemblance to reality. Their fear, love of comfort, and unwillingness

to shoulder responsibility transform their suspicions into perceived realities. Consequently, they become pessimistic about everything, even regarding the Messenger of God and even God Himself." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1995 AD/1374 SH: 22, 48)

The commentary then supports this interpretation by citing Imam Ali's words in the Covenant: "Miserliness, cowardice, and greed are different blameworthy characteristics, all of which arise from having a negative opinion of God." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 54)

The Qur'anic verse under discussion addresses those who refused to participate in the *Ḥudaybīyyah* expedition and offered unjustified excuses for their absence. According to Tafsir *Nemooneh*, these excuses did not reflect their true motives, which were rooted in fear, distrust, miserliness, and insufficient reliance upon God. By referencing the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*, the commentary explains that cowardice, greed, and pessimism originate from deficient trust in God. Their misinterpretation of events was shaped by fear of hardship and reluctance to fulfill responsibilities, leading them to perceive their suspicions as justified.

4) The Wisdom of Ceasefire

Peace, ceasefire, and the establishment of security have always been among the primary goals pursued by all prophets and the righteous servants of God. Accordingly, throughout the life of the Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH), he was never known to initiate a war. This is because the vitality and progress of religion do not depend on warfare and bloodshed. Rather, since religion appeals to human reason, conscience, and innate nature, its message is conveyed far

more effectively through peace, wisdom, and good conduct than through resorting to the sword.

Imam Ali (AS) states: "I have found peace and reconciliation to be more effective than war, so long as they do not lead to the humiliation of Islam." (Laythi Wāsiṭī, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 506)

Even when war becomes unavoidable, peace remains the preferred option whenever its conditions are met, reflecting Islam's fundamental reluctance toward bloodshed. Thus, the Qur'an declares: "If they incline toward peace, then you also incline toward it, and place your trust in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (al-Anfāl: 61)

This verse indicates that even if the enemy proposes peace, Muslims should be prepared to accept it, since peace offers significant benefits and profound wisdom. Imam Ali highlights these benefits in his Covenant to *Mālik Ashtar*, stating: "For in peace are secured the comfort of your soldiers, your own peace of mind, and the security of your country." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53)

Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an, while citing the Covenant, states: "Islamic traditions strongly emphasize the establishment of peace and reconciliation within human societies. It has even been narrated that, in Imam Ali's covenant to *Mālik Ashtar*, one of the distinguishing characteristics of an Islamic government is its commitment to establishing peace." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2005 AD/1426 AH: 10, 297)

Accordingly, the commentary explains that the rationale for accepting a peace proposal from the enemy lies in the benefits it secures, namely, the comfort and relief of soldiers, greater security for

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cities, and psychological tranquility for government officials. It attributes this understanding directly to the Covenant of *Mālik Ashtar*.

Ibn Maytham similarly explains: "Imam Ali warned *Mālik* not to reject a peace agreement that was pleasing to God when the enemy invited him to it. He drew his attention to the benefits and advantages of such a peace. At the same time, he instructed him to remain extremely cautious of the enemy after reconciliation, emphasizing the necessity of exercising prudence and warning him not to rely upon any favorable opinion that peace with the enemy might create. He further demonstrated the necessity of such caution through an implicit analogy." (Ibn Maytham, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 5, 301)

Thus, *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* employs the Covenant to explain that the wisdom behind accepting an enemy's offer of peace lies in ensuring the well-being of the armed forces, strengthening public security, and providing peace of mind for government authorities.

2-7. Administrative Citation of the Covenant

The Covenant is among the greatest and most comprehensive documents on governance and public administration in Islamic thought. It is the longest directive that Imam Ali (AS) addressed to *Mālik Ashtar* and, according to some commentators on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, represents Imam Ali's most complete political and administrative charter for governing a state (Husseini Shirazi, n.d.: 4, 142).

In this Covenant, Imam Ali (AS) outlines the most fundamental principles of leadership. He begins by reminding the governor of the primary objectives of authority, governance, and leadership, principles

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upon which the entire political order depends. He then explains the ethical and practical requirements for governing the country and administering its cities. Finally, he discusses the various social classes upon whom the prosperity of society depends, assigning each its proper place, before concluding with ethical and political instructions, some directed toward all people and others specifically intended for government officials, close associates, advisers, and the governor himself (Baḥrānī, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 5, 228).

Both commentaries *Nemooneh* and *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* cite the Covenant in discussing several important principles of public administration.

1) Principles Governing the Appointment of Judges

The fair administration of justice constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of governance in an Islamic society. Indeed, judicial integrity influences every aspect of government, and a just judge occupies an exceptionally elevated position in Islam. In the Covenant of *Mālik*, Imam Ali lays down remarkably comprehensive principles for selecting and appointing judges. Under the heading "The Governing Principles behind the Appointment of Judges," *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* observes: "The qualities and regulations concerning judicial appointment contained in the Covenant constitute one of the most remarkable legal frameworks for selecting judges. Comparable principles have neither been found nor systematically formulated in any other religious or legal tradition as guidelines issued by the leader of an Islamic government for appointing judges throughout the Islamic territories." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2005 AD/1426 AH: 10, 133)

Thus, *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* skillfully utilizes the Covenant to identify the qualifications required for judicial office and to explain Imam Ali's standards for selecting individuals worthy of this crucial responsibility.

2) The Secret to Sustainable Reform: Improving the Affairs of Cities

At times, an Islamic ruler may undertake sincere efforts toward reform, yet those reforms fail to endure. Imam Ali identifies both the cause of this problem and its solution in one of the passages of the Covenant, a passage that has received considerable attention from later commentators. Imam Ali instructs *Mālik*: "Consult frequently with scholars and wise men concerning the affairs of your provinces and regarding those measures through which previous generations succeeded in bringing prosperity and reform to their cities." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53)

This luminous statement identifies two essential principles for ensuring lasting reform:

1. Maintaining close association with scholars;

2. Engaging in continual consultation with wise and experienced experts.

Both principles are strongly emphasized throughout Islamic teachings. Commenting on Qur'an 4:135 under the heading "Principles Governing Social Relations," *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* draws upon this passage of the Covenant and writes: "A beautiful lesson may be derived from this section of the Covenant: "Government officials and Muslim rulers are advised to seek counsel from specialists in every political and social matter." They should never make important governmental decisions without consulting experts in the relevant field." (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2005 AD/1426 AH: 10, 135)

Accordingly, the commentary highlights one of the Covenant's major administrative principles: the use of qualified advisers and consultation with competent experts as the key to solving societal problems and ensuring the durability of political reform.

3) Trust in the People

Within the Alavid model of governance, one of the most important administrative principles is trust in the people. This principle may also be inferred from several Qur'anic verses, including surah *Āli 'Imrān*: 159, where God instructs the Prophet to pardon the believers, seek forgiveness for them, and consult them in public affairs. The verse therefore implies that the Prophet should place confidence in the people and involve them in decision-making.

While commenting on this verse under the heading "Reliance upon the People," *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* cites the Covenant of *Mālik* and writes: "Imam Ali instructed *Mālik* to place his trust in the general public and to avoid relying upon the privileged elite." He said: "Let the most beloved of affairs to you be those that are most moderate in truth, most comprehensive in justice, and most inclusive in securing the satisfaction of the people; for the anger of the general public nullifies the satisfaction of the elite, whereas the displeasure of the elite is rendered insignificant when the people are content. The privileged classes invariably impose the heaviest burdens upon the government. They offer the least assistance in times of hardship, are the least satisfied with justice, and are the most persistent in their demands, the least grateful for favors received, and the slowest to

accept refusal and the least steadfast during times of difficulty. In contrast, it is the masses of the people who constitute the firm pillars of religion, the united body of the Muslims, and the reserve force for defense. Therefore, let your inclination and affection always be directed toward them." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 53; Makarem Shirazi et al., 2005 AD/1426 AH: 10, 131)

Accordingly, *Nafaḥāt al-Qur'an* interprets Imam Ali's instructions in surah *Āli 'Imrān*: 159 as establishing an important administrative principle: rulers should place their trust in the general public rather than rely primarily on the privileged elite. The commentary therefore presents public trust and popular support as essential foundations of effective and just governance.

Conclusion

As the foremost interpreter of the Qur'an after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Imam Ali (AS), in his extraordinary Covenant addressed to *Mālik Ashtar al-Nakha'ī*, recognized as the foremost interpreter of the Qur'an after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), presented in his Covenant to *Mālik Ashtar al-Nakha'ī* a comprehensive charter of governance principles and methods, characterized by exceptional precision and insight. The close relationship and harmony between the Covenant's expressions and Qur'anic verses have endowed it with significant exegetical value, securing its prominent place in Qur'anic interpretation. As a result, many Qur'anic exegetes have relied on the Covenant to achieve a more nuanced and scholarly understanding of the Qur'an, particularly regarding its deeper layers of meaning. Both

commentaries have used Qur'anic passages in the interpretation, difficult lexical expressions, specifying the scope of general Qur'anic statements, assisting in determining that certain verses have not been abrogated, and refuting incorrect interpretive opinions.

From a philosophical and wisdom-oriented perspective, the two commentaries also employ the Covenant to explain the underlying rationale behind Qur'anic injunctions. These include the wisdom of honoring covenants and agreements, as well as the reasons why Islamic rulers should show affection, concern, and respect toward the general public and the poor.

In the field of governance and administration, the Covenant is likewise cited under various Qur'anic verses to derive practical managerial principles, including methods for educating and training administrators and guidelines for how Islamic leaders should interact with and govern the people.

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The "Deficiency of Intellect" Sermon in *Nahj al-Balāghah*: An Examination of the Approaches of Commentators and Researchers

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Abstract

Nahj al-Balāghah, the collection of Imam Ali's (AS) sermons, letters, and sayings, has attracted the attention of commentators and exegetes since its compilation. In the contemporary period as well, numerous

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scholars have written commentaries on the entire work or on selected sections. Among its sermons, Sermon 80, commonly known as the "Deficiency of Intellect" sermon, has received exceptional attention because it contains explicit statements criticizing women. The present study investigates the following question: ‘How have Muslim commentators and researchers approached this controversial sermon?’ If they have defended or endorsed it, or alternatively criticized or rejected it, ‘What intellectual assumptions and methodological approaches have informed their positions?’ The purpose of this study is not to analyze the content of the sermon itself, but rather to examine the foundations and reasons underlying the diverse interpretive approaches adopted by commentators and scholars toward the sermon and its implications. The significance of this study lies in both its historical and social dimensions. Historically, the sermon has become intertwined with longstanding Sunni-Shiʿi debates. Socially, its implications, particularly in the modern era, have become the subject of intense scholarly discussion and controversy. Moreover, given the considerable body of research devoted to this sermon, a systematic analysis of the various interpretive approaches has become increasingly necessary. Using a descriptive-analytical method based on library research, this study first describes how commentators and researchers have engaged with Sermon 80 and then analyzes the intellectual premises underlying their interpretations. The findings indicate a clear distinction between the approaches of classical, traditional commentators, who generally extended the sermon’s criticism to women as a whole, and those of most contemporary

researchers. A number of modern scholars have attempted either to question the authenticity of the sermon's chain of transmission or, while affirming the dignity and status of women, to defend its attribution to Imam Ali (AS) by offering contextual and interpretive explanations. The study concludes that classical Sunni commentators, such as *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, although acknowledging that the sermon was delivered in the context of the Battle of the Camel and *ʿĀyishah*'s participation in that conflict, nevertheless regarded its criticism of women as consistent with the patriarchal worldview of their own historical context. Some contemporary traditionalists have adopted a similar position. In contrast, many modern scholars, finding the condemnation of women incompatible with their inherent human dignity and rights, have sought to reinterpret the sermon in a manner consistent with contemporary understandings of women's status. Others have rejected attributing the sermon to Imam Ali (AS) altogether, arguing that its content is incompatible with the teachings of the Qur'an.

Keywords: *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 80, Women in the Teachings of Imam Ali (AS), Approaches of Commentators and Researchers, the "Deficiency of Intellect" Sermon.

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Introduction

Nahj al-Balāghah, owing especially to its eloquence, depth of meaning, and exceptional authority, has consistently attracted the attention of Muslim scholars and writers. Since the early centuries of Islam, nearly one hundred commentaries have been written on this

work. Among the earliest is that of *Abul Ḥasan Bayhaqī* (d. 565 AH), while the most celebrated are those of *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd* (d. 656 AH) and *Ibn Maytham* (d. 679 AH). Ostadi (1992 AD/1316 SH) has identified approximately 400 books, commentaries, dissertations, and articles devoted to *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Ostadi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 353). Among these, only the published commentaries currently available constitute the corpus examined in the present study.

Among the sermons of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 80, numbered Sermon 79 in some editions and commonly known as the Sermon of the Deficiency of Intellect has received more scholarly attention than any other. The sermon contains statements that criticize women and warn against following them, even in matters regarded as good. Its text and translation are as follows:

"O! People! Women are deficient in faith, fortune, and intellect. The deficiency of their faith is due to their abstention from prayer and fasting during their menstrual periods. The deficiency of their intellect is evidenced by the fact that the testimony of two women equals that of one man. The deficiency of their fortune is that their inheritance is one-half that of men. Therefore, beware of wicked women, and even with the virtuous among them remain cautious. Do not obey them even in what is right, lest they become encouraged to expect obedience in what is wrong."

The issue addressed in this study, one that has occupied the minds of numerous Muslim scholars from the earliest periods until the present and has generated a substantial body of modern scholarship, is the interpretive approach adopted by commentators and researchers

toward this controversial sermon.

Specifically, when some scholars reject either the sermon's content or its attribution to Imam Ali (AS), 'What intellectual assumptions underlie their position?' Conversely, 'When others defend its implications, what methodological and interpretive frameworks shape their defense?'

