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**Examining the Authenticity of the *Tafsīr* Attributed to
 Imam Hassan Askari (as)**

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Abstract

The book *Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as)* is a commentary (*Tafsīr*) attributed to the Eleventh Imam of the Shi'a, Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as). This book contains unique interpretive, theological, and doctrinal contents, and some of its narrations are found in the four principal Shi'a hadith collections (*al-Kutub al-Arba'ah*), such as *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih*; therefore, examining its authenticity is of particular importance. There is a difference of opinion among the Shi'a regarding the authenticity of the book. This paper examines the acceptance or rejection of the narrations in this book by reviewing both confirming and refuting evidence. Ultimately, based on confirming evidence—such as the narration and verification (*tashīh*) of the book by Shaykh Saduq and other early Shi'a scholars—and the refutation of the opposing evidence—such as the three-pronged rejection of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri (the weaknesses of its manuscript, author, and content) and the rejection of excessive perceived exaggeration (*ghuluw*)—this study concludes that the narrations of this *Tafsīr* cannot be definitively rejected and are almost universally accepted. The research methodology is descriptive-analytical, and data was collected via library research.

Keywords: *Tafsīr*, Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), Shaykh Saduq, *Rijāl* of Ibn al-Ghada'iri, *Ghuluw*.



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Introduction

The present article falls within the specialized domain of Hadith Studies and Twelver Shi'a Qur'anic Sciences. The invaluable hadith legacy of the Shi'a faith encompasses various narrative collections, and the validity, chain of transmission, and attribution of some of these works to the Infallible Imams (as) have consistently been a critical subject in Islamic studies. Among these, the book *Tafsīr* Attributed to Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) holds a unique position, as its content is narrated directly from the Eleventh Imam of the Shi'a and comprises precise exegetical, theological, and jurisprudential discussions. Furthermore, the presence of some narrations from this exegesis in the four principal Shi'a hadith collections (al-Kutub al-Arba'a), such as *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih* by Shaykh Saduq, heightens the importance of examining its authenticity.

Despite the significance of this work, the authenticity of *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-'Askari (as) has long been a matter of intense scholarly debate and disagreement among Shi'a scholars. On one hand, a group of early scholars, including Shaykh Saduq and Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Tabarsi, have, through extensive narration and verification (*taṣḥīḥ*), practically affirmed its attribution. On the other hand, severe critiques of the chains of narrators (*Rijāl*) exist, particularly those attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri, which weaken the principal narrator (Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi) and classify the entire book as fabricated. Moreover, certain textual problems, perceived instability in the chains of transmission, and the suspicion of exaggeration (*Ghuluw*) in its content have added complexity to this controversy.

This tension between the affirmations of the predecessors and the critiques of the *Rijāl* scholars necessitates a comprehensive review and structured analysis of the existing evidence. The objective of this research is to re-evaluate the corroborating and refuting evidence concerning the authenticity of *Tafsīr al-Mansub ilā al-Imām al-'Askari* (as). Using a descriptive-analytical methodology and relying on library resources, this study seeks to examine the strengths and weaknesses of each piece of evidence, ultimately determining the final jurisprudential and narrative status of this exegesis within the framework of Shi'a hadith methodology. The conclusion of this article asserts that, given the strength of the confirming evidence and the successful rebuttal of the objections, the narrations of this *Tafsīr* cannot be definitively rejected and are considered to be almost universally accepted.

Problem Statement

According to the claim made within *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as), all its statements are narrated directly from Imam Hasan al-'Askari



(as). Thus, this Tafsīr is classified under the category of narrational commentaries (*Tafasir Ruwa'i*), and based on the aforementioned claim, all its contents are considered the word of the Infallible Imam (as). Consequently, the dispute revolves around the entire text of the book, as there is no claim of additional statements by non-Infallibles (as) within it.

What is inferred from the actions and positions of Shi'a scholars and researchers regarding this Tafsīr is that the authenticity of the book is a matter of disagreement.

* Some consider the entire book to be fabricated (Ibn al-Ghada'iri, 11th Century CE, p. 98).

* Some consider a portion of its narrations trustworthy and another portion unreliable (Hashemi, 2009 CE).

* Some consider all of its narrations to be reliable (Majlisi, Mohammad Taqi, 1659 CE, (b) Vol. 7, p. 523 / Hurr al-'Amili, 1692 CE, Vol. 30, p. 187 / Majlisi, Mohammad Baqir, 1698 CE, Vol. 1, p. 28 / Nuri, 1902 CE, Vol. 5, p. 200).

Acceptance of some narrations from this book leads to the acceptance of a broader scope in the interpretation and doctrines of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). For instance, this book discusses the intercession (*shafa'āh*) of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) even regarding the rights of people (*haqq al-nās*), which is not found in most Shi'a books (Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), 874 CE, p. 128).

