



**In the Name of Allah,
the Entirely Compassionate,
the Especially Merciful**

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In this first section, introductory material on the research topic is presented, and then the research background is reviewed. A logical inference is then made from the background review, and the existing research vacuum (s) are shown. Obviously, the best method of review is the analytical or analytical-critical method in which the backgrounds are grouped regardless of the time and place, and based on the similarities of the approach and the researcher (s) are expressed towards them. Dear author, by referring to the review section of the Quarterly Site, you will be informed of similar articles, and the novelty of the article will be expressed towards them. Important Note: In articles or works that appear in the background of the article, only the year of publication should be mentioned before the author's name and the full details of the work should be included in the list of sources.



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The main value of the research lies in this section, because the research findings are determined, and the researcher's final understanding of the research is expressed. In general, in this section, accurate interpretation of the data and expression of the researcher / researchers view of the findings, comparison of the research findings with the findings of previous researches and the position of the research among similar researches, brief description of the limitations faced by the research and research proposal (s) inferred from research findings are presented.



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- 2- Promoting and deepening Ahl al-Bayt (as) culture and knowledge;
- 3- Promoting and presenting scientific products of Imam Mobin Research Center;
- 4- Publishing an authentic and reference quarterly with scientific-research validity in the field of Ahl al-Bayt (as) culture and education.

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The Journal of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings editor in chief appreciates your good efforts to announcing other staffs and students to cooperate as an article author.

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Dr. Mohammad Reza Aram
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Defining the Ahl al-Bayt (as): Qur'anic, Prophetic, and Scholarly Perspectives on the Household of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)

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 Balikis Oluwakemi Salih²

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Abstract

This article employs comparative analysis to explore the theological debate surrounding the definition of Prophet Mohammad's Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Prophet's purified Household). Drawing on classical and modern sources, it investigates both literal and technical meanings in the Qur'an, early Islamic reports, and later scholarship. Focusing on key narrations, especially about Zayd ibn Arqam, and the Verse of Purification (Qur'an 33:33), the study contrasts Sunni and Shi'a interpretations, including the influence of the Hadith al-Kisā'. Through linguistic, exegetical, and historical analysis, the article argues that while a broad definition includes the Prophet's wives, children, and relatives, the Qur'anic and hadith contexts emphasize a narrower group linked to purification and spiritual authority. It concludes that the term "Ahl al-Bayt" is contextually defined, affecting understandings of Islamic theology and religious authority.

Keywords: Ahl al-Bayt (as), Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), Verse of Purification, *Hadith al-Kisā'*, Islamic Exegesis.



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I. Introduction

Prophet Mohammad identified his Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Household) on multiple occasions; however, the precise composition of this group remains contested. A notable discussion occurred when a delegation of Tabi'īn, led by Yazid b. Hayyan, consulted the companion Zayd ibn Arqam. During their exchange, a man named Husein asked whether the Prophet's wives were considered part of his Ahl al-Bayt. Zayd responded that while the wives are generally part of the household, the specific Ahl al-Bayt referenced in the context of *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* which he recounted to them are those family members for whom zakat is prohibited (Muslim, 2007, p. 267-268).

Two narrations preserve this dialogue with apparent contradictions, affirming and denying the wives' inclusion, but these are complementary rather than conflicting. Zayd distinguished between the Prophet's broader household, which includes wives and blood relatives, and the spiritually distinct Ahl al-Bayt emphasized in the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*. This nuanced distinction underscores the longstanding theological debate on the precise identity of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt.

Literature Review

This article examines the enduring debate over the identity of Prophet Mohammad's Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Prophet's purified household) as mentioned in the Verse of Purification (Qur'ān 33:33), highlighting divergent views among early companions, classical Sunni scholars like al-Tabari, al-Razi, and al-Qurtubi, and Shi'a authorities such as al-Tusi and al-Tabataba'i. While Sunni interpretations often include the Prophet's wives alongside his daughter Fatimah, his cousin Ali, and grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, Shi'a scholars argue for a restricted definition excluding the wives, based primarily on the *Hadith al-Kisā'* (Tradition of the Cloak) and linguistic analysis indicating a divine declaration of infallibility (*'iṣma*) for this specific group. Al-Tabari (d. 923 CE/31) acknowledge this in his exegesis, and he writes:

"The scholars of interpretation differed regarding those intended by the phrase "Ahl al-Bayt" (the people of the household). Some said it refers to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn—may God be pleased with them. Others said it refers to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him)." (Tabari, 2014, p. 150, 160)

The Argument and Structure of the Article

The article structures its analysis to: introduce the debate; explore literal and theological meanings of "Ahl al-Bayt;" review Qur'anic references to prophetic families; compare exegeses of the Verse of Purification; analyze the *Hadith al-Kisā'* and its authenticity; and discuss theological



implications. It argues that although the Prophet's wives are generally considered part of his household, the strict Qur'anic context and prophetic tradition exclude them from the spiritually purified Ahl al-Bayt. This nuanced, contextual definition has significant consequences for Islamic theology and religious authority, reconciling varying Sunni and Shi'a perspectives while emphasizing the exclusive spiritual status of Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn within the Prophet's true Ahl al-Bayt.