The principal research question is therefore: 'On what intellectual and interpretive approaches are the responses of classical commentators, modern commentators, and contemporary researchers to Sermon 80 of *Nahj al-Balāghah* based?'

The hypothesis of this study is that the disagreements among commentators and researchers concerning the Sermon of the Deficiency of Intellect stem primarily from differences in their epistemological assumptions, social contexts, and hermeneutical methodologies. Accordingly, these diverse interpretations can be broadly classified into two major trends: a traditionalist approach and a contemporary re-interpretive approach.

The importance of this study is threefold. First, numerous commentaries on Sermon 80 have been published but have not yet been examined collectively. Second, a considerable number of contemporary studies have also appeared on this sermon. The accumulated scholarship has now reached a stage that calls for systematic classification, evaluation, and analysis of both commentaries and modern research. Third, because of changing social realities and evolving conceptions of gender in the modern world, the sermon's content has acquired renewed social sensitivity and

significance, making a comprehensive study of its reception both timely and necessary.

The objective of this study, which is fundamentally concerned with identifying the underlying assumptions and interpretive approaches of commentators and researchers, is to develop a general framework for understanding how different interpretive orientations, such as traditional or text-centered, theological-doctrinal, historical-critical, social or contextual, and modernist or revisionist approaches, influence the interpretation of a representative religious text.

Given the nature of the research, the study employs library-based research for data collection, a descriptive method to present its theoretical foundations, and an analytical approach to interpret and explain its findings. In other words, the research combines documentary investigation with descriptive-analytical methodology. The authors first examine published commentaries and scholarly studies on *Nahj al-Balāghah*'s Sermon 80, collecting and classifying all relevant discussions. They then analyze these materials using a descriptive-analytical approach to address the research question.

Regarding the theoretical framework, it should be noted that the primary concern of this study is not to determine the sermon's authenticity or inauthenticity, but rather to identify the interpretive approaches adopted by commentators and researchers in engaging with it. Accordingly, the study's theoretical foundation draws on theories of textual interpretation, hermeneutics, the historicity of understanding, and the influence of social and intellectual contexts on the interpretation of religious texts. In this perspective, commenting

on or interpreting *Nahj al-Balāghah* is not merely a reflection of the text's apparent meaning; rather, it constitutes a process of reproducing meaning across different historical and social contexts. Therefore, analyzing how commentators and researchers have approached Sermon 80 requires careful attention to the factors that influence interpretation. From a hermeneutical perspective, textual understanding is historical in nature and conditioned by the interpreter's intellectual horizon. No interpreter approaches a text free from presuppositions or historical circumstances. On this basis, the differences between traditional commentaries and contemporary studies may be understood as the result of differing historical and social horizons. Traditional commentators interpreted the sermon within a patriarchal cultural environment and in light of the prevailing assumptions of their time, whereas contemporary researchers have approached it in light of modern discussions concerning women's rights, human equality, and critical reinterpretations of religious texts.

Approach analysis focuses not merely on the content of an interpretation but also on the assumptions and factors that shape it. The principal approaches in religious studies include: "The traditional or text-centered approach, the theological-doctrinal approach, the historical-critical approach, the social or contextual approach; and the modernist or revisionist approach."

Each of these approaches entails its own interpretive principles when engaging with religious texts.

According to the sociology of knowledge, the emergence and interpretation of ideas are inseparable from their social contexts, and

religious thought is inevitably influenced by the cultural and social structures of every historical period. Accordingly, traditional commentaries on *Nahj al-Balāghah* should be understood in relation to the social and cultural structures of their own times, while modern reinterpretations should likewise be viewed as products of contemporary intellectual and social developments, particularly the expansion of scholarship on women's rights and gender studies, which has significantly influenced recent readings of Sermon 80.

The theoretical framework adopted in this study integrates historical-social hermeneutics with the analysis of interpretive approaches to religious texts. Within this framework, commentators' and researchers' engagement with Sermon 80 is understood as being shaped by three principal variables:

- The interpreter's epistemological presuppositions, including theological, hadith, juridical, and anthropological beliefs regarding women, religious texts, and the authority of traditions;
- The historical and social context, including cultural conditions, gender structures, social relations, and the prevailing intellectual climate of the interpreter's era;
- The interpretive approach, including traditional textualism, theological apologetics, historical-critical interpretation, and modern revisionist readings.

1. Literature Review

Previous studies on Sermon 80 of *Nahj al-Balāghah* have generally focused on interpreting the sermon itself and resolving its apparent

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ambiguities rather than examining how commentators have approached and critiqued it, which constitutes the central concern of the present research. Nevertheless, all previous studies related to the sermon may be regarded as part of the background literature for this investigation.

- Among the earliest works is *Fayḍ al-Islām*'s translation and commentary. In his interpretive translation, *Fayḍ al-Islām* (1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 179) argues that the sermon primarily concerns *ʿĀyishah* and her supporters.
- Jaʿfari (1997 AD/1376 SH: 11, 240-302), while accepting the authenticity of the sermon, maintains that the three deficiencies attributed to women are incompatible with Qur'anic teachings.

  Another group of scholars accepts the apparent wording of the sermon while maintaining that women generally lack the deficiencies described therein and may, in some respects, even surpass men.
- In his article "An Examination of the Status and Role of Women from Imam Ali's Perspective in Social Issues," Janati (2001 AD/1380 SH: 38-44) accepts the notion of women's "Deficiency of Intellect" but argues that it refers only to practical and experiential reasoning within the social conditions of that historical period. He attributes the apparent contradiction to the prevailing social circumstances of the time.
- In "Woman in the Mirror of Majesty and Beauty," Javadi Amoli (2006 AD/1385 SH: 368-373) attempts to provide a logical and convincing explanation for Imam Ali's statement.

- In their article "The Status and Rights of Women in *Nahj al-Balāghah*," Saremi and Majidi (2012 AD/1391 SH: 33-46) emphasize Imam Ali's profound respect for women and therefore reject the attribution of the sermon to him.
- In "The Semantics of Faith in the Tradition "Women Are Deficient in Faith," Tabataba'i Amin (2013 AD/1392 SH: 51-72) argues that the sermon suffers from weaknesses in its chain of transmission and interprets "Deficiency of Faith" as referring not to a deficiency in belief but to a reduction in spiritual tranquility.
- In his article "A New Perspective on Describing Women as Deficient in Intellect," Masjedi (2015 AD/1394 SH: 57-78) offers an alternative interpretation of the sermon and, in defense of women's rights, considers its literal meaning highly improbable.
- In "The Sociology of Language in Explaining Women's Social Status in Sermon 80 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*," Nazarbeigi (2015 AD/1394 SH: 109-121) argues that the sermon contains no insult to women. Even accepting its apparent wording, he contends that it may be understood as referring only to women who have departed from their natural identity.
- In his master's thesis "An Analysis of the Traditions on Women's Deficiency of Faith," Nazemi (2020 AD/1399 SH: 23-42) argues that the concept of women's deficiency of faith is compatible with rational principles and does not conflict with either Qur'anic verses or prophetic traditions.
- In the master's thesis "Women's Intellect from the Perspective of Islam," Saeid (2016 AD/1395: 1-136) argues that most traditions

describing women as deficient in intellect are *Mursal* (having interrupted chains of transmission) and are inconsistent with the apparent teachings of the Qur'an.

- Finally, in the master's thesis "A Critical Analysis of the Foundations, Methodology, and Views of *Amīnah Inloz* on Shiʿi Hadith," Sheykhi (2018 AD/1397 SH: 16-165) argues that the sermon applies exclusively to *ʿĀyishah* rather than to women in general.

As noted above, a considerable body of scholarship has been devoted to the Sermon on the "Deficiency of Intellect," and a wide range of interpretations has been advanced. The sheer volume of these studies suggests that the subject has reached a point of scholarly saturation. At the same time, this abundance of research highlights the need for a critical assessment that evaluates and classifies these works according to their underlying interpretive approaches. The present article therefore seeks to offer a fresh and critical perspective by categorizing and analyzing interpretations of this religious text (specifically, Sermon 80) in light of their social, historical, and cultural contexts, while also assessing the interaction between textual interpretation and these contextual variables.

2. Discussion: The Sermon on the Deficiency of Intellect in Commentaries on *Nahj al-Balāghah* and Modern Scholarship

As noted earlier, the corpus examined in this study does not encompass every commentary ever written on *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Rather, it is limited to those commentaries that have been published. Accordingly, unpublished manuscript commentaries fall outside the

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scope of this research and are not cited as sources. The published commentaries consulted, together with their treatment of Sermon 80, are presented below in chronological order.

2-1. "*Maʿārij Nahj al-Balāghah*" by *Abū al-Ḥasan Bayhaqī* (d. 565 AH)

Bayhaqī, who apparently adhered to the Shiʿi School, affirmed the authenticity of Sermon 80 and described women as "Ignorant." He regarded the sermon as applying to women in general rather than to a particular individual or circumstance. Considering the sermon's criticism of women to be justified, he confined his commentary primarily to the phrase, "Do not obey them even in what is right," apparently viewing this statement as requiring particular explanation. He interpreted it as a prohibition against men's unconditional obedience to women (Bayhaqī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 154), despite the fact that the wording of the passage is general and contains no explicit qualification.

2-2. "*Sharḥ Minhāj al-Barāʿah*" by *Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī* (d. 573 AH)

Rāwandī, a Shiʿi jurist and theologian, expressed no doubt regarding the attribution of the sermon to Imam Ali (AS). He even regarded it as originating from a Prophetic tradition. Although he did not mention *ʿĀyishah* by name, he identified the occasion of the sermon as a condemnation of her conduct. His wording suggests that he placed primary responsibility for her involvement in the events on *Ṭalḥah* and *Zubayr*, thereby implicitly excusing her to some extent. Nevertheless, by citing a Prophetic tradition similar to Sermon 80,

Rāwandī interpreted its implications as universal rather than restricted to *ʿĀyishah* (Rāwandī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 1, 310). Thus, although he viewed *ʿĀyishah* as the immediate referent of the sermon, he did not limit its application exclusively to her.

2-3. "*Ḥadāʾiq al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*" by Quṭb al-Dīn Kaydarī Bayhaqī (fl. 576 AH)

Kaydarī accepted the authenticity of the sermon and commented only on the statements "Women are deficient in faith" and "Do not obey them in what is right." His explanation of the latter closely resembles that of his fellow townsman *Abū al-Ḥasan Bayhaqī* in "*Maʿārij Nahj al-Balāghah*." (Kaydarī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 1, 375)

2-4. "*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*" by Ibn *Abī al-Ḥadīd Muʿtazilī* (d. 656 AH)

Among the alleged deficiencies attributed to women, *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd* devoted particular attention to the notion of deficient faith. He interpreted the sermon as applying to all women and argued that because human actions are manifestations of faith, the incompleteness of women's deeds necessarily implies incompleteness in their faith. However, despite this general interpretation at the beginning of his discussion, he later identified *ʿĀyishah* as the principal referent of the Imam's remarks and considered these deficiencies applicable to her as well. Nevertheless, he maintained that she ultimately repented, was forgiven, and would enter Paradise. He further characterized women as naturally inclined toward excessive desire and regarded this tendency as justification for the injunction against unquestioning

obedience to them, arguing that such obedience would only strengthen these inclinations (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229).

2-5. "*Sharḥ Miṣbāḥ al-Sālikīn*" by *Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī* (d. 689 AH)

Ibn Maytham, a Shiʿi hadith scholar, jurist, and theologian, had no reservations concerning the authenticity of the Imam's words. He made considerable effort to substantiate both the existence of the deficiencies attributed to women and the correctness of the Imam's statements. His commentary makes it clear that he did not regard the sermon as referring to any specific woman; rather, he interpreted it as addressing women in general. Although he acknowledged Islam's respect for women, he nevertheless warned against excessive deference toward them. He interpreted the final portion of the sermon, which advises caution even in one's relations with righteous women, as a practical strategy for avoiding the harmful consequences of excessive intimacy with women and yielding to some of their worldly desires (Baḥrānī, 1950 AD/1370 AH: 2, 480-484). It appears that *Ibn Maytham*'s principal concern was not to criticize *ʿĀyishah* specifically, but rather to defend the text itself through a traditional, text-centered reading that extends the sermon's criticism to women as a class.

2-6. "*Al-Dībāj al-Waḍīʾ fī Kashf Asrār Kalām al-Waṣī*" by *Abū al-Ḥasan Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah Ḥusaynī* (d. 745 AH)

Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah explicitly identified *ʿĀyishah* as the occasion for the sermon. He accepted all the deficiencies attributed to women and endorsed the instruction not to obey women even in matters that are

good, arguing that such caution prevents them from becoming emboldened to urge men toward wrongdoing. He also regarded women's alleged deficiency in faith as implying a diminished spiritual rank before God (Ḥusaynī, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 2, 561-563).

2-7. "*Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn wa Tadhkirat al-ʿĀrifīn*" by *Fatḥullāh Kāshānī* (d. 988 AH)

Mullā Fatḥullāh Kāshānī, a prominent Shiʿi exegete, concentrated primarily on the issue of the testimony of two women being equivalent to that of one man. He attributed the legal insufficiency of a single woman's testimony to women's greater tendency toward forgetfulness, which he associated with the predominance of moisture in their physical constitution according to traditional medicine. Having accepted the existence of the deficiencies mentioned in the sermon, he regarded the command not to obey women as a necessary consequence of what he described as their flawed judgment, weak intellect, and unsound understanding (Kāshānī, 1958 AD/1378 AH: 1, 340-341).