A brief explanation of the rules for attributing a book to a person

To ensure the soundness of a book or the correctness of its attribution to a person, both confirming and refuting evidence must be examined. If the confirming evidence is sound and the refuting evidence is questionable, the book is confirmed. Conversely, if the confirming evidence is questionable and the refuting evidence is sound, the book is rejected. If the confirming and refuting evidence are equal with no preference for one over the other, a suspension of judgment is maintained regarding the book. If there is a preference, opinions vary based on the intensity of that preference. This paper addresses both the confirming and refuting evidence to arrive at a conclusion.

Confirming Evidence

A) Presence in the Sources of Man La Yahduru al-Faqih

This book is among the sources of *Man La Yahduru al-Faqih*, while Shaykh Saduq considers everything in *Man La Yahduru al-Faqih* to be authentic, famous, and a scholarly reference (Saduq, 991 CE, (f) Vol. 1: p. 2). Shaykh Saduq narrates this book directly from its primary narrator, Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi:

> [Statement of the chain of transmission to Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi]

> And whatever is in it [the book] from Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi, I have narrated it from him.

> (Saduq, 991 CE, (f) Vol. 4: p. 502)

This is significant because foremost Shi'a scholars avoided direct narration from unreliable narrators and considered it a form of critical disparagement (*jarh*) (Najashi, 1058 CE, p. 396). Therefore, when a scholar narrates directly from an individual, it indicates their trust in that person and affirms the person's reliability.

A common objection to this evidence is that Saduq only narrated one tradition from him in *al-Faqih*, and this alone cannot be a confirming indicator.

However, this objection can be answered in several ways:

* Firstly: By carefully considering the indicators of authenticity—such as handwriting, Imami confirmation, fame, and the book's status as a reference—it is clear that these are general indicators for an entire book, not just for a single narration. In short, distinguishing between the narrations of a book when accepting *qara'in wuthuq bi al-sudur* is not tenable. This is similar to arguing that when Najashi confirms the reliability (*tawthiq*) of Zurarah, he only confirms the Zurarah who is in his own chain to him, and not the Zurarah in other chains because the narrators in those other chains may not have been careful in accurately receiving Zurarah's words.

* Secondly: As stated, Saduq testified that all narrations in *al-Faqih* are authentic and a proof between him and God. More importantly, he derived them from famous, reliable, and authoritative books. Thus, *al-Faqih* cannot be viewed as a simple book; rather, merely narrating from a book indicates its authenticity in Saduq's view, and furthermore, its fame and acceptance within the early Shi'a community. Therefore, even if he only cited one narration from *Tafsir al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as)*, the book would fall under the generality of his statement. Moreover, Saduq narrates this *Tafsir* directly and orally from al-Astarabadi, eliminating the suspicion that he took it through an intermediary and only trusted the intermediary:

> 2586- And Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi narrated to me from...

> (Saduq, 991 CE, (f) Vol. 2: p. 327)

> 30- Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi al-Mufassir (May God be pleased with him) narrated to us, saying...

> (Saduq, 991 CE, (h) Vol. 1: p. 282)

* Thirdly: *Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih* is a jurisprudential book, whereas most narrations in *Tafsir al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (AS)* are esoteric interpretations (*Tafsir batini*), theological, and doctrinal. This



limits Saduq's jurisprudential use of the book, confining it to a single narration. Consequently, it was not feasible for Saduq to narrate many traditions from this book in *al-Faqih*.

* Fourthly: Saduq frequently narrated from this Tafsīr through the same chain of al-Astarabadi in his other books, which were not jurisprudential. Hence, one cannot claim that he trusted only one hadith from this book and considered the rest unreliable. Examples include: (Saduq, 991 CE, (c) p. 403 / Saduq, 991 CE, (b) Vol. 2: p. 359 / Saduq, 991 CE, (g) p. 403 / Saduq, 991 CE, (h) Vol. 1: p. 282 / Saduq, 991 CE, (e) p. 24, p. 33, p. 36 / Saduq, 991 CE, (a) p. 174 / Saduq, 991 CE, (d) Vol. 1: p. 140 / Saduq, 991 CE, (d) Vol. 1: p. 416).

Some examples of Saduq's narrations from the Tafsīr that were in his other books, which are now lost, have been cited through earlier scholars:

* Through Qisas al-Anbiya' by Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi: (Rawandi, 1178 CE, p. 170 / Rawandi, 1178 CE, p. 288).

* Through al-Ihtijaj by Ahmad ibn Ali al-Tabarsi: (Tabarsi, 12th Century CE, Vol. 1: p. 15).