II. Meaning of "Ahl al-Bayt"

Literal Meaning

The phrase "Ahl al-Bayt" (People of the House) appears twice in the Qur'an: first regarding Prophet Ibrahim and his family, including his wife (Qur'an 11:73), and second concerning Prophet Mohammad and his family (Qur'an 33:33). Linguistically, "Ahl al-Bayt" literally means the "people or family of the house." Classical Arab linguist Ibn Manẓūr defines "Ahl" as the inhabitants or close relatives living in the same household, indicating familial ties based on kinship or residence (Ibn Manzur, 1955, p. 28). Similarly, Al-Zabīdī explains that "Ahl" refers to kin or those closely connected by blood, marriage, or household relations, emphasizing intimate family membership (Al-Zabīdī, 1965, p. 316). Both sources highlight the term's connotation of close familial association within a shared dwelling.

Technical Meaning

Majority of the Sunni scholars are of the opinion that the wives of Prophet Mohammad were of his Ahl al-Bayt in every situation and circumstance. On the contrary, the Shi'a are of the view that the wives of Prophet Mohammad though were part of his Ahl al-Bayt in entirety, however, they were excluded in at least three (3) occasions namely:

The Qur'anic Verse of purification (*āyāt at-Taḥīr*)

The Qur'anic Verse of Malediction (*āyāt Mubahala*)

Hadith of the two weighty things (*Al-Thaqalayn*)

III. The Ahl al-bayt in the Qur'an

The term Ahl al-Bayt (أهل البيت) appears both directly and indirectly in the Qur'an in reference to the families of several prophets, notably Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and Nūh (Noah).

A. Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and His Ahl al-Bayt

Historically, Prophet Ibrāhīm had two wives who bore him two children - one from each. These two children later went on to establish an extended family tree which Qur'an called "Āli Ibrāhīm (family of Ibrāhīm)." However, prior to the birth of one of the two children of Prophet Ibrāhīm, the angels announce to Ibrāhīm and his wife who were both very old and (the wife) barren, the birth of a son, and say:

“Do you wonder at the Decree of Allah? The Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be on you, O people of the house. Surely, He (Allah) is All-Praiseworthy, All-Glorious.” (Qur’ān 11: 73)

On the term "Ahl al-Bayt" used in this verse, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī writes:

“As for His saying: ‘Ahl al-Bayt’ (People of the Household), it is a form of praise for them; thus, it is in the accusative either as a vocative or as an expression of specification (*ikhtiṣāṣ*). Then this [praise] is reinforced by His statement: "Indeed, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious." The Praiseworthy (*Ḥamīd*) is the One whose actions are praised, and Glorious (*Majīd*) is the noble and generous—the One possessed of honor and magnanimity. Among the praiseworthy actions is leading the obedient servant to his desire and aspiration, and among the kinds of grace and generosity is that the seeker is not withheld from his aim. So, if it is known that He, exalted is He, is capable of all things, and that He is Praiseworthy and Glorious, then how can astonishment still remain in the reality of the matter? Thus, it is established that the purpose of mentioning these words is to remove any astonishment.” (Al-Razi, n.d, p. 213)

Furthermore, Ibn Kathīr says:

"The mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, O People of the Household. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious." — That is: He is praiseworthy in all His actions and words, one who is praised and exalted in His attributes and essence. For this reason, it is confirmed in the two Ṣaḥīḥs [al-Bukhārī and Muslim] that they said: "We know how to send peace upon you, but how do we send blessings upon you, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: Say: 'O Allah, send blessings upon Moḥammad and upon the family of Moḥammad, just as You sent blessings upon Abraham and upon the family of Abraham, and bless Moḥammad and the family of Moḥammad, just as You blessed Abraham and the family of Abraham. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.'" (Ibn Kathīr, 2000, p. 492)

This imply that from the Qur'an usage of the term "Ahl al-Bayt", wife(s) is naturally inclusive in it enjoying the praises, glorification and blessings on the condition as Rāzī notes, that: Among the praiseworthy actions is leading the obedient servant to his desire and aspiration, and among the kinds of grace and generosity is that the seeker is not withheld from his aim. Likewise, it is understood from the hadīth cited (above) by Ibn Kathīr that he perfectly agrees.