2-8. "*Al-Muqtaṭaf min Biḥār al-Anwār*" by *Allamah Majlisī* (d. 1110 AH)

In this abridged commentary derived from "*Biḥār al-Anwār*," *Majlisī,* the renowned Shiʿi hadith scholar and jurist, argued that human actions are directly dependent upon one's faith. Consequently, he maintained that the incompleteness of women's actions necessarily reflects a deficiency in their faith. By the same reasoning, he considered women's reduced testimony and inheritance to be justified by deficiencies in intellect and conduct. Regarding the instruction not

to obey women even in what is right, he explained that the Imam was not prohibiting righteous actions themselves; rather, he meant that good deeds should be performed solely because they are intrinsically good, not merely because women have recommended them (Ansariyan, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 221).

2-9. "*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*" by *Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (d. 1323 AH)

In his commentary, where Sermon 80 is numbered as Sermon 78, *Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, like the classical commentators, accepts the deficiencies attributed to women. He explains them by arguing that women are primarily occupied with household responsibilities, family affairs, and childrearing; consequently, God has endowed them with only the degree of intellectual capacity necessary for these responsibilities (ʿAbduh, 1893 AD/1323 AH: 1, 126). It is noteworthy that although *ʿAbduh* was a jurist and one of the leading religious reformers of modern Egypt, he did not criticize the attribution of deficiencies in intellect, faith, or inheritance to women. Instead, following the classical tradition, he merely sought to clarify the apparently problematic phrase, "Do not obey them in what is right," arguing that it should not be understood as a prohibition against performing righteous deeds, but rather as a warning against unquestioning obedience to women (ibid.).

2-10. "*Minhāj al-Barāʿah*" by *Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Hāshimī al-Khūʾī* (d. 1324 AH)

Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Hāshimī Khūʾī, known as "*Amīn al-Ruʿāyā*," an

Imami jurist and scholar, entertained no doubt regarding the attribution of the sermon to Imam Ali (AS). Drawing extensively upon Qur'anic verses and traditions from the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (AS), he made considerable efforts to demonstrate the validity of the Imam's statements. His commentary relies heavily on that of *Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī*. In defending the three deficiencies attributed to women, he presents detailed arguments grounded in Qur'anic, hadith, and jurisprudential evidence, affirming their legitimacy and religious validity. At the same time, in discussing the honor accorded to women, he cites traditions from the Prophet and the Imams describing the virtues of righteous women. Nevertheless, in explaining the concluding passages of the sermon, which caution against both righteous and unrighteous women,he also cites traditions emphasizing the inadvisability of consulting women in decision-making (Hāshimī al-Khūʾī, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 5, 302-324).

2-11. "*Fī Ẓilāl Nahj al-Balāghah*" by *Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyah* (d. 1979 AD/1400 AH)

Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyah, the Lebanese Shiʿi scholar and exegete, discusses Sermon 80 (numbered 78 in his commentary) in response to the claim that it merely reflected Imam Ali's hostility toward *ʿĀyishah* following the Battle of the Camel. He offers five responses to this objection. In his fifth and final argument, *Mughnīyah* maintains that the contents of the sermon derive from a Prophetic tradition. He also cites Shaykh *Muḥammad ʿAbduh*'s view that God granted women intellectual capacities proportionate to the needs

arising from their domestic and familial responsibilities (Mughnīyah, 1967 AD/1387 SH: 2, 121-124).vThus, although *Mughnīyah*'s overall interpretive method is educational and attentive to contemporary concerns, his treatment of this sermon reflects a traditional apologetic approach that defends both its authenticity and its content.

2-12. "*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*" by *Sayyid ʿAbbās Ali Mūsawī* (d. 1413 AH)

The Lebanese Shiʿi scholar Sayyid *ʿAbbās Ali Mūsawī*, drawing upon *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*'s commentary, interprets the sermon as referring primarily to *ʿĀyishah*. While accepting the notion of women's deficiency in faith, he excludes the impeccable women from this general rule. He further argues that history demonstrates men's superiority in virtually every field of knowledge and achievement, while women's contributions have remained comparatively limited. According to *Mūsawī,* although women often equal or even outnumber men in population, they nevertheless remain subordinate to men, which he regards as further evidence of their intellectual deficiency. Discussing the Qur'anic laws of inheritance, he justifies women's smaller share by citing several legal obligations imposed on men: women are not required to provide financial maintenance, they receive a bridal gift, and their husbands are responsible for their housing, food, and clothing. *Mūsawī* also portrays women as especially skilled at deception and therefore considers it obligatory to avoid wicked women. He appeals to Qur'anic passages, particularly those describing the great cunning of women.[1] At the same time, he

1. (Surah Yūsuf: 28): "*Inna Kaydakunna ʿAẓīm*."

emphasizes the sermon's warning concerning even righteous women, arguing that because women are generally emotional and preoccupied with particular rather than universal concerns, they may become suspicious of their husbands, disclose confidential matters, and even lead them toward ruin (Mūsawī, 1957 AD/1377 AH: 1, 450-452).

2-13. A Light of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Translated and Edited by Sayyid Mohammad Mahdi Ja'fari (b. 1939 AD)

Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Jaʿfari affirms the authenticity of Sermon 80 by citing earlier sources, including "*Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ*" by *Sibṭ Ibn Jawzī* and "*Kashf al-Maḥajjah li Thamarat al-Muhjah*" by *Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs*. His work, however, is limited to documenting the sermon's occurrence in earlier sources and providing a translation; he offers no substantive commentary (Jaʿfari, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 1, 704712). His principal concern appears to have been establishing the documentary basis of the sermons rather than interpreting them.

2-14. "*Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*" by *Muhammad Taqi Jaʿfari* (d. 1998 AD/1419 AH)

Muhammad Taqi Jaʿfari, one of the leading contemporary Shiʿi philosophers and scholars, rejects the notion that Imam Ali (AS) intended to portray women as inherently inferior to men. He considers such a literal reading of the sermon highly improbable, since the Qur'an consistently presents men and women as equal in their essential human qualities. According to Jaʿfari, the deficiency of faith mentioned in the sermon refers only to the temporary suspension of women's religious obligations during menstruation, not to any defect

in their belief. Thus, the deficiency concerns ritual practice rather than one's relationship with God. During menstruation, women are exempted from prayer and fasting because of the simultaneous physical and psychological burdens they experience, yet they remain capable of remembering God and maintaining their spiritual connection with Him. Once this period ends, they may make up their missed fasts and resume their devotional life. Jaʿfari's view, that women do not truly suffer any deficiency of faith even during menstruation, stands in marked contrast to the position of earlier commentators. Similarly, he argues that the expression "Deficiency of Intellect" does not imply any diminution of women's intrinsic worth, particularly given the indispensable and often greater role women play in pregnancy and childbirth. Nor does the legal equation of two female witnesses with one male witness constitute an absolute rule. A man's testimony may itself be invalid if he lacks adequate knowledge, while in certain legal matters a single woman's testimony is fully equivalent to that of a man, for example, in issues that only women can know firsthand, such as identifying the father of the child she carries (*Lā Yaʿlam illā min Qibalihā*). Regarding the phrase "Deficiency in Their Share," Jaʿfari argues that the Qur'anic inheritance verses[1] are not universally applicable to every circumstance and therefore should not be understood as establishing an absolute principle of inequality. In his view, Imam Ali's primary concern was to address practical aspects of everyday social life rather than to distinguish between the essential humanity of men and women, since attributing such an inherent

1. Surah al-Nisā': 11

deficiency to women would contradict the teachings of the Qur'an. He likewise maintains that the warning to be cautious even of righteous women does not apply to women who possess sound judgment and reason. While affirming the authenticity of the sermon and linking it to the historical events surrounding the Battle of the Camel and ʿ*Āyishah*'s manipulation by *Ṭalḥah* and *Zubayr*, Jaʿfari argues that many women possess a false sense of weakness in relation to men. In attempting to overcome this perceived weakness, some women, such as ʿ*Āyishah*, may confront men directly in an effort to attain what he describes as an aspiration toward assuming traditionally masculine roles (Jaʿfarī, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 11, 240-302).

2-15. "*Explanation of Nahj al-Balāghah*," by Sayyid Muhammad Hosseini Shirazi (d. 1422 AH)

Sayyid Muhammad Hosseini Shirazi, one of the leading Shi'i scholars, begins his discussion by referring to Imam Ali's (AS) general view of the status of women before turning to the role of ʿ*Ayishah* in the Battle of the Camel. The commentator argues that women's intellectual constitution is weaker, claiming that modern science has confirmed this assertion. On this basis, he considers it necessary to avoid consulting women on major matters. He further adds that it is no coincidence that, despite worldwide slogans of equality, governmental positions continue to be occupied by women less frequently than by men. According to him, what Imam (AS) meant by the deficiency of women's faith is that, unlike men, women have not attained complete faith. Their lesser material share is likewise the result of their intellectual deficiency and physical weakness (Hosseini Shirazi,

2019 AD/1399 SH: 1, 302-304). He further argues that because God created women primarily for managing the household and family affairs, He reduced their rational faculty while increasing their emotional capacity. According to him, women's exemption from prayer and fasting during menstruation is regarded by both the Qur'an and medical science as a consequence of a condition involving hardship and illness, and the wisdom behind suspending these religious obligations may be the reward granted for enduring such hardship (ibid.).

2-16. Imam Amir al-Muʾminin (AS) Message: A New and Comprehensive Commentary on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, by Naser Makarem Shirazi (b. 1926 AD/1305 SH)

Naser Makarem Shirazi, contemporary Shi'i scholars, accepts the authenticity of the sermon but maintains that Imam Ali's address concerns only certain women who, because of their shortcomings, committed wrongful acts (Makarem Shirazi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 3, 275-302). Drawing upon Qur'anic verses that describe human beings as greedy (Surah *al-Maʿārij*), unjust and ignorant (Surah *al-Aḥzāb*), ungrateful (Surah *al-Zukhruf*), and rebellious (Surah *al-ʿAlaq*), he argues that these descriptions apply only to those who have not been nurtured by the divine prophets and who have strayed from the right path. Elsewhere, however, the Qur'an honors the children of Adam (Surah *al-Isrāʾ*), referring to righteous individuals favored by God. Accordingly, the statement that "Women are deficient in intellect" cannot be understood as applying to all women, especially since history presents both exemplary women and profoundly misguided

women who have been sources of great social disorder (ibid: 289).

Makarem Shirazi then offers several explanations for these deficiencies. These include the pathological condition associated with menstruation, which renders women temporarily unsuited for acts of ritual worship; the predominance of emotion over reason, which may increase the likelihood of error and thus explains why the testimony of two women equals that of one man; and men's financial obligations, such as providing maintenance for wives and children, which justify their receiving a double share of inheritance.

Regarding the phrase, "Do not obey them even in what is right," he explains that good deeds should be performed because they are inherently good, not out of unconditional submission to one's wife. Otherwise, women may come to expect compliance with their improper requests. He notes, however, that exceptional women such as Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (SA) are excluded from this general rule (ibid: 300).

Concerning the statement, "Beware even of their good women," Makarem argues that "Good" here refers to women who are relatively, not absolutely, good. Truly righteous women should not be regarded with suspicion; rather, their advice ought to be welcomed. As evidence, he cites the Qur'anic verse concerning the weaning of a child: "If they both decide, by mutual consent and consultation, to wean the child, there is no blame upon them." (al-Baqarah: 233)

2-17. "*Nahj al-Balāghah Mirror*," by Sayyid Ali Akbar Qarashi (b. 1928 AD/1307 SH)

According to Sayyid Ali Akbar Qarashi, a Shi'i scholar, Imam Ali's reference to the deficiency of faith should be understood as referring

to deeds rather than belief. He supports this interpretation by citing Surah *al-Baqarah*: 143, where the Qur'an uses the term faith to refer to the Muslims' previous prayers after the change of the *Qiblah*. Classical exegetes understood this verse to mean that God would not allow their previous prayers, their "Faith," that is, their deeds, to be lost. Qarashi therefore concludes that all three deficiencies mentioned in the sermon originate from divine legislation. Since women's natural disposition is more suited to childrearing and household management, God endowed them with stronger emotions and comparatively less rational capacity than men. He concludes by affirming that Imam Ali's sermon was occasioned by *ʿĀyishah*'s conduct during the Battle of the Camel (Qarashi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 1, 405-407).

In addition to these dedicated commentaries, which constitute independent studies on *Nahj al-Balāghah*, a number of scholars have discussed the Eighth Sermon within broader books or public lectures. Among the most significant are Martyr Mortaza Motahhari, Abdullah Javadi Amoli, and Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei.

Martyr Mortaza Motahhari (d. 1979 AD/1358 SH) in "Women and Judicial Issues," explains the Qur'anic ruling equating the testimony of two women with that of one man by attributing it to women's stronger emotional disposition. He argues that women are more readily influenced by emotions and that heightened emotional responses may lead to inaccurate judgments (Motahhari, 2011 AD/1391 SH: 18). Nevertheless, a broader reading of Motahhari's works shows that he viewed men and women as equal in their human dignity and spiritual perfection. Although he acknowledged natural

differences between the sexes, he considered them equal in honor and intrinsic human worth.

In "Woman in the Mirror of Glory and Beauty," Abdullah Javadi Amoli (b. 1933 AD/1312 SH) argues that equating the testimony of two women with that of one man is unrelated to intelligence or rational capacity. Rather, it concerns memory and recollection. The requirement for two female witnesses does not imply that women possess deficient intellect but reflects the possibility that, because women are often occupied with domestic responsibilities and childrearing, they may forget details of events they have witnessed. Javadi Amoli further states: "The form of intellect that may be more developed in men than in women is political and administrative reasoning. Even if someone possesses greater practical wisdom in political or executive affairs, this does not indicate greater nearness to God." (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 368-373)

Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei (b. 1939 AD/1404 SH) also addressed[1] the Eighth Sermon in response to a question asking whether the tradition describing women as "Deficient in Intellect" contradicts women's freedom. While affirming the authenticity of the narration, he explained that it does not imply that women lack the capacity for understanding. Indeed, many women possess levels of intelligence and insight far superior to those of many men. He further suggested that the deficiencies mentioned by Imam Ali (AS) may not

1. Remarks in the question-and-answer session held on 26 June 1981 (06/04/1360) at Abuzar Mosque in Tehran, during which, in the course of the same speech, the bombing and assassination attempt against Ayatollah Khamenei took place.

arise from women's innate nature but rather characterize women shaped by the oppressive culture of their time. According to him, during Imam Ali's era, women throughout the world, including non-Arab societies, were subjected to systemic oppression and were generally denied access to education, public life, and political participation (Khamenei, 1981 AD/1360 SH).