We see that Saduq narrates one tradition from this book in his jurisprudential book, whose authenticity is confirmed, and several other traditions in his non-jurisprudential books. This indicates his confidence in Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as), and not just a single hadith from it. Furthermore, of Saduq's 200 or 300 books—as reported by Shaykh Tusi and Najashi—only 13 remain today (with disputes over the attribution of some), and Saduq included narrations from Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) in six of these 13 books. Moreover, based on the reports of scholars closer to Saduq's era, who had access to his various books that are now lost to us, Saduq did not fail to narrate from *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) in his other works as well.

B) Presence in the Sources of al-Ihtijaj by al-Tabarsi

The narrations of *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) are present in al-Tabarsi's al-Ihtijaj. In the introduction to this book, al-Tabarsi testifies that all its narrations are either subject to consensus (*ijma'i*), rational ('aqli), or famous among different sects, with the exception of the narrations from Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), whose fame is less than the others. This does not mean they lack the qualities of the others, but that they share the same qualities, only with less widespread narration, which seems to be due to a single chain of transmission (*isnād wāhid*). He ultimately specifies that he took the narrations in the section of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) from the Tafsīr attributed to him, and he attributes this *Tafsīr* to the Imam (as) decisively. This is because he states that "The Imam (as) mentioned those

narrations in his Tafsīr," rather than merely saying "Those narrations are in the *Tafsīr*!"

Refuting Evidence

A) The Statement of the *Rijāl* Attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri Regarding This *Tafsīr*

He states that *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) is fabricated, and its sole narrator, Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi, is weak and a great liar:

> Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Mufasssir al-Astarabadi. Abu Ja'far Ibn Babawayh narrated from him. He is weak, a liar. He narrated a Tafsīr from him, which he narrates from two unknown men: one known as Yusuf ibn Mohammad ibn Ziyad, and the other: Ali ibn Mohammad ibn Yasar, from their father, from Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith (as). And the Tafsīr is fabricated on the authority of Sahl al-Dibbaji from his father, containing some of these objectionable hadiths (*manakir*).

> (Ibn al-Ghada'iri, 11th Century CE, p. 98)

This statement is subject to challenge:

* Firstly: In the book *Ithbat Qat'i Shahadat al-Siddiqa al-Shahida* (as) fi Kutub al-Shi'a (Bughayri, 2019 CE, (b)) by the same author, the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri was discussed extensively. The summary of that discussion is that three fundamental problems plague this book:

* a) The manuscript of this book's copy to Sayyid 'Abd al-Karim ibn Tawus lacks a chain of transmission (*sanad*) or evidence, and in fact, evidence has been established for the non-existence of such a book.

* b) The author, who is likely Ahmad ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ubayd Allah al-Ghada'iri, lacks both specific and general authentication (*tawthiq khass wa 'amm*), and at best, he might be considered praiseworthy according to some principles.

* c) The excessive disparagement (*jarh*) of Shi'a narrators in this book raises doubts about the author's scholarly rigor or the reliability of his character, to the extent that someone like Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani considered this book fabricated and a product of adversaries (*mu'anidin*).

* Secondly: The statement of the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri itself stems from a scholarly error, because Shaykh Saduq took this book with its famous chain orally and in person, and Sahl al-Dibbaji is not mentioned in the chain. The existence of al-Dibbaji and his father in the chain cannot be assumed because the chain was passed orally from one narrator to the next, and if another person were in the chain, the previous narrator would have typically mentioned them in the session of hearing the hadith. Yet, none of them mentioned al-Dibbaji or his father, having narrated the book from one to the other by hearing, not through a non-



documented discovery (*wijadah*), letter, or book without a chain. Even if it is assumed that al-Dibbaji's chain was a different one, numerous other problems arise: 1. the chain was not exclusive to Sahl al-Dibbaji; rather, Saduq narrated it without mentioning Sahl, which compromises the probability of fabrication by al-Dibbaji. 2. The author of this book makes no mention of Saduq, despite being post-Saduq and thus presumably having oversight of the chains. Either he suffered from a lack of thorough investigation and did not see such a chain, or he suffered from scholarly deficiency and failed to notice the existence of Saduq's chain. In either case, his opinion is not authoritative.

* Thirdly: A further problem with the statement of the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri is that he seems to have overlooked the Imam mentioned in the narration of this Tafsīr or has confused two different Tafsīr books. The Tafsīr under discussion is attributed to Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), while the Tafsīr mentioned by the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri is from Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith (the Third Abu al-Hasan), i.e., Imam al-Hadi (as)! Since the narrators differ and the Imam also differs, does this not lead us to the conclusion that the book and the narration are different? It is also possible that a Tafsīr book from Imam al-Hadi (as) reached the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri, but he confused it with the *Tafsīr* attributed to Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as).

In any case, even assuming the attribution and the statement of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri are accepted, his statement still cannot be taken, because his statement apparently refers to another book. The interpretation that he might have cited Sahl al-Dibbaji's Tafsīr as an example, with the word Kama (like) being omitted, so that it would read: "And the Tafsīr is fabricated kama ('like') on the authority of Sahl al-Dibbaji," is contrary to the apparent meaning (*khilāf al-zāhir*), and there is no report of a variant manuscript of this sentence. Similarly, the interpretation that the phrase "Sahl al-Dibbaji" or another word was corrupted (*taṣhīf*) or distorted (*tahrīf*) is contrary to the principle of non-addition (*asl 'adam ziyadah*) and contrary to the apparent meaning, since no report of a variant manuscript for this sentence has been received. Furthermore, the identity of the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri has not been established yet, so that we might try to justify his words based on his scholarly prestige.

Moreover, the justification that the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri might have been confused because the title al-'Askari was used for Imam al-Hadi (as) is also contrary to the apparent meaning. This is because when he quotes the chain (*sanad*), he does not mention the title al-'Askari at all, but rather Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith. This indicates that Abu

al-Hasan al-Thalith was written in the copy he had access to, because it is the habit of everyone to quote the exact wording of the chain from the predecessors, not to change the Imam's name, title, or kunya (patronymic) on their own. We cannot say he might have changed it to the kunya "Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith", even though al-'Askari was there, and he mistakenly understood it to be Imam al-Hadi (as). Additionally, the use of the title al-'Askari for Imam al-Hadi (as) was not the dominant usage (*ghalabat isti'mal*), making it unlikely that the text he had used this title. In summary, this justification also seems remote.

Furthermore, the justification that the name of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) might have been omitted from Ibn al-Ghada'iri's copy is also incorrect. This is because Saduq, who received the book orally from al-Astarabadi, narrated from this book numerous times (as previously mentioned), but we see that he never once mentioned Imam al-Hadi (as). Hence, the possibility that the book was from Imam al-Hadi (as) and Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) was merely the transmitter, and the intermediary of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) was omitted (corrupted) from the copy available to the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri, is contrary to the apparent meaning.

Aside from all this, Shaykh Saduq, who lived two centuries before him, received this book orally. He was known for his stringent approach in accepting hadith, and he was severe in matters of ghuluw (exaggeration). Despite this, he narrated from this book in his most authentic work, which he considered a proof between him and God, and testified to the fame and authority of the books he took from. Thus, he considered this book to be of confirmed issuance from Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as).

Now, in light of the above evidence, does the statement of Ibn al-Ghada'iri have the strength to counter the action of Saduq? Perhaps these are the reasons why Allamah Mohammad Taqi al-Majlisi, in *Rawdat al-Muttaqin*, attributes falsity and delusion to the statement of the *Rijāl* of Ibn al-Ghada'iri and calls this Tafsīr unequivocally the words of the Imams (as). In *Lawami' Sahibqarani*, which he wrote in Persian, he explicitly states that Saduq had direct contact with al-Astarabadi. He thus ruled the hadith to be authentic and considered it a proof between himself and God. He certainly knew more about that era than Ibn al-Ghada'iri. He accused Ibn al-Ghada'iri of lacking piety and attributed the Tafsīr decisively to the Imam (as). He also reported that some muhaddithin (hadith scholars) considered its chain to be the most sublime of chains (Majlisi, Mohammad Taqi, 1659 CE, (b) Vol. 7, p. 523).

Allamah Mohammad Baqir al-Majlisi, the author of *Bihār al-Anwār*, countered the statement of the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri with the action of Saduq and the acceptance of most Shi'a



scholars, calling Saduq more knowledgeable about this *Tafsīr* than Ibn al-Ghada'iri (Majlisi, Mohammad Baqir, Vol. 1, p. 28). Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili criticized the statement of the author of the *Rijāl* attributed to Ibn al-Ghada'iri, suggesting the possibility of a difference in the narrations of his copy compared to Saduq's copy. He also pointed to the reliance of Saduq, al-Tabarsi, and others on this book, giving preference to their view (Hurr al-'Amili, 1692 CE, Vol. 30, p. 187).

B) The Chain (Sanad) of This Book Suffers from Instability (*Iḍtirāb*)

The theory of *iḍtirāb* (instability or disruption) has been proposed regarding the chains Saduq cites from this book in his works, and it will be examined. All the chains and citations of Shaykh Saduq in the accessible books, and even some chains in the inaccessible books, have been previously mentioned.

Three sources of doubt have been identified in his chains by some scholars¹:

First: In the chain of Saduq's Amali, the name of Shaykh Saduq's teacher is mentioned as Mohammad ibn Ali al-Astarabadi, indicating a change in the chain.