It may be inferred from Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks that he does not consider the meaning of the sermon to be universally applicable to all historical periods. By restricting the deficiencies mentioned in the sermon, he regards them as specific to societies and eras in which corrupt cultural norms foster such shortcomings. In contrast, the early commentators, when referring to women, did not impose any temporal limitation; instead, they employed general and unrestricted expressions such as "Concerning the condemnation of women."

3. Analysis and Classification of the Commentators' Approaches to the *Nahj al-Balāghah*

The approach of the early commentators toward the Eighth Sermon remained largely unchanged until approximately the middle of the fourteenth century AH and was predominantly text-centered. During the classical period, commentators generally presented their own independent interpretations of the sermon, although they occasionally quoted one another. For example, *Quṭb al-Dīn Kaydarī*'s (d. 576 AH) discussion of the injunction not to obey women in matters recognized as good closely resembles the commentary in "*Maʿārij Nahj al-Balāghah*" by his fellow townsman *Abul Ḥasan Bayhaqī* (d. 565 AH).

Kaydarī attributes the prohibition to the dominance of women's appetitive faculty over their intellect and to their alleged ignorance, precisely the same explanation found in *Bayhaqī*'s work (Kaydarī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 1, 375).

In more recent commentaries, however, the commentators' treatment of the sermon has changed noticeably, reflecting broader social transformations. This shift in perspective has several causes, as evidenced by the diverse approaches adopted toward the Eighth Sermon. One contributing factor was the introduction of new concepts into Muslim societies and into the intellectual vocabulary of modern scholars and commentators. The Constitutional Revolution, together with subsequent cultural developments and women's increasing participation in political, revolutionary, scientific, and intellectual spheres, presented a new image of women within society. A deeper understanding of women's personalities and their various capacities encouraged commentators to distance themselves, at least partially, from the views of earlier authorities and gave them the confidence to propose interpretations that differed from those of the classical commentators. Consequently, some modern commentaries directly contradict traditional interpretations. From the perspective of its literary structure, the content of the Eighth Sermon may be divided into two broad sections. In the first section, Imam Ali (AS) describes women, referring to them as "Deficient in Intellect" and "Deficient in Faith." In the second section, which appears to present the practical implications of the descriptive section, the Imam issues directives concerning interaction with women, warning his audience against

associating with them and instructing them not to follow women even in matters regarded as good.

Most text-centered commentators found nothing incompatible between the descriptive portion of the sermon and reason or religion. Instead, they devoted greater attention to the prescriptive statements. It appears that, in their view, attributing these characteristics to women was natural and acceptable; what required explanation was the instruction not to obey women even in righteous matters. Given the large number of commentaries and scholarly studies devoted to the Eighth Sermon of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, as well as the diversity of interpretations and viewpoints, it is necessary to classify these approaches systematically. Although such classifications may be arranged chronologically to illustrate the historical development of scholarly perspectives, this alone is insufficient. On the one hand, many early and contemporary scholars hold remarkably similar views; on the other hand, the sheer number of interpretations and the variety of perspectives make a thematic classification more useful.

Such a classification may be based on several criteria. Among the most significant factors influencing commentators' approaches are:

- Acceptance or rejection of the authenticity of the sermon.
- Commitment to the literal meaning of the sermon versus allegorical or esoteric interpretation.
- Restricting the sermon to a specific historical referent while simultaneously extending its implications more broadly.
- Generalizing the sermon without identifying any specific referent.
- Restricting the sermon exclusively to a particular individual or event.

- Extending the sermon to all historical periods versus limiting it to the circumstances of its original utterance.
- The influence of theological affiliation and the requirements of particular legal and doctrinal schools.
- Interpretations of the injunction, "Do not obey them in what is right."

3-1. Acceptance or Rejection of the Authenticity of the Tradition

Early commentators such as *Quṭb Rāwandī* (d. 573 AH), Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656 AH), and Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī (d. 689 AH), as well as later scholars including Mulla Fathullah Kashani, Shaykh Muhammad ʿAbduh, Mirza Habibullah Khoei, Mortaza Motahhari, Muhammad Jawad Mughnīyah, Sayyid Muhammad Husseini Shirazi, Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, Naser Makarem Shirazi, Ali Akbar Qarashi, Abdullah Javadi Amoli, and Ayatollah Khamenei, explicitly state that this sermon was delivered after the Battle of the Camel. By doing so, they implicitly affirm both the historical authenticity of the sermon and the reliability of its attribution to Imam Ali (AS).

In contrast, Sa'id (2015 AD/1395 SH: 1-136), in his master's thesis Women's Intellect from the Perspective of Islam, argues that most traditions describing women as deficient in intellect are transmitted through incomplete chains and are inconsistent with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. Since the Qur'an nowhere explicitly refers to women as intellectually deficient, he concludes that men and women possess equal intellectual capacity.

3-2. Emphasis on the Literal Meaning of the Sermon versus Allegorical or Esoteric Interpretation

Classical commentators generally accepted that the sermon had a

literal meaning. This acceptance is evident from their commentaries, all of which are based upon the authority of the apparent wording of the tradition. Their explanations largely conform to the literal text, while they sought to support individual passages of the sermon through citations from the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, and both internal religious reasoning and rational arguments (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229).

A particularly notable example of strengthening the sermon through Qur'anic evidence may be found in "*al-Dībāj al-Waḍīʾ*," where Husseini (2003 AD/1424 AH: 2, 561-563) extensively supports the sermon's content with Qur'anic verses.

3-3. Emphasis on the Literal Meaning of the Sermon versus Allegorical or Esoteric Interpretation

Among later and contemporary scholars, some have adopted different views, holding that Sermon Eighty possesses both an outward (literal) and an inward (esoteric) meaning. Qarashi, Muhammad ʻAbduh, Hashemi Khoei, Ja'fari, Musawi, and Mughnīyah did not object to the literal sense of the sermon; rather, they explained and elaborated upon its statements in accordance with their apparent meaning. For example, Shaykh Muhammad ʻAbduh did not see any contradiction between the literal and deeper meanings of the sermon. Regarding the alleged deficiency of women's intellect, he argued that because women are primarily occupied with household affairs and domestic responsibilities, God endowed them with intellectual capacity proportionate to their needs. Similarly, Qarashi interpreted the sermon

in accordance with its literal wording, although he understood "Deficiency of Faith" to mean a deficiency in religious practice rather than in belief itself. Adopting a sympathetic attitude toward women, he regarded the deficiencies attributed to them as divinely ordained wisdom intended for their own benefit (Qarashi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 1, 405-407). Hashemi Khoei substantiated every phrase of the sermon with Qur'anic verses and traditions, thereby effectively endorsing its literal meaning (Hashemi Khoei, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 5, 302-324). In "A Light of *Nahj al-Balāghah*," Ja'fari affirmed the authenticity of the sermon by citing sources such as "*Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ*" and "*Kashf al-Maḥajjah li Thamarat al-Muhajjah*." (Ja'fari, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 1, 704-712) Another group of scholars accepted the literal wording of the sermon while maintaining that women do not, in reality, possess the deficiencies mentioned therein and may even surpass men in certain respects. Contemporary scholars such as Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, Abdollah Javadi Amoli, and Naser Makarem Shirazi offered alternative interpretations that differed from the text's apparent meaning. Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, for example, argued that "Deficiency of Intellect" does not imply any diminution in a woman's intrinsic worth. Concerning the phrase "Deficiency in Shares," he maintained that the relevant Qur'anic verse concerning inheritance is not universally applicable, and that interpreting women's deficiency in its conventional, commonly understood sense would contradict the Qur'an (Ja'fari, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 11, 240-302).

Javadi Amoli likewise sought a rational explanation for Sermon

Eighty. He proposed that intellectual deficiency should be understood as a memory deficit rather than a deficit in reasoning or intelligence (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 368-373). Makarem Shirazi, after discussing the dignity and significance of women in Islam, argued that the sermon does not encompass all women, just as the Qur'anic descriptions of humanity as ungrateful, unjust, or doomed to loss do not apply universally to every human being. In effect, he sought to present an interpretation that transcends the literal wording of the sermon, portraying women as equal to men rather than inferior to them (Makarem Shirazi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 3, 275-302).

Masjedi rejected the literal interpretation altogether. Even assuming the sermon to be authentic, he interpreted women's "Deficiency of Faith" as referring to a temporary reduction in inner tranquility rather than any deficiency in heartfelt belief (Masjedi, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 94, 57-78). By contrast, Nazemi regarded the notion of women's deficiency of faith as fully compatible with reason, accepted the sermon's stated justifications, and explicitly argued that the content of Sermon Eighty does not conflict with the Qur'an (Nazemi Ashani, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 7, 23-42).

3-4. Particularization with Identification of a Specific Referent Combined with Generalization

Among the early commentators, some adopted an approach that combined specification with generalization. They maintained that the sermon's primary referent was *'Āyisha*, while simultaneously holding that its statements applied to women in general. *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, for example, considered Sermon Eighty to have been directed primarily at

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ʿĀyisha but nevertheless understood its message as applying to all women (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229). Similarly, *Quṭb Rāwandī*, without explicitly naming *ʿĀyisha*, regarded her as the principal subject of the sermon while also affirming that it constituted a condemnation of women generally (Rāwandī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 310). *Ibn Maytham* likewise considered *ʿĀyisha* responsible for the Battle of the Camel but interpreted the sermon as addressing women as a whole (Baḥrānī, 1950 AD/1370 AH: 2, 480-484).

3-5. Generalization without Identifying a Specific Referent

Some early commentators, such as *Quṭb al-Dīn Kaydarī* (d. 576 AH) and *Bayhaqī* (d. 565 AH), adopted a purely generalizing approach. They made no reference to *ʿĀyisha* or any other individual and understood the sermon as referring to women in general (Kaydarī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 1, 375). Likewise, although later commentators occasionally mentioned *ʿĀyisha*, most did not consider the sermon restricted to her. Qarashi, for instance, regarded the deficiencies attributed to women as applying to all women (Qarashi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 1, 405-407). *Muhammad ʿAbduh* and *Mughnīyah*, despite their reformist inclinations, likewise interpreted Imam Ali's statements as referring to women generally (ʿAbduh, 1893 AD/1323 AH: 1, 126).

3-6. Particularization

Fayḍ al-Islām (1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 180), the translator of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, restricted Sermon Eighty exclusively to *ʿĀyisha*. Likewise, Sheykhi (2017 AD/1397 SH: 16-165), in his M.A. thesis "A Critical

Analysis of the Foundations, Methodology, and Views of Amina Inloz on Shi'i Hadith," argued that ʻĀyisha was the exclusive referent of the sermon. By contrast, scholars such as Mortaza Motahhari, Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, Javadi Amoli, and Ayatollah Khamenei made no explicit reference to *ʻĀyisha* as the intended subject of the sermon.vMakarem Shirazi, however, adopted a middle position. He argued that the descriptive section of the sermon does not refer to all women but only to "Certain Women" whose personal shortcomings had led them to commit wrongful acts. While advocating this qualified form of particularization, he nevertheless identified *ʻĀyisha* as one of the sermon's intended referents (Makarem Shirazi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 3, 275-302).

3-7. Extending the Sermon's Meaning to All Historical Periods versus Restricting It to Its Original Context

Whether the content of Sermon Eighty and the deficiencies attributed to women were intended only for the historical period in which the sermon was delivered, or whether they continue to apply universally, has also been a matter of discussion among commentators and researchers. Most early commentators referred to women in general without imposing any temporal limitation, using broad expressions such as "Concerning the condemnation of women." Although commentators such as *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, *Rāwandī,* and *Ibn Maytham* referred to *ʻĀyisha*, they nevertheless did not restrict the sermon to her historical context. Rather, they understood Imam Ali's statements as applying to women of all ages. Their reliance on a similar Prophetic tradition also

indicates that they regarded these alleged deficiencies as having been recognized since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The approach of later scholars to this issue appears particularly significant, given the considerable historical distance from the sermon's delivery. Some, such as Hashemi Khoei, adopted views similar to those of the early commentators, maintaining that the deficiencies mentioned in Sermon Eighty apply to women generally and imposing no temporal limitation on the sermon (cf. above; Hashemi Khoei, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 5, 302-324).

Others likewise regarded the sermon as possessing universal temporal applicability. For example, *Muhammad Jawād Mughnīyah* argued that the sermon has no connection with Imam Ali's hostility toward *'Āyisha*; otherwise, the Imam would also have censured *Ṭalḥa* and *Zubayr*, who were the principal instigators of the Battle of the Camel (Mughnīyah, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 2, 121-124).

In contrast, Ayatollah Khamenei treated Sermon Eighty as historically conditioned. He argued that the deficiencies attributed to women were specific to the period in which the sermon was delivered, when women generally lived under oppressive social conditions and were deliberately kept in intellectual and social deprivation (Khamenei, 1981 AD/1360 SH).

According to Nazarbeigi, Imam Ali's statements may instead be understood as applying to all women who have become alienated from their natural identity (Nazarbeigi, 2014 AD/1394 SH: 1, 109-121). Likewise, Jannati (2001 AD/1380 SH: 160, 38-44) accepted the existence of a deficiency in women's intellect but confined it to practical or experiential reasoning within the particular circumstances

of that historical period. He attributed these deficiencies to the prevailing social conditions of the time, when women rarely participated in public or social activities.

3-8. Sectarian Affiliations and the Requirements of Jurisprudential and Theological Traditions

From a religious-affiliation perspective, the commentaries on *Nahj al-Balāghah* may be divided into two broad categories: "Those written by Shi'i scholars and those by Sunni scholars. Most commentators, regardless of sectarian affiliation, have expressed no doubt concerning the authenticity of this sermon." Both the Shi'i commentator *Quṭb Rāwandī* (d. 573 AH) and the Sunni Mu'tazili commentator *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd* (d. 656 AH) introduce Sermon Eighty with the phrase: "Among his sayings (AS), delivered after the conclusion of the Battle of the Camel, concerning the condemnation of women." (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229; see also the discussion of *Rāwandī* above) This common introduction itself reflects their agreement regarding the historical setting in which the sermon was delivered.

With respect to their treatment of *'Āyisha*, who was regarded as the principal figure behind the Battle of the Camel, sectarian differences become more apparent. Among Sunni scholars, *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, despite identifying *'Āyisha* by name as the Prophet's wife, absolves her of ultimate deviation, considers her among the repentant, and describes her as one of the inhabitants of Paradise (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229).

By contrast, the Shi'i commentator *Ibn Maytham* indirectly refers

to *ʿĀyisha* as the instigator of the Battle of the Camel and holds her responsible for the destruction and loss of Muslim lives (Baḥrānī, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 2, 480-484). Other commentators, such as *Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah*, a Zaydi scholar, merely allude to *ʿĀyisha* without further discussion (Hosseini, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 2, 561-563). Among contemporary Sunni and Shi'i scholars alike, *ʿĀyisha* is generally regarded as the primary target of the sermon's criticism.

3-8. An Analysis of the Command "Do Not Obey Them in What Is Right"

One of the most important interpretive challenges that has occupied commentators from both the classical and modern periods concerns the command: "Do not obey them in what is right."

At first glance, this statement appears problematic because it seems to discourage obedience even in matters that are good and commendable, whereas performing good deeds constitutes a fundamental principle of Islamic teaching. Some early commentators, including *Bayhaqī* and *Kāshānī*, argued that men should not obey women in any matter whatsoever, even in matters that are objectively good, and should instead oppose them (Bayhaqī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 2, 154; Kāshānī, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 1, 340-341).

Other classical commentators maintained that Imam Ali's intention was not to prohibit the performance of good deeds themselves. Rather, they interpreted the statement as prohibiting unconditional obedience to women. Accordingly, one may perform a good action because it is inherently good, but not merely because a woman has instructed one

to do so (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 6, 214-229; see also Baḥrānī, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 2, 480-484).

Later commentators adopted this latter interpretation. They argued that the phrase should not be understood as a command to refrain from doing well but rather as a warning against unquestioning obedience to women (cf. ʻAbduh, 1893 AD/1323 AH: 1, 126).

Musavi, citing Qur'anic verses, contrasted the Qur'an's description of Satan's scheme as weak with its characterization of women's stratagem as formidable, and on this basis argued against obeying women (cf. Musavi, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 1, 450-452). Among contemporary scholars, figures such as Javadi Amoli and Makarem Shirazi maintain that the prohibition concerns only certain women and, even then, is directed against absolute and unconditional obedience rather than all forms of compliance (Makarem Shirazi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 3, 275-302).

Conclusion

Sermon Eighty of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, which censures women by attributing to them deficiencies of intellect and faith and warns believers against following women even in matters regarded as good, has been the subject of scholarly discussion from the earliest centuries to the present.

In addressing the principal question of this study, namely, how Muslim commentators and researchers have approached this controversial sermon, the authors first surveyed the contents of the principal commentaries and modern studies, then classified the various

interpretive approaches and their underlying assumptions. The study concludes that the differences among commentators stem primarily from factors such as the historicity of interpretation, the influence of social and intellectual contexts on the understanding of religious texts, and differing commitments to textual literalism and to the authority of the apparent meaning of the text.

One group of commentators, adopting a text-centered approach, defended the sermon's literal implications. Others rejected the apparent meaning of the alleged deficiencies, preferring allegorical or interpretive readings that did not extend the sermon's judgments to all women.

Regarding the sermon's prescriptive section, particularly the command "Do not obey them in what is right," some early commentators adopted a strict position, arguing that men should refrain altogether from obeying women. Nevertheless, the majority of both classical and modern commentators maintain that Imam Ali (AS) did not intend to prohibit the performance of good deeds; rather, his purpose was to discourage absolute and unquestioning obedience to women.

A number of contemporary scholars, finding the condemnation of women incompatible with human dignity and the essential nature of human beings, have sought to defend the status of women by offering interpretations that are more consistent with contemporary social realities and respectful of women's dignity. Some have gone further still, rejecting the attribution of the sermon to Imam Ali altogether on the grounds that its content is incompatible with the teachings and principles of the Qur'an.

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The Narration of the Prophet's Bewitchment and the *Mu'awwadhatayn*: A Critical Study of Its Chain of Transmission (Sanad) and Implication, with a Historical and Theological Reexamination

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Abstract

The narration of the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH) is reported in Islamic sources with variations in *Sanad* and Text. Its theological implications for the doctrine of impeccability have also made it contentious. This research assesses the reliability of these narrative reports through *Sanad* and text analysis. It investigates, if a minimal

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acceptance is granted, how to delineate the effect's scope to safeguard the prophetic role in receiving and conveying revelation. Using a comparative analytical method, the study evaluates *Rijāl* aspects and conducts textual criticism of the narrations. It examines the historical and social context of *Medina* and the plausibility of similar threats. The discussion also encompasses the cause of revelation and the debate over the Meccan or Medinan classification of the *Muʿawwadhatayn*, as linking these surahs to the event hinges on resolving chronological issues and their apotropaic application. Findings show inconsistencies in the reports' chains of transmission, with some narrations pointing only to a limited physical affliction. Thus, a minimal interpretation does not compromise revelatory impeccability or the mission of the prophet. The connection to the *Muʿawwadhatayn* can be framed as a recommended reuse for defense, offering a reconcilable perspective on their origin debate.

Keywords: Prophet's (PBUH) Bewitchment, *Muʿawwadhatayn*, Impeccability, Occasion of Revelation, Hadith Criticism.

Introduction

The issue of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment has long been a challenging subject. The most prominent report in Shia and Sunni sources regarding the cause of revelation of the *Muʿawwadhatayn* (*al-Falaq* and *al-Nās*) involves the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH) by *Labīd ibn al-Aʿṣam*, a Jewish man from the *Banū Zurayq*. According to this narration, *Labīd*, with his family's assistance, placed hairs from the Prophet's (PBUH) comb along with the comb's teeth

and knotted threads inside a date palm spate, blew on it, and hid it in a well named *Dharwān*. The Prophet (PBUH) fell ill due to this magic until *Gabriel* revealed the *Mu'awwadhatayn*. Their recitation caused the knots to be loosened, removing the magic's effects.

This narration, found with minor textual variations but similar content in both sects, has been evaluated differently by exegetes and scholars throughout history. Some considered it a definite historical event, while others deemed it fabricated due to its conflict with the principle of prophetic impeccability. Previous research has often taken polarized positions of outright acceptance or rejection, lacking comprehensive analysis.

This research aims to provide a comparative examination of Shia and Sunni narrative sources to critically evaluate the narration of the Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) bewitchment through a two level analysis of *Sanad* and implication. It seeks to answer fundamental questions: 'Regarding the *Sanad* encompassing the reliability of narrators, the authenticity of the chain of transmission, and its continuity or discontinuity to what extent is this narration reliable?' Concerning implication and the text including its internal consistency, variant versions, and its contradiction or conformity with the Qurʾān and foundational theological principles, especially impeccability, 'What interpretation of the narration is defensible?'

Additionally, this study scrutinizes the relationship between the revelation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment incident, along with the challenges concerning the Meccan or Medinan classification of these two *Surahs*. This is undertaken to derive a well-

founded analysis of the narration's validity through a rational and textual approach. Elucidating these dimensions can serve as a significant step toward a better understanding of the position of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and a more precise articulation of the foundational beliefs of Muslims.

1. Research Background

The investigation of the episode of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment holds a significant place within Hadith and exegetical works. A number of hadith scholars and exegetes have endeavored to analyze or critique various dimensions of this narrative. For instance, *Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī* (2003 AD/1424 AH: 1, 151) delved exhaustively into the specifics and details of the Hadith regarding the bewitchment of the Prophet (PBUH). In the contemporary period, specialized journals in Qur'anic and Hadith studies have published articles that independently examine the subject of the Prophet's bewitchment and its connection to the occasion of revelation for the *Mu'awwadhatayn Surahs*. Among these is the article "A Critique of Exegetical Opinions on the Lexical Items of the Mu'awwadhatayn Based on Re-examining the Structure of the Two Surahs." (Rajabi Qodsi and Muradi Zanjani, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 3, 142-171)

Furthermore, research focusing on the *Sanad* and text aspects of the narrative, such as the article "A Sanad and Text Evaluation of the Narration on the Cause of Revelation for the Surahs of *Mu'awwadhatayn*" (Rabe' Nattaj, Aqapour, and Heydari, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 15, 229-248) or "A Comparative Study of the Effect of

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Bewitchment on the Prophet in *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Muslim* in Light of the Occasion of Revelation for the Mu'awwadhatayn," (Sayyid Mousavi, Murtazavi, and Abdullahzadeh, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 11, 255-276) have analyzed this report.

A common feature among most of these works is a binary and absolutist approach to the narrative of the Prophet's bewitchment; that is, they either completely affirm it or categorically reject it, without undertaking a comprehensive and comparative examination of all its facets. The present study strives to assess the narrative's validity through *Rijāl* science analysis and textual criticism, critique its text and variant versions, evaluate it against Qur'anic verses on magic and the principle of impeccability, and reconstruct the historical context of Medina. It aims to propose a defensible formulation regarding the extent of susceptibility in a manner that avoids both the extreme of unconditional acceptance and the extreme of unsubstantiated rejection.

2. Conceptual Definition of Bewitchment

2-1. Bewitchment in Lexicology and Terminology

In lexicons, bewitchment is defined as an act performed with the assistance and proximity of Satan, which diverts a person from truth to falsehood. According to *al-Azharī*'s expression, the essence of bewitchment is the alteration of the reality of things and the presentation of falsehood in the form of truth. This concept is defined in *Lisān al-'Arab* as "The presentation of something contrary to reality, such that the observer imagines what they see is reality," while the truth is otherwise (Ibn Manẓūr, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 4, 348-349;

Farāhīdī, 2001 AD/1421 AH: 3, 135). Bewitchment has also been referred to as meaning deception, guile, and influencing hearts through the subtlety and complexity of speech. This definition is particularly evident in the concept of "The Bewitchment of Speech," where speech, by affecting emotions and altering the state of the audience, acts like an enchantment (Ma'lūf, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 323; Bustānī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 478).

In some sources such as *Tāj al-'Arūs* and *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, bewitchment is defined as a corruption that occurs through proximity to Satan or via subtle and hidden methods. In this interpretation, the effect of bewitchment lies not in changing the essence of things, but in altering the perception of the recipient or observer (Zabīdī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 6, 502-505; Jawharī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 679). As expressed by *Ṭabarsī*, Bewitchment and soothsaying are similar due to their effect on the mind and sight of the observer, where the recipient imagines something contrary to reality. He explicitly states that bewitchment affects only the human mind and imagination and does not affect any change in the reality of the object. This view is strengthened by careful consideration of Qur'anic verses, as in the example of the transformation of ropes into serpents by the sorcerers, where the effect was solely applied to the perception of the observers (Qarashī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 3, 237).

Rāghib Iṣfahānī also analyzes bewitchment in three concepts: deception, the assistance of Satan, and the acts performed by ascetics. He holds the belief that *Bewitchment* as a real change in the nature of objects is baseless and is merely a form of instilling falsehood in place

of truth (*Rāghib*, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 1, 298).

An examination of the lexical meaning of bewitchment in various sources indicates that, in most definitions, this concept signifies the alteration or distortion of human perception of reality. Bewitchment is defined as a tool for creating illusion, deception, and presenting falsehood in the form of truth. From the perspective of lexicographers, this act is often carried out by utilizing proximity to Satan or employing specific methods that do not affect the truth of objects but only influence the mind and imagination of the recipient. Therefore, the general consensus of lexical sources is that bewitchment is an illusory and unreal manipulation achieved through deception or subtle acts and has no connection to changing the real nature of things.

2-2. Manifestations of Bewitchment from the Perspective of Scholars

From the viewpoint of Islamic jurists and thinkers, the definition of bewitchment encompasses various dimensions shaped by religious sources and common perceptions. *Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī* emphasizes that for an accurate understanding of the concept of bewitchment, one must refer to the common understanding of society, as among people, bewitchment is generally considered a hidden and extraordinary phenomenon, not counted as a normal or common occurrence (Narāqī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 14, 114).

Allamah *Ḥillī* considers bewitchment to be a collection of writings, utterances, or acts that can indirectly affect the body, heart, or intellect of the bewitched person (Ḥillī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 12, 144). In his view, this effect can lead to consequences such as illness, death,

creating affection or hatred, or even separation between spouses (ibid: 5, 396). Imam Khomeini also accepted this definition and emphasized this same meaning (Mousavi Khomeini, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 1, 529).