Examination: Saduq used this book 13 times in his currently accessible and inaccessible books, and only once did he mention the name Mohammad ibn Ali al-Astarabadi. Is this not an indication of a corruption (*tashhīf*) in the name? Do the 12 instances not indicate that the one instance is a corruption? Or does it indicate that that one instance was a different chain? Furthermore, even with these possibilities, it is highly likely that no corruption occurred, and the chain was unified. The reason is that the only difference in the Amali chain is the father's name, while there is complete agreement in the name of the teacher, the teacher's title, the chain of narration, and the narrator. This clearly indicates the unity of the two individuals: Mohammad ibn Ali al-Astarabadi and Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi. The reason for the two names stems from the custom of the early scholars—and even today—of using a grandfather's name instead of the father's name, such as "Mohammad ibn Ali al-Saduq" and "Mohammad ibn Babawayh al-Saduq," both referring to the same person, Shaykh Saduq.

Second: In some of Saduq's chains, it is stated that two people, Yusuf ibn Mohammad ibn Ziyad and Ali ibn Mohammad ibn Ziyad, narrated from their fathers, while in the rest of the chains, the intermediary of their two fathers is not mentioned. This indicates instability in the chain.

1. To access all these sayings, you can refer to the book "Examination of the Authenticity and Validity of Narrations in the Exegesis Attributed to Imam al-'Askari (A.S.)."

Examination: Usually, in manuscript and chain analysis in such cases, scholars do not quickly conclude instability; rather, they suggest the omission of *abwayhima* from the chains that do not include it. However, the case here is different. In the current manuscript of *Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as)*, the story of those two narrators and their fathers is narrated. It is stated that Mohammad ibn al-Qasim al-Astarabadi narrated directly from those two, and those two narrated directly from Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), without the mediation of their fathers. The fathers' names appear not as intermediaries in the chain, but in the story of the two narrators' lives. The story narrates that their fathers, fearing the Zaydi government and the potential killing of their sons, were forced to come to Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) and leave their two sons with him, so that the Imam (as) could teach them the *Tafsīr* of the Quran. After seven years, the fathers returned after the Imam's (as) prophetic announcement (*ikhbar ghaybi*) that they had been freed from the evil oppression of Hasan ibn Zayd al-'Alawi al-Zaydi, and they took their children. This means that the fathers were the reason for the two sons' knowledge of the Quranic *Tafsīr* by having them trained by the Imam (as), but the fathers were not the narrators of that knowledge. Apparently, Shaykh Saduq either forgot or did not pay attention to this matter, and thus sometimes added the phrase '*an abwayhima* in some chains. For the story of the two sons' lives, one can refer to the beginning of *Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as)*.

Third: In some chains, the singular *abihi* is used instead of *abwayhima*, which indicates instability.

Examination: By looking at the chains that have *abihi*, we notice that the narration is only from Yusuf ibn Mohammad ibn Ziyad; hence, *abihi* is used in the chain. If Ali ibn Mohammad ibn Sayyar had been mentioned, *abwayhima* would have been used. The manuscript of this book is accessible to us, and it has been cited repeatedly in Shaykh Saduq's chain. There is no doubt that the narrators of this book are Yusuf and Mohammad together. Therefore, if only one is mentioned, it is either due to abbreviation in the chain, omission with contextual evidence, or the author's forgetfulness. The third possibility is unlikely, considering the memory of the early hadith scholars, and the repetition and fame of this chain.

C) Conflict of Some Narrations in the Book with Historians' Reports

Examination:

* Firstly: History has been in the hands of the Shi'a's opponents, specifically the Nasibi governments of the Umayyads and Abbasids. Is it appropriate to circulate the narrations around the axis of such historical accounts, or to circulate the history of the Nasibis around the axis of the Imams' (as) narrations? Even if it is not proven that the narrations are



attributed to the Imams of Guidance (as), such a principle that culminates in the texts of the Nasibis or the opponents of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is not fit to be an axis. We see examples of this kind of disagreement in the date of the killing of some companions and the day of the birth of the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

* Secondly: Even assuming the authority (*hujjiyyah*) of history and its ability to conflict with narrations, the history that has come from the opponents is not definitive in its details so that we should abandon the narrations because of it.

* Thirdly: Even if we waive the above two points, there is also conflict in authentic narrations, and one of the possibilities for resolving the conflict is a narrator's mistake. It is possible that one narrator or both narrators made a mistake. Here, in the worst-case scenario, if we assume the narrators of the attributed Tafsīr made a mistake, only that specific narration is set aside. Considering the introduction of the attributed Tafsīr, an excerpt of which was mentioned, the two primary narrators from the Imam were relatively young children. Thus, the probability of a mistake in their transmission is higher. However, it is clear that they were not that young, as the Imam (as) imparted virtues, merits, and profound points to them, which are difficult for some to comprehend.