Shahīd Awwal considered the scope of manifestations of Bewitchment to be broader, including matters performed by employing jinn, satans, or even angels for hidden influence or treating illnesses, conjuring spirits, and communicating with them. He also lists revealing unknown properties of substances and writing talismans among the manifestations of bewitchment (*Shahīd Awwal* (*ʿĀmilī Makkī*), n.d.: 3, 164).

Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn, the son of Allamah *Ḥillī*, defines bewitchment as performing extraordinary acts through psychic powers or by utilizing the influences of celestial bodies and linking supernatural forces with earthly factors, and alongside this, he also mentions seeking help from simple spirits (*Fakhr al-Muḥaqqiqīn Ḥillī*, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 1, 405).

Ayatollah Gulpaygani also defines bewitchment as any act that has abnormal and unconventional effects, resembling spiritual graces or miracles, whether this effect is on humans, animals, or even inanimate objects. He gives examples such as moving a tree, causing a ceiling or wall to shake, and stopping water without attributing it to natural factors or well-established verses and supplications from the impeccable Imams (AS) as instances of such bewitchment (Gulpaygani, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 342).

3. The Status of Bewitchment in the Qur'an

According to the book *al-Muʿjam al-Iḥṣāʾī li Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*,

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the word "*Bewitchment"* is used 61 times in the Qur'ān (Rouhani, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 2, 240). From the perspective of the verses, it is divided into two main categories: First, magic that is merely a type of deception, sleight of hand, and illusion with no external reality; as in the story of the magicians in the time of Moses in verse 66 of Surah *Ṭāhā*: "So it seemed to him, from their magic, that their ropes and staffs were moving." This verse clarifies that the movement of the magicians' ropes and staffs was purely illusory, and people thought they were actually moving. Another verse in the same vein, namely verse 116 of Surah *al-A'rāf*, also states: "So when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them," indicating that their magic only affected the perception of the onlookers and did not create an objective change in the objects themselves.

Second, a magic that has a real effect and the ability to create external or psychological changes in people. For example, verse 102 of Surah *al-Baqarah* mentions that some people learned magic that caused separation between husband and wife: "And they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife." It continues to emphasize: "And they learn what harms them and does not benefit them," showing that magic can have a real and harmful effect.

In this context, in his commentary on this verse, Makarem Shirazi recalls the story of *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*; two angels who appeared among the Children of Israel in human form and taught people the correct methods to ward off magic to prevent its misuse. However, many people used this knowledge for false purposes and fell into tribulation (Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 378-379).

Here, the question arises: 'Does the effect of magic have only a psychological and illusory dimension, or is a physical and real effect also possible?' *Ṭabāṭabāʾī* and some other exegetes, based on Qur'anic evidence, believe that the effect of magic is in most cases limited to the realm of the mind and perception. In his *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, he emphasizes that magic is a type of interference with human senses that causes one to see or hear things that are not real (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 8, 275). He considers interference in human imagination to be one of the most certain types of magic, calling it "Bewitching of the sight." (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 1, 368; Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 1, 379)

In conclusion, it can be said that magic, from the Qur'anic perspective, is an extraordinary act that sometimes has only a suggestive and imaginary dimension, and at other times may, by utilizing unknown physical or chemical forces or through the cooperation of devils, leave real effects in the external world and on the human body. This distinction provides a more coherent analysis of the concept of magic in religious sources and paves the way for its methodical investigation[1].

1. As a corroborative indication within the Imami tradition even outside the specific context of Qurʾanic exegesis jurists in certain legal chapters have presupposed the possibility that bewitchment can occur externally and that concrete effects may follow from it. In other words, their discussion of liability and legal responsibility under the condition that an effect is established suggests that bewitchment has not consistently been treated in this discourse as mere metaphor or illusion (cf. Ṭūsī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 5, 329; *Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī*, 1989 AD/1409 AH: 4, 973; *Ḥillī*, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 5, 425; *Shahīd Thānī*, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 15, 77; *Mousavi Khomeini*, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 2, 546). Nevertheless, this realist-leaning construal,→

4. Examination of the Chain of Transmission and Content of the Narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) Bewitchment

To evaluate the validity of the narration regarding the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment, it is essential to first classify and analyze this narration based on its narrative sources and chains of transmission. The related narrations can be examined in three primary axes:

4-1. Analysis of Sunni Narrations

A significant portion of the narrations concerning the Prophet's bewitchment is found in Sunni sources, particularly within the *Kutub al-Sittah*, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. Most of these narrations trace back to *'Āyishah* and *Ibn 'Abbās*. In some reports, the name *"Labīd ibn al-A'ṣam"* is explicitly mentioned as the one who performed the magic, while in others, only the phrase "A Jew bewitched the Prophet" is mentioned, generally referring to the same individual. For example, *Bukhārī* narrated this incident in seven different locations in his book, all of which are reported from *'Āyishah* (Bukhārī, 1981 AD/1401 AH: 4, 91; *Ibn Mājah*, n.d.: 2, 1173).

4-1-1. Chain of Transmission Analysis

Many Sunni hadith scholars and exegetes consider these narrations authentic. However, some researchers, such as *al-'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*,

← by itself, does not demonstrate the occurrence of bewitchment in the case of the Prophet (PBUH). It can only clarify the intellectual grounds for accepting the possibility of causal influence at the ordinary level. Accordingly, a final judgment concerning the report of the Prophet's bewitchment remains contingent upon assessing the reports in terms of *Sand* and implication and evaluating them against established theological principles.

have raised doubts about the soundness of their chains. In *al-Mīzān*, he explicitly states that many of these hadiths were not recorded through direct observation or firsthand oral transmission; rather, they are merely reports of a historical story that the narrator associated with the occasion of revelation based on a conceptual alignment with the verses (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, 1974 AD/1353 SH: 173).

Consequently, it appears that the transmission of these narrations from *'Āyishah* and *Ibn 'Abbās* falls into one of two possibilities: either they heard this account from others and narrated it, in which case the narration is considered *Mursal*; or it was essentially a fabricated narration invented by them or those around them. *Allamah* Sayyid *Murtaza Askari* also believes that *'Āyishah*, in many instances, narrated hadiths inspired by the life of the Prophet (PBUH) (*Askari*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 3, 295).

Furthermore, in most chains of these narrations, the name *Hishām ibn 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr* appears before the name of *'Āyishah*. Although *Hishām ibn 'Urwah* is mentioned in *Shia* sources as a trustworthy narrator and a student of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (*Ṭūsī*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 318), some scholars of biographical evaluation, such as *Mālik ibn Qiṭṭān*, *Ibn Ḥajar*, *al-Dhahabī*, and *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, have accused him of leniency and even *tadlīs* in narration (*Ibn Ḥajar*, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 11, 45; *al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, 1997 AD/1417 AH: 14, 40; *al-Dhahabī*, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36). On the other hand, it must be noted that *Hishām ibn 'Urwah* was born in 61 AH, while *'Āyishah* passed away in 58 AH; therefore, his direct narration from her is chronologically impossible (*Ibn al-Athīr*, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 3, 362).

4-1-2. Supporting and Opposing Views in Sunni Sources

This narration is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and for this reason, many Sunnis consider it authentic (*Bukhārī*, 1981 AD/1401 AH: 4, 380; Muslim, 1985 AD/1405 AH: 4, 172). In contrast, a number of hadith scholars and hadith critics, such as *Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī*, *al-Nawawī*, and *al-'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, have expressed doubts about the authenticity of these narrations. *Ibn Ḥajar*, in the introduction to *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, names more than 300 narrators from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* who have been criticized or weakened by scholars of biographical evaluation (Ibn Ḥajar, 2004 AD/1424 AH: 1, 346). *Nawawī*, in the introduction to his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, acknowledges the existence of questionable narrations within the Ṣ*aḥīḥayn* and raises issues regarding the reliability of some of their narrators (Nawawī, 1928 AD/1347 AH: 1, 16).

Furthermore, personalities such as *Abū Hurayrah, Abū Mūsá al-Ash'arī, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ*, and *'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr*, who play a role in the chains of narrations in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, are considered unreliable from the perspective of many researchers in hadith studies. For example, *Abū Hurayrah* accompanied the Prophet (PBUH) for only three years and was known for his prolific narration and even fabrication of hadith. For instance, *Dhahabī* in "*Sīyar A'lām al-Nubalā'" and Khaṭīb Baghdādī in "Tārīkh Baghdād"* have pointed to cases of leniency or problems in the reliability of some narrators.

In the contemporary period, researchers such as *Maḥmūd Abū Rayyah* and *Allamah* Sayyid *Murtaza Askari*, through a critical re-examination of the hadith heritage, have extensively critiqued the

reliability of some prolific narrators and the theological consequences of unconditionally accepting these reports (*Dhahabī*, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36; *Khaṭīb Baghdādī*, 1997 AD/1417 AH: 14, 40; *Abū Rayyah*, 1958 AD: 216; *Askari*, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 1, 89).

4-2. Analysis of Shia Narrations

In *Shia* sources, there are reports of the incident of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment, narrated in reliable exegetical and hadith works; these include *Tafsīr Qummī, Tafsīr Furāt Kūfī, Tafsīr Nūr Thaqalayn, al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, Makārim al-Akhlāq, and Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*. The common theme of these narrations often revolves around Gabriel informing the Prophet (PBUH) about the location of the magic and introducing *Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* (AS) as the one entrusted to uncover and nullify it (Qummī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 446; Kūfī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 372; Ḥuwayzī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 718; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 813; Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 1, 413; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 5, 396-397).

Some of these sources, such as *Tafsīr Qummī* and *Tafsīr Furāt Kūfī*, are considered among the early *Shia* works. The report of the bewitchment incident within them indicates that the discussion of this issue is not limited to later sources but has roots in the earliest Shia narrative tradition. Although, in terms of their chains, many of these reports are narrated as *Mursal*, their multiplicity in reliable Shia exegetical and hadith works strengthens the core historical report.

These narrations state that Gabriel informed the Prophet that a Jewish man had concealed a magical object in a well, and the Prophet was instructed to send *Ali* (AS) to extract it. *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, after

considerable effort at the bottom of the well, found a container holding a rope with 21 knots along with other objects and brought it to the Prophet. According to this narration, as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* (AS) recited the *Mu'awwadhatayn Surahs*, each knot was untied, and the effects of the magic were completely nullified (Ḥuwayzī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 718; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 813).

4-2-1. Chain of Transmission Analysis

Many of these narrations in Shia sources appear as *Mursal* or with weak chains, especially those taken from works like "*Ṭibb al-A'immah"* or "*Tafsīr al-Furāt al-Kūfī*." Some later hadith scholars, such as *Allamah Majlisī*, have accepted these narrations despite their weak chains and cited them in their works (Majlisī, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 60, 24).

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in critiquing these narrations, explicitly noted that there is a question about how magic could affect the Prophet (PBUH); because the Qurʾān has denied the accusation of being bewitched that the polytheists made, considering it an allegation of madness: *"Wa Qāla al-Ẓālimūna in Tattabi'ūna illā Rajulan Masḥūran"* (And the wrongdoers say, 'You follow none but a bewitched man'). However, he explains that this verse merely negates the Prophet's madness and does not indicate a denial of magic affecting his illness or physical symptoms (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683).

Some narrations also emphasize that the Prophet (PBUH) used to recite these very two *surahs*, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, as a protective incantation for Imam *Ḥasan and Ḥusayn* (AS) to safeguard them from

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any harm of magic or the evil eye.

In summary, from the Shia theological perspective, the effect of magic is absolutely impossible and negated insofar as it relates to the mission, revelation, and the station of prophethood. However, a limited effect of magic on the physical health of the Prophet, in a manner that does not harm his mission and impeccability, is not considered impossible by some exegetes. Given the social and political conditions of Medina, where Jewish enemies were always seeking to harm the Prophet, such actions were not implausible, although God protected him through the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs*.

Attributing bewitchment to the Prophet *Muḥammad* (PBUH) is compatible with the foundational beliefs of Islam only if it does not extend to the realm of revelation, intellect, and his impeccability. The Qur'ān mentions the expression "Bewitched" in the context of quoting the opponents' words to invalidate the Prophet's mission and by attributing it to the "Wrongdoers" (*Ẓālimūn*), it clarifies the falsity of such a claim (Surah al-Furqān: 8; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 15, 249). However, this Qur'anic negation pertains to magic that could affect the reception or delivery of revelation, not the negation of any physical affliction. For this reason, a number of exegetes and theologians have interpreted the reports concerning the Prophet's bewitchment as pertaining to bodily afflictions and divine trials; trials that, like illness, do not compromise his impeccability and mission (Ṭabrisī, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 7, 267; Makarem Shirazi, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 15, 456; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 3, 192). This interpretation makes it possible to reconcile the narrative data with

definitive theological principles.

4-2-2. Differences of Opinion in Shia Sources

Differences of opinion are observed among *Shia* scholars; for instance, *Shaykh Ṣadūq* did not include these narrations in his books at all, whereas *Shaykh Ṭūsī and Ṭabrisī* mentioned them briefly and proceeded to analyze and critique their chains (Ṭūsī, n.d.: 10, 434; Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 10, 865). *Allamah Majlisī* also explicitly states that although magic cannot affect prophets and Imams in the sense of nullifying their intellect or revelation, it may occur to the extent of affecting their senses or causing physical illness (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 60, 23-25; 89, 365-366; 92, 125-129).

Therefore, the predominant Shia view is that the effect of magic on the Prophet (PBUH) to the extent of impairing his perception or revelation is rationally and textually negated. However, the possibility of a limited physical effect without compromising the station of prophethood is considered worthy of investigation in Shia narrations and has not been categorically rejected.

4-3. Criticism of Weak or Fabricated Narrations

A portion of the reports concerning the incident of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment in Shia and Sunni sources lack the necessary reliability due to weak chains or accusations of fabrication. Among these are narrations that trace back to *Hishām ibn 'Urwah*. Although *Hishām ibn 'Urwah* is counted among famous hadith scholars and jurists, many scholars of *Rijāl*, such as *Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahabī*, have expressed serious doubts about his narrations due to their abundance

in *Kufa* and his leniency in hadith transmission, and some have even accused some of his narrations of being fabricated (Ibn Ḥajar, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 11, 45*;* Dhahabī, 1993 AD/1413 AH: 6, 35-36).

The table below provides a brief comparative overview of the sources, main narrators, and chain reliability of these narrations:

Source Cluster	Principal Narrators	*Sanad* Status in *Rijāl* Sources	Researchers' Assessments
The Six Books (al-Kutub al-Sittah), e.g., *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Sunni)	ʿĀyishah; Ibn ʿAbbās	Regarded as sound by many Sunni scholars; criticized by some researchers	Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī considers these transmissions weak in Sanad, yet does not object to the text; he also answers several objections raised against them.
Biḥār al-Anwār, *Nūr al-Thaqalayn*, and related works (*Shia*)	Imam Ṣādiq (AS)	Mostly *Mursal* or with weak chains	*Shia* Hadith scholars tend to accept them conditionally and in some cases affirm these reports.
Reports transmitted through Hishām ibn ʿUrwah	Hishām ibn ʿUrwah; al-Zubayr	Weak; suspected of fabrication	Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahabī accuse him of *Tadlīs* and laxity in transmission.

5. Theological and Doctrinal Analysis of the Bewitchment Narration

5-1. The Relation of the Bewitchment Narration to the Principle of the Prophet's (PBUH) Impeccability

One of the most important questions raised regarding the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is its potential conflict with the principle of his impeccability. Some researchers believe that if the Prophet, due to magic, experienced a state where he thought he had done something he had not, this situation would be inconsistent with

his prophetic station and impeccability. To examine this issue, the definition of impeccability from the perspective of Shia and Sunni theologians must first be clarified. From the perspective of Shia theology, the impeccability of the Prophet (PBUH) means complete immunity from any error or mistake in receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation, as well as in acting upon divine laws. This immunity encompasses all aspects related to divine guidance (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 189-191; Ṭūsī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 1, 274; Allamah Ḥillī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 12, 144; Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683).

In contrast, many Sunni theologians and hadith scholars consider the Prophet's impeccability to pertain to the realm of receiving and conveying revelation, and do not deem the occurrence of some non-legislative, ordinary symptoms or errors for the Prophet as impossible, though unlikely (Nawawī, 1928 AD/1347 AH: 1, 16; Ibn Ḥajar Asqalānī, 2004 AD/1424 AH: 11, 151; Fakhr Rāzī, 2000 AD/1420 AH: commentary on verse 102 of al-Baqarah, Vol. 1, p. 357).

Accordingly, the difference of opinion regarding the possibility or impossibility of magic affecting the Prophet (PBUH) stems more from a fundamental difference in the definition of impeccability between Shia and Sunni theologians than from a narrative contradiction. From the Qurʾānic perspective, numerous verses address the issue of magic, stating that its effect is only possible by God's permission (al-Baqarah: 102). Also, in the story of Pharaoh's magicians, it is stated that their magic only created a visual illusion and had no real power (Ṭāhā: 66). By categorizing the narrations related to the Prophet's (PBUH)

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bewitchment, three approaches can be observed: "One group of narrations propose that the Prophet experienced a type of temporary perceptual disturbance; another group limit the effect of magic merely to a temporary sensation or illusion; and in contrast, some, relying on the absolute impeccability of prophets, deny any effect of magic upon them."

In this regard, two major theological views are evident. The first view holds that any effect of magic, even at the level of perception or sensation, could undermine people's trust in revelation and the prophetic mission, contradicting the verse: *"Wa mā Yanṭiqu ʿan al-Hawā in Huwa illā Waḥyun yūḥā"* (al-Najm: 3-4). However, the second view accepted by many Shia theologians and even some Sunnis emphasizes that the Prophet was not naturally immune to physical and sensory harms, but his impeccability in receiving and conveying revelation was completely preserved. For example, *Allamah Majlisī* in *"Biḥār al-Anwār"* refers to narrations indicating that the effect of magic was limited to affecting the Prophet's senses or eyesight, and no more (*Majlisī*, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 60, 23-25). *Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī* in *"al-Mīzān"* also confirms this meaning, emphasizing that illness, fatigue, or short-term perceptual disturbance did not compromise the Prophet's revelatory mission (*Ṭabāṭabāʾī*, 1973 AD/1393 AH: 20, 683-684).

The theological analysis of the bewitchment narration depends on distinguishing the scope of impeccability. According to the Imami basis, impeccability pertains to the Prophet's (PBUH) immunity from error in receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation, as well as from committing sin. Therefore, any interpretation of the narration

that necessarily entails a disturbance in receiving or conveying religion, or casts doubt on the truthfulness of revelation, is, in terms of its implication, incompatible with the principle of impeccability and invalid. Conversely, bodily afflictions and external harms, as long as they do not extend to the realm of the revelatory mission, do not necessarily conflict with impeccability.

Based on this, if the occurrence of bewitchment is accepted, a defensible interpretation is a limited and temporary effect at the level of sensation and perception of ordinary, non-legislative matters, not an intrusion into revelation and the mission. This explanation clarifies the narrative's semantic boundaries and preserves the religious trust of the community, because the criterion of trust is certainty in revelation and the divine message, and this realm remains protected in the mentioned interpretation. Consequently, the result is that it is possible to reconcile a minimal acceptance of the report with safeguarding the principle of impeccability, without falling into unconditional acceptance or unfounded rejection.

5-2. Extra-Textual Analysis of the Incident as a Divine Trial

Some theologians and thinkers believe that the incident of bewitchment can be analyzed as a divine trial for the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers; because in the divine tradition, prophets are exposed to divine tests and hardships to manifest the degrees of their faith and patience, and that of their community. In this incident as well, the presence of Gabriel and the participation of Imam Ali (AS) in discovering and nullifying the magic indicate that God supported His

Prophet at that very moment and swiftly removed the danger.

Therefore, the philosophy of such an event can be understood as a demonstration of the power of Guardianship, supernatural assistance, and a divine trial without the slightest impairment to the prophetic mission and impeccability of the Prophet (PBUH). The effect of this magic was confined to a limited, perceptual domain and never prevented the Prophet from guidance or receiving revelation. This very aspect means that this narration not only does not contradict the prophetic station of the Prophet, but rather finds meaning within the framework of divine wisdom and the tradition of testing prophets, serving as a model of patience and trust in God for the believers.

6. Historical, Social, and Political Analysis of the Bewitchment Incident

Magic was a deep-rooted and prevalent phenomenon in pre-Islamic Arab society. Many tribes of the Arabian Peninsula believed that through magic and talismans, affection or enmity could be instilled in others' hearts, illness or incapacity could be created, and even a person's life could be taken. These beliefs were especially common in tribal rivalries and wars to harm enemies or preserve sovereignty in the courts of rulers, and were employed as a power-centric tool. Numerous historical evidences, such as those found in "*al-Aghānī*" (Abul Faraj Iṣfahānī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 1, 24-26) and "Ṭabaqāt" (Ibn Sa‘d, 1988 AD/1408 AH: 2, 99 and 103), point to this prominent presence of magic in pre-Islamic culture.

On the other hand, the Jewish residents of Medina also possessed

considerable skill in the arts of magic and soothsaying. Historical sources such as "*al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah"* by *Ibn Hishām* and "*al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah"* by *Ibn Kathīr* report that the Jews, in addition to their economic and political influence, utilized occult sciences and magic to affect people or oppose the prophets (*Ibn Hishām*, 2013 AD/1434 AH: 1, 598-599; 2, 215). Even the Noble Qur'ān reminds us in verse 102 of Surah *al-Baqarah* that some Jewish groups used magic as a tool for causing tribulation.

Historical reports such as "*al-Ṭabaqāt"* by *Ibn Sa'd* and "*Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī"* contain evidence indicating that the Jews of Medina attempted several times to harm the Prophet (PBUH); including the incident of *Zaynab bint Ḥārith*, who intended to kill the Prophet with poisoned food (*Ṭabarī*, 1967: 2, 92-93; *Ibn Sa'd*, 1988 AD/1408 AH: 2, 137-195), or the cooperation of the Jews with the polytheists in the Battle of *al-Aḥzāb*, and finally, the execution of magic by *Labīd ibn A'ṣam* and his accomplices. These events show that the Jews used all means, including magic, to threaten prophets.

This subject can be examined considering the status of magic in the Jewish tradition; such that in their sacred texts, the existence of magic is accepted while warnings are given against its use (Deuteronomy, 18:10–12). Historical research indicates that in religious conflicts, attributing magic to rival religious figures served a polemical function and was not always a precise report of a historical event (*Schäfer*, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 72).

From a historical perspective, magic was an accepted reality in the social milieu of that time and was sometimes used as a means of

intimidation and psychological sabotage. *Ibn Athīr* in "*al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh"* emphasizes that Jewish scholars also resorted to magic against previous prophets (*Ibn Athīr*, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 1, 517). However, *Ibn Khaldūn* in his "*Muqaddimah"* warns that not all these reports should be considered definitive without chain and rational examination, and that part of these narrations may reflect the general atmosphere and beliefs of the people (*Ibn Khaldūn*, 2004 AD/1425 AH: 1, 273-281). Despite this, the historical conclusion shows that magic in the life world of pre-Islamic Arabs and also in some Jewish layers of Medina was not merely a marginal matter; rather, it was a tool for psychological warfare, intimidation, and weakening the social capital of a rival. In the atmosphere of Medina, where tribal conflicts, religious rivalries, and political sensitivities intensified after the consolidation of the Prophet's (PBUH) power, attributing magic or attempting it could have a political and social function: "Creating doubt in the spiritual authority of the Prophet (PBUH), suggesting vulnerability, and strengthening the opposition front. Therefore, the reports concerning bewitchment should be read not only alongside the possibility of an external act but also as a reflection of the atmosphere of hostility and the mechanisms of psychological and reputational sabotage. The judgment regarding the extent of its effect, which was explained in the theological analysis section, should not replace the explanation of these historical and social functions."

7. The Meccan or Medinan Origin and the Occasion of Revelation of the Mu‘awwadhatayn Surahs

One of the significant topics in this context is the issue of the Cause of

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Revelation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs* and their connection to the bewitchment incident. Some exegetes, such as *Jābir ibn Zayd, 'Aṭā', 'Ikrimah, Ibn 'Abbās*, and *Ibn 'Āshūr*, consider these *surahs* to be *Meccan* (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1956: 30, 624), relying on their monotheistic style and their placement at the end of the codex. However, another group, including *Tha'labī, Fakhr Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr, Suyūṭī, Ṭabrisī*, and *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, consider the *Mu'awwadhatayn* to be Medinan and believe they were revealed during the Prophet's bewitchment as a means to repel it (Rāzī, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 32, 369; Tha'labī, 2002 AD/1422 AH: 10, 337; Ibn Kathīr, 2000 AD/1420 AH: 8, 536; Suyūṭī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 6, 417; Ṭabrisī, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 27, 378-380; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974 AD/1393 SH: 20, 683-684).

To resolve this contradiction, several hypotheses have been proposed:

- The possibility of these *surahs* being revealed again in Medina as a cure for the magic;
- A reminder and instruction to recite them in Medina without a new revelation;
- Or their actual origin being Medinan, but later being counted among Meccan *surahs* due to their stylistic similarity to them.

Based on historical evidence and the order of the codex, the most probable hypothesis is that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* were revealed in Mecca and were later recommended to the Prophet in Medina in connection with the bewitchment incident. This conclusion is consistent with both the cause of revelation narrations and the function of these *surahs* in removing psychological or physical harms caused by magic.

In this context, the differing opinion of *Ibn Mas'ūd* regarding not including the *Mu'awwadhatayn* in his personal codex and the view of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS), who introduced these two *surahs* as part of the Qur'ān (*Baḥrānī*, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 5, 814), indicate that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* had a special protective and talismanic role from the very beginning, and this role became more prominent during the bewitchment incident. The narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) clearly emphasize that these *surahs* are part of the Qur'ān and that God saved His Prophet from the harm of magic through their revelation (Nūrī, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 13, 18; Majlisī, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 92, 15; Ḥuwayzī, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 5, 719; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 5, 30).

In summarizing this section, it can be said that the disagreement among exegetes regarding the Meccan or Medinan origin of the *Mu'awwadhatayn surahs* directly affects how the connection between these two *surahs* and the bewitchment narration is explained. Considering the stylistic evidence, the position of the *surahs* in the codex, and at the same time, the narrative reports related to the bewitchment incident, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, as *surahs* with a function of seeking refuge and protection, had an original Meccan revelation. However, in Medina, following the bewitchment event, the recommendation to recite and apply them, or a reminder of their function, was emphasized. Therefore, the link between these two *surahs* and the bewitchment incident does not necessarily mean it is the original cause of revelation, but can signify an applicative and apotropaic appropriateness. Based on this, both the apparent

contradiction of Meccan and Medinan is explainable, and the reports of the cause of revelation can be interpreted in a methodical and non-contradictory framework.

8. Exegetical Analysis of the Mu'awwadhatayn *Surahs* and Their Connection to Magic

Surah al-Falaq and *Surah al-Nās*, known as the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, begin with the phrase *"Qul A'ūdhu"* (Say, I seek refuge) and involve seeking God's protection from apparent and hidden evils. Because these *surahs* are recited in times of danger and threat, they are also called *"Mashqshaqatayn"* in some sources; meaning speech uttered in critical situations and during calamities (Khorramshahi, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 2, 1271-272).