D) The Existence of Wonders, Rarities, and Exaggeration (*Ghuluw*) in This Book

This critique has a general claim and a specific claim, both of which will be examined separately:

General Claim: The presence of wonders and rarities in a book indicates the book's weakness.

Examination: If a miracle (*mu'jiza*) is not wondrous and rare, it is no longer a miracle. Indeed, miracle and miraculousness mean something that humans are incapable of producing, and humans are incapable of producing wonders and rarities, not things that are not wondrous or rare. Furthermore, what attracts people's attention to the divine proofs is something that is wondrous and rare; otherwise, it would not attract attention. For example, suppose the heaviest weight a human could lift was 300 kilograms. If a prophet, as a sign of a miracle, lifts a weight of 299 kg, 300 kg, or even 301 kg, this would not attract people's attention. However, if he lifts a door made of stone weighing several tons, like the door of Khaybar, or splits the moon (*shaqq al-qamar*), then people's attention would be drawn, and the question would arise in their minds: could he be a messenger from God, whose scope of power is far greater than others, or even all living beings on earth?. Can the mere presence of wondrous and rare miracles in a book be taken as evidence of the book's weakness?

It might be argued that the evidence for weakness is that other books have not narrated them with successive transmission (tawatur).

Examination: Was there a scribe beside every miracle to write it down? And after that, was every scribe supposed to narrate it to another scribe? And was every other scribe supposed to write it down? And was it supposed to reach the level of tawatur? Perhaps the miracle was only for one person or a small group. Or perhaps that very person or group did not see the capacity among the people to tolerate the virtue, and so they tried to tell it only to the close associates. It is even mentioned in numerous narrations that a virtue of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) was not recorded in narrations or history, but one of the Infallible Imams (AS) mentioned it so that it would be registered in a corner of the narrations and its memory would remain.

Specific Claim: Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) contains exaggerative content, so one must be cautious about it.

Examination: The author has a book titled Defense of the Virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) with an Approach to Recognizing Exaggeration (Ghuluw) in the Words of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) (Mahdi Bughayri, 2023, (a)). The subject of this book is recognizing ghuluw in the words of the Infallibles (as), recognizing the power of the Infallibles (as) in cosmic governance (*wilāyat takwīni*), and understanding their virtues. It discusses these topics in detail. For information, you can refer to that book. However, for the sake of brevity in this article, we state that ghuluw in religion and narrations means that someone says the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the entire essence of God, or a part of His essence, or co-equal with Him, or independent of Him. Everything other than this, even if it is a mistake, is not called ghuluw.

By examining the numerous narrations in Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as), no narration was found to have the slightest suspicion of *ghuluw*. Not only has the author not seen any narration suggesting exaggerative content (in the sense mentioned above) in this book, but he has not heard anything from the book's opponents that would suggest ghuluw in the above sense. It is inferred from the statements of Shi'a scholars such as Mohammad Taqi al-Majlisi, Mohammad Baqir al-Majlisi, and Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili that they did not detect exaggerative themes in this *Tafsīr*.

In addition to them, the following scholars also defended this book and seemingly did not consider it exaggerative:

* Allamah Wahid Bihbahani, under the biography of al-Astarabadi (the Tafsīr's narrator), points to the baselessness of Ibn al-Ghada'iri's disparagements (Wahid Bihbahani, 1790 CE, p. 326).



* Mirza Husayn Nuri, after listing the names of 11 later scholars who relied on Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as), calls this book reliable (Nuri, 1902 CE, Vol. 5, p. 200).

E) Textual Problems

The meaning of textual problems is that some people have raised objections upon seeing some narrations in this Tafsīr, and with this objection, they call the issuance of the book into question. Before a general examination, it is noted that even if we assume the textual problems are valid, they only challenge the specific narrations to which they are raised, and they do not challenge the book's principle. This is because the evidence for the book's reliability, its fame, and its citation by various Imami scholars across different eras confirm the book's essential credibility. This is unless someone's principle is based on chain examination and considers the book weak in chain (*dha'if al-sanad*) and non-authoritative due to the ambiguity of the two narrators from the Imam (as). This, however, is within the scope of jurisprudential authority, not the book's reliability or authenticity. We see that even Usulis like Shahid Thani, whose method was chain examination, narrated from this book multiple times in *Munyat al-Murid*. Similarly, the book's narrations were used in the scholarly licenses of scholars. Thus, the weakness of the chain does not mean the book is fabricated or unreliable; at most, it compromises its jurisprudential authority among the Usulis.

1. Instability in the Text of Some Narrations

Examination: This problem is found in the narrations of all Muslim books, Shi'a and non-Shi'a alike, and is not a strange or new matter. The reason for it is the distance in time, the numerous transcriptions throughout the ages, mistakes by scribes, or even mistakes by narrators, which does not affect reliability because reliability is not the same as infallibility. Observe the *Fara'id al-Usul* of Shaykh Ansari, whose time is only about 200 years distant from ours, and see how manuscript variation occurred within 200 years. Despite this, everyone relies on the book with all its variant manuscripts, and such manuscript variation does not lead anyone to say that *Fara'id al-Usul* should no longer be consulted. The same goes for *Kifayat al-Usul* of Akhund Khurasani, which is less distant, about 100 years. In short, if someone considers this objection valid, they must set aside all Muslim books, including the Quran, and even all books of other religions, because even the Quran has experienced differences in its manuscripts and readings.

2. Conflict of Some Narrations with the Verses of the Quran

Examination: The claimed narrations (Hashemi, 2009 CE) were carefully examined, and no conflict was observed. One common mistake is the exaggerated perception of conflict (*ta'arud*). It should be noted that the

verses of the Quran are concise and summarized, while the narrations interpret and explain the concise and summarized Quranic contents. Therefore, the perception of conflict is not generally favorable, and in fact, no case was found that warranted examination. A narration detailing a Quranic verse does not create conflict with that verse; rather, it interprets the verse, similar to ambiguous verses (*āyāt mutashabiha*) whose inner meaning (*bāṭin*) contradicts their apparent meaning (*dhāhir*). Yes, if a Quranic verse says God is one (*Qul Huwa Allahu Aḥad*), and then a narration says God is two, a confirmed conflict (*ta'arud mustaqarr*) would arise, challenging the narration. It is not appropriate to call it contradiction or conflict when a narration explains a verse and clarifies its hidden aspects.

3. Conflict with Definite Narrations and Beliefs of the Imamiyya Shia sect

The claim is that in this *Tafsīr*, the story of Laylat al-Mabit and Abu Bakr's departure with the Prophet (pbuh) is narrated in a manner that contradicts other Shi'a and even Sunni hadiths. It is even claimed that the narration states God commanded the Prophet (pbuh) to accompany Abu Bakr because Abu Bakr would assist the Prophet (pbuh), remain steadfast in the prophetic covenant, be one of his companions in Paradise, and one of his close associates. Subsequently, the Prophet (pbuh) requested Abu Bakr to accompany him and became aware of Abu Bakr's sincerity.

Examination: The claim that this *Tafsīr* includes such praises about Abu Bakr from God Almighty is incorrect. It seems there was an error in translating the narration. The text of the cited part is:

> "And I command you to take Abu Bakr as a companion, for if he gives you solace, helps you, assists you, and remains steadfast on what he covenants and contracts with you, he shall be among your companions in Paradise and among your close associates in its chambers."

> (Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), 874 CE, p. 465)

In the aforementioned expression, the sentence is stated in the form of a conditional proposition (*qadiyyah shartiyya*), not a definitive real proposition (*qadiyyah jazimah haqiqiyyah*). The objector mistakenly believed that this narration describes Abu Bakr, whereas the narration offers a conditional description, contingent on the fulfillment of the condition. The editor of *Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as)* drew attention to this matter. To refute the doubt, in addition to drawing attention, he cites a Quranic verse with the same meaning as an example:

> Reflect upon the meaning of the conditional in (if) and its response kana (shall be)! And in the condition and the suspension of the consequence (*jaza'*) upon it, there is subtlety and admonition. Do you not see the Almighty's saying, "If you associate others with God, your work will surely



become worthless" (al-Zumar: 65), addressed to the Great Messenger, the best of creation, and the finest of mankind?

> (Imam Hasan al-'Askari (AS), 874 CE, p. 466)

We know that the Prophet (pbuh), due to his infallibility, would never commit polytheism (*shirk*). However, this verse, in the form of a conditional sentence, states that if the Prophet (pbuh) were to commit shirk, his works would become void, not that the Prophet actually committed or will commit shirk.

However, the matter that the editor of this Tafsīr did not address—and seems to agree with the objectors on—is the statement in the expression that God commands the Prophet (pbuh) to accompany Abu Bakr. This contradicts other narrations that state Abu Bakr joined them mid-way, and this expression contradicts Shi'a and even Sunni narrations.

Examination: Does the phrase "Accompany Abu Bakr!" mean that the Prophet (pbuh) must search for Abu Bakr and request his companionship?. Such a meaning is not inferred. Rather, this expression is compatible with the Prophet (pbuh) encountering Abu Bakr mid-way and granting him permission to accompany him. Furthermore, the continuation of the narration does not state that the Prophet (pbuh) searched for Abu Bakr to find him and ask for his assistance. Rather, he merely sought Abu Bakr's consent so that Abu Bakr would not later claim that the Prophet (pbuh) granted him permission to accompany him without informing him of the difficulties, or that he exploited Abu Bakr's ignorance and forced him to accompany him. Coincidentally, in the continuation of the conversation with Abu Bakr, the Prophet (pbuh) used another conditional sentence, which was also overlooked in the translation and interpreted as a definitive real proposition:

> Then the Messenger of God (pbuh) said to Abu Bakr: Are you content to be with me, O Abu Bakr, to be pursued just as I am pursued? And to be known as the one who urges me towards what I claim? So you will bear various kinds of torment from me? The Messenger of God (pbuh) then said: Assuredly, if God inspects your heart and finds what is in it compliant with what has flowed from your tongue, He shall place you in a position relative to me like the hearing and sight and the head to the body, and like the soul to the body, like Ali, who is likewise to me [in that position]. And Ali is above that due to the increase of his virtues and the nobility of his characteristics.