Exegetical sources mention that the Prophet *Muḥammad* (PBUH) used these *surahs* as incantations for his two grandsons, *Ḥasan* and *Ḥusayn* (AS); *Ibn Shahrāshūb* in "*al-Manāqib"* and *al-Ṭabrisī* in "*Majma'al-Bayān"* explicitly state that the Prophet (PBUH) would repeatedly recite these two *surahs* to protect them (Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 3, 384; *Ṭabrisī*, 1960 AD/1379 AH: 10, 565).

Other narrations also mention that these two *surahs* were brought down by Gabriel and Michael for the Prophet's healing. Imam *Ṣādiq* and *Bāqir* (AS) are reported in narrations by *'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī* and *Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī* to have said that the Prophet suffered from a severe fever due to the illness from magic, and Gabriel brought these surahs to cure him (Qummī, 1984 AD/1404 AH: 2, 446; Baḥrānī, 1994 AD/1373 SH: 4, 531).

Furthermore, based on a narration from *'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir*, the Prophet (PBUH) said that these two *surahs* were revealed to him together and as a unit, and he emphasized: "Two surahs were revealed to me tonight the like of which I have never seen." (Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 20, 590)

Regarding the phrase *"Wa min Sharri al-Naffāthāti fil 'Uqad"* (And from the evil of the women who blow on knots) in *Surah al-Falaq*, *Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī* explained that *"Naffāthāt"* refers to women who would blow on knots and practice sorcery through this method, as this practice was more common among women. He also, in discussing the word *"Falaq,"* refers to a narration that considers *Falaq* to be the name of a well in Hell, a view supported by some exegetical narrations (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974 AD/1393 SH: 20, 681-682). *Suyūṭī* also attributed *"Naffāthāt"* to the daughters of *Labīd ibn al-A'ṣam* (Suyūṭī, 2001 AD/1421 AH: 2, 336). These interpretations indicate that the reference to magic in these verses is also linked to the historical context of the Prophet's bewitchment incident and likely points to those who collaborated with *Labīd* in performing the magic.

From an exegetical perspective, the expression *"Wa min Sharri al-Naffāthāti fil 'Uqad"* in *Surah al-Falaq* refers to one of the most well-known methods of magic in the cultures surrounding the era of revelation: knotting and blowing (*Nafth*) accompanied by incantations for psychological effect or creating the illusion of harm and threat. Therefore, the primary indication of the verse is to state a clear instance of the evil of magic and to seek God's refuge from it, not a direct literal reference to a specific incident. However, since the

pivotal element of the magical act in the narrations of the bewitchment incident namely the knots and blowing on them is prominently reported (such as the narration of the knotted rope and the knots being untied simultaneously with the recitation of the *Mu'awwadhatayn*), it can be said that there is a conceptual correspondence between the Qur'anic image of blowing on knots and the narrative image of the bewitchment incident. Accordingly, the connection between the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment story should be understood more as a kind of narrative correlation and highlighting of the *surahs*' apotropaic function, rather than the verses themselves definitively and explicitly referring to the well of *Dharwān* or the external details of the incident. Consequently, the *Mu'awwadhatayn*, by outlining types of hidden evil including magic, establish a general framework for seeking refuge, and the narrations have applied this framework to a historical instance and emphasized the protective function of the *surahs*.

Conclusion

1. *Rijālī* and textual criticism evaluations demonstrated that the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is not uniform in its chains of transmissions across reports in both major Islamic traditions. Some chains face issues such as *Irsāl*, historical discontinuity, or problematic narrators. Therefore, the outcome of the research is neither definitive proof nor absolute rejection of the narration, but rather the acceptance of the possibility of a minimal historical core accompanied by narrative embellishments in some reports.

2. A comparison of texts revealed that differences primarily occur in the details of the narration (the type of tool, the role of individuals, the method of discovery, and the manner of removing the effect), while the common core of the narration revolves around the act of bewitchment and its subsequent removal through divine recourse. Consequently, in the semantic analysis, one must avoid generalizing individual details to the main claim and base the interpretation on reliable common elements.
3. From a theological perspective, the criterion for judgment is that the content of the narration does not extend to the realm of receiving, preserving, and conveying revelation. Based on this, even assuming a minimal acceptance of the narration, a defensible interpretation refers to a limited and temporary effect at the level of physical symptoms, sensory matters, or ordinary non-legislative affairs, not a disruption in revelation and the prophetic mission. As a result, the principle of revelatory impeccability remains unimpaired, and the alleged conflict with doctrinal foundations is resolved.
4. Historical evidence of the prevalence of magic and its functions within the cultural milieu of Arabia and in the context of the conflicts in Medina indicates that threatening with magic or accusing of it could have been part of the mechanisms of pressure and psychological warfare against the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, the very proposition of such an event is plausible in terms of historical context, although determining the details of the incident requires stronger chains of transmission.
5. Exegetical analysis shows that the *Mu'awwadhatayn* primarily

provide a general framework for seeking refuge from hidden evils, including magic. The narrations may have applied this framework to a specific historical instance. Therefore, the connection between the *Mu'awwadhatayn* and the bewitchment incident does not necessarily signify the original cause of revelation. It can be explained as a recommendation and an immediate, apotropaic application in Medina, an explanation that increases the possibility of reconciling reports about the occasion of revelation and the disagreement over their Meccan or Medinan origin.

The culmination of the chain analysis, textual, theological, and historical analyses indicates that a methodological approach to the narration of the Prophet's (PBUH) bewitchment is conditional acceptance with a minimal interpretation. That is, if reliance is placed on stronger chains, the narration ultimately indicates a limited affliction and is not incompatible with revelatory impeccability. Furthermore, the relationship of the *Mu'awwadhatayn* to the incident can be explained within the framework of their apotropaic function and narrative correlation. This result offers a middle path that avoids both the unconditional acceptance of weakly supported details and the unfounded absolute rejection of the narration.

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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.

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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 ʿUbayd ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm*, published in the Journal of the University of *Shāriq* for *Sharʿīyyah* 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 Shiʿi 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 Shiʿi 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 Shiʿi 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 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 Ashʿath, 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 ʿĀmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 167; Burūjirdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 428);

6) "I asked *Abū ʿAbdillāh* (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

ʿĀmilī, 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 ʿĀmilī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 20, 144);

8) "From *Abū ʿAbdillāh* (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 *ʿĀyishah* said: "Woman is but a man's plaything, so a man should treat his plaything kindly." (Shāfiʿī, 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 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-Jaʿfarīyāt*." *Muḥaddith Nūrī* also transmitted it in "*Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil*" with the same chain as found in "*al-Jaʿfarīyāt*." 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 *Jaʿfar 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-Ashʿath*, and the "*Mūsā*" from whom *Ashʿath* narrates is a grandson of Imam *Kāẓim* (AS). The "My father (*Abī*)" mentioned in the chain refers to *Ismāʿīl*, the son of Imam *Kāẓim*.

It should be noted that there is disagreement among Islamic scholars regarding the reliability of the book "*al-Jaʿfarīyāt*." Some scholars consider it unreliable (Mūsawī Khuʾī, 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; Ḥāʾirī, 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-Zīyārāt*" 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 *Khuʾī* considered him reliable for this reason (Khuʾī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 5, 361).

Najāshī states that *Ismāʿīl*, the son of Imam *Kāẓim*, was the author of a book (Najāshī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 26), and *Qahpāʾī* regarded him as one of the scholars of the Imāmiyya (Qahpāʾī, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 1, 224). *Baḥr al-ʿUlūm* also explicitly affirmed his knowledge, virtue, and trustworthiness (Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, 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 *Ismāʿīl*, *Mūsā*, and the narrator who transmits from him (*Ibn Ashʿath*) 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 described him as "An Imami hadith transmitter, trustworthy, of great

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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 ʿĀmilī, 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 Shiʿi narrators, some of whom are counted among the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmāʿ*, who narrate from him, and the abundance and acceptance of narrations transmitted through him in major hadith compilations and their influence on Shiʿi 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 "*Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl*," this hadith is considered correct (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 20, 323).

Hadith no. 6: "I asked *Abū ʿAbdillāh* (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-Wāfī, Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa*," and "*Mirʾāt al-ʿUqūl*." All of them transmit it from *"Kāfī*" with the chain:

"*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā from Salamah ibn al-Khaṭṭāb from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan from Muḥammad ibn Zīyād from Abān ibn ʿUthmān and al-Ḥusayn ibn Abī Yūsuf from ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAmr*."

The "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā*" referred to here is "*Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-ʿAṭṭār*," 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-Azdurqānī*. Shaykh *Ṭūsī* merely mentioned his books without indicating either authentication or criticism (Ṭūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 200). *Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī* 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 Khuʾī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 9, 148; Burūjirdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 223; Ḥillī, ibid: 1, 333; Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī, n.d.: 5, 2)

The "ʿ*Alī ibn al-Ḥasan*" mentioned in the chain refers to ʿ*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 ʿUmayr*, 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 ʿUthmān was among the companions of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) and Imam *Kāẓim* (AS) (Qahpāʾī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 25; Mūsawī Khuʾī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 157). He was one of the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmāʿ* and is considered trustworthy (Ibn Dāwūd, n.d.: 12). *Khuʾī* rejected the attribution of the *Nāwūsīyya* sect to him (Najāshī, ibid: 13; Qahpāʾī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 1, 25) on the grounds that he was among the *Aṣḥāb al-Ijmāʿ* (Khuʾī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 161).

ʿ*Abd al-Malik ibn ʿAmr* is trustworthy (Ibn Dāwūd, n.d.: 1, 126), Arab, Kufan, and among the companions of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) (Mūsawī Khuʾī, 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-Fatḥ ibn Yazīd al-Jurjānī* to Imam *Riḍā* (AS). This narration appears in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* and was later cited in *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa* from that book. The chain of this

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

Regarding *al-Fatḥ ibn Yazīd al-Jurjānī*, no explicit praise or criticism has been reported by *Rijāl* scholars. *Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī* described him as unknown (Ibn Ghaḍāʾirī, ibid: 1, 84), while *Shaykh Ṭūsī* mentioned that he authored a book (Ṭūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 206), which *Najāshī* named "*al-Masāʾil*." Allamah *Ḥillī* referred to the (disagreement) concerning whether *al-Masāʾil* should be attributed to *Abul Ḥasan al-Riḍā* (AS) or *Abul Ḥasan al-Hādī* (AS) (Ḥillī, 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 ʿAbd 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-ʿAṭṭār 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*" appears in the chain, it can usually refer to one of two individuals:

1) *Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid 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 *Ghiyāth 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 "*Jaʿfar*," 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 Shiʿi hadith sources. In Sunni sources, it appears only in the book "*al-Fawāʾid al-Shahīr bil Ghaylāniyyāt*" with the following chain of transmission:

"*Yusr ibn Anas Abul Khayr from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yazīd ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yazīd ibn Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-Farawī from ʿĪsā ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī* from his father from his grandfather from the father of his grandfather from ʿAlī that the Prophet (PBUH) said…"

The hadith is also recorded in "*al-Firdaws bi Maʾthūr al-Khiṭāb*" without mentioning the chain of transmission, attributed to Imam ʿAlī (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.

"*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 *Isḥāq 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

ʿAsqalānī, 1896 AD/1326 AH: 3, 240)

Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī 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 *ʿĀyisha* (Ṭarhūnī, 1, 233). Therefore, it is possible that the phrase was originally the statement of *ʿĀyisha* and was intentionally or unintentionally attributed to the Prophet (PBUH).

Given the close similarity in wording among the phrases: "*Falyaṣunhā, Falyubḍiʿhā, Falyuṣniʿhā, Falyughaṭṭihā, Falā Yuḍayyiʿhā*" 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 ʿĀmilī* have transmitted it from "*al-Kāfī"* (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 22, 788; Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, 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 "*Luʿbah*" (Plaything)

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

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

The expression "*Laʿiba 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 *Ṭabāṭabāʾī*, the word "*Laʿb*" 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 (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 19, 288).

Thus, the concept of "*Laʿb*" 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 "*Luʿbah*"

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

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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:

- 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 "*Laʿb*" (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 (*Laʿb* 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 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" (*Luʿbah*). 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 AD/1374 SH: 2, 171)

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.

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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 *ʿĀyishah*: "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 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; Ṣaʿīdī 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 *Luʿbah* 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*ʿ" (with kasra on the bāʾ) refers to a portion of wealth (Ṭurayḥī, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 4, 300), while "*Biḍāʿah*" 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 Ashʿath, 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*ʿ" is used when someone produces or makes something well, and the expression "*Rajulun Ṣun*ʿ" refers to a man

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who possesses skill in crafting or making things (Ibn Fāris, n.d.: 3, 313). The term "*Iṣṭināʿ*," the *Ifti ʿāl* form derived from "*Ṣanīʿah*," carries the meanings of gift, generosity, honor, and beneficence (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 8, 208). Therefore, from the phrase "*Fal Yuṣniʿhā*" 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 Yughaṭṭihā*," derived from the root (*gh-ṭ-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 ʿAbdillāh* (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*) 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 ʿAmilī, 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 ʿAmilī, 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 *Luʿbah* 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 strengthening and stabilizing the family should not be forgotten.

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 *ʿĀyishah*: "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-Aʿrāf*: 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 *ʿĀyishah*: "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 ʿĀmilī, 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 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 Ashʿath, n.d.: 91)	Weak chain (unknown narrator)	*Iṣṭināʿ* 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 ʿĀmilī, 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 *Abū ʿAbd*	(Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407	Weak chain	Addresses regulation of

Hadith	Source	Chain Authenticity	Textual Evaluation
Allāh 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 ʿĀmilī, 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 *Riḍā*… 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 ʿĀmilī, 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 ʿĀyishah)	(Shāfiʿī, 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 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 "*Luʿbah*" (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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