> (Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), 874 CE, p. 467)

You see that all the sentences concerning Abu Bakr are conditional and suspended. That is, the Prophet (pbuh) states that if God sees that your word matches your heart, He will grant you virtue. However, when it comes to

Amir al-Mu'minin (as), he states this decisively and certainly. Hence, no praise is confirmed for Abu Bakr; rather, there are allusions to some issues in a metaphorical way.

Apart from all this, even if we assume, contrary to fact, that this narration is a praise for Abu Bakr from beginning to end, dissimulation (taqiyyah) is one of the aspects of Shi'a narrations. It is possible that Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) was compelled to practice taqiyyah at a certain point during those seven years of instruction to the two children. Although, as stated, the import of the narrations does not support the objector's claim.

The objector made another claim: that in this same narration, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) sought the consent (talab ridha) of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) for him to sleep in his bed, and this is considered far-fetched.

The cited text and its continuation are:

> The Messenger of God (pbuh) said to Ali (as): Are you content that I be sought but not found, and you be found, so that the ignorant may rush to you and kill you? He said: Yes, O Messenger of God, I am content that my soul be a shield for your soul, and my life a ransom for your life. Rather, I am content that my soul and life be a ransom for a brother of yours, or a relative, or some of the animals you might use! And do I love life except for your service and to act according to your command and prohibition, and for the love of your friends, the assistance of your chosen ones, and the struggle against your enemies? Were it not for that, I would not wish to live in this world for a single hour.

> (Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), 874 CE, p. 466)

Examination: No far-fetched aspect was found! The Prophet (pbuh) seeking the consent of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) does not diminish his status; rather, it shows his excellent character in seeking consent. Furthermore, the continuation of the narration indicates his high status, for Amir al-Mu'minin (as) continues by saying, "My soul and life be a ransom for you, O Messenger of God (pbuh), and if I am not a ransom and servant for you, I do not wish to live in this world for a single moment".

4. Conflict with Narrations Explaining the Occasion of Revelation (*Sha'n Nuzūl*)

If you look at the narrations explaining the sha'n nuzul, you will initially find many conflicting cases. However, with contemplation, their conflict can be resolved in a correct and conventional way. This is not a new or strange issue that only plagues the narrations of *Tafsīr* al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as). The most authoritative *Tafsīr* books also have conflicting narrations concerning the interpretation or sha'n nuzul of Quranic verses.

The options available in such circumstances are:



* One narration states the sha'n nuzul, while the other states the practical instance (misdaq).

* One narration was stated under taqiyyah, and the other was not subject to taqiyyah.

* One verse had multiple occasions of revelation.

* One narration states the most complete instance, and the other states a less complete instance.

* One narration states a specific *Sha'n Nuzūl*, and another states a general sha'n nuzul.

* One narration states a specific *Sha'n Nuzūl*, and another generalizes it to other instances.

* One narration is generally indicative, and the other is specifically indicative (*dalāli khāṣ*), but it does not specify the former.

* One narration states the story of the sha'n nuzul in detail, and the other in summary.

* It is possible that a narrator of one hadith mistakenly mentions someone else's name in the sha'n nuzul, and the other hadith is correct, but the core event is true, not that one's core event is true and the other is false or fabricated. This also applies to the scribes of manuscripts.

* It is possible that a narrator of one hadith mistakenly alters a part of the narration's story, and the other hadith is correct. And so on.

Conclusion

Tafsīr al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) possesses confirming and refuting evidence regarding the correctness of its issuance from Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as). Overall, the confirming evidence, despite its smaller number, has great strength, while the refuting evidence, despite its larger number, has little strength. The result is that the confirming evidence outweighs the refuting evidence, and this book is considered reliable.

The scope of this reliance is general. That is, unlike those who accept some narrations and reject others, the book is considered generally acceptable. However, it must be noted that the meaning of general acceptance of the book is the acceptance of the overall content of the narrations, not the acceptance of every single word and meaning, because every book, inevitably, undergoes corruption (*taṣhīf*) or distortion (*tahrīf*) in its manuscripts throughout history, and this is obvious to all.



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