B. The *Dhuriyyah* of Ibrāhīm

The Qur'an uses the term *dhuriyyah* (ذُرِّيَّةً) to refer to the descendants of Prophet Ibrāhīm, explicitly excluding his wife(s) in this context. For example, Qur'ān 2:124 records: “And when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words... ‘Surely I will make you an Imam of men.’ Ibrahim said:



‘And of my offspring?’ My covenant does not include the unjust, said He.” Linguistically, "Dhuriyyah" denotes offspring or progeny, derived from the root "ذَرَأَ" (*dhara'a*), meaning "to create" or "bring forth" (Ibn Manzur, 1955, p. 80; al-Fayruzabadi, 2005, p. 642). Both *Lisan al-‘Arab* and *Al-Qamus al-Muhit* emphasize its reference to lineage and descendants.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī adds a grammatical and theological dimension, explaining that "and from my offspring" is linked to the preceding divine promise of leadership, indicating Ibrahim’s request for some descendants to be appointed as leaders, fulfilled by prophets including Mohammad (al-Rāzī, n.d, p. 213). This demonstrates that divine leadership excludes unjust members regardless of lineage.

Thus, while “Ahl al-Bayt” generally includes wives, children, and descendants, the Qur’anic context—exemplified by Ibrahim’s narrative—highlights the exclusion of corrupt family members from divine leadership, as underscored by the covenant excluding the unjust (Qur’ān 2:124).

C. Nūh (Noah), His Ahl al-Bayt, Renegade Wife and Son

Qur’an gives a concise story of Prophet Nūh, his family and people with regards to the flood.

"(Remember) Noah, when he cried (to Us) aforetime: We listened to his (prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress" (Qur’ān 21:76)

However, Nūh's son was excommunicated from his family for rejecting the truth, and was destroyed. Quran continues:

"So, he said: 'Embark ye on the Ark in the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest... So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains, and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest):

"O my son (Noah said)! Embark with us, and be not with the unbelievers!" The son replied: "I will betake myself to some mountain: it will save me from the water."

Noah said: "This day nothing can save, from the command of Allah, any but those on whom He hath mercy!" And the waves came between them, and the son was among those overwhelmed in the Flood." (Qur’ān 11: 41-44)

Finally, Nūh's understanding of his son as a member of his family whom Allah has promised to protect from the great disaster is redefined. Qur’ān reveals:

“And Noah called upon His Lord, and said: "O my Lord! Surely My son is of my family! And Thy promise is true... He said: "O Noah! He is not of thy family for his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge..." (Qur’ān 11: 45-46)

This verse (and the previous verse with respect to Ibrāhīm) exclusively reveals that true membership of a family (especially that of the Prophets) is on the condition of faith and righteousness, otherwise, unbelievers, sinners and unrighteous individuals are not qualified to be part of the "Ahl (family)" of the Prophets.

Also, in the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 66: 10), there is a reference to the wives of Nūh and Lūt as examples of disbelievers among the families of prophets, indicating that mere marital bond or blood relation does not guarantee inclusion in the blessed "Ahl al-Bayt."

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī writes:

His saying: “We said, ‘Load upon it [the Ark] of every kind, two [mates]’” — that is, We commanded Noah (peace be upon him) to carry aboard the Ark a pair from every species of animals, namely a male and a female.

His saying: “and your family — except those for whom the word [of punishment] has already preceded” — that is, carry aboard your family, meaning those closely associated with him such as his wife, children, the wives of his children, and their children — except those for whom Our word had already gone forth and Our prior decree had been issued that they would perish. The one excluded here was his treacherous wife, mentioned by God the Exalted in His saying: “God sets forth an example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants, but they betrayed them” (Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2020, p. 37-38)

And with regards to the son of Nūh, Ṭabāṭabā’ī continues: God’s saying: “He said, ‘O Noah, indeed he is not of your family. Indeed, he is [one whose] conduct was not righteous, so do not ask Me about that of which you have no knowledge,’” etc. — God clarified for Noah (peace be upon him) the correct perspective concerning what he had mentioned in his plea: “My Lord, indeed my son is of my family, and indeed Your promise is true,” — by which he sought the salvation of his son. So, God said: “Indeed, he is not of your family,” thereby invalidating the basis of Noah’s argument. The meaning of “he is not of your family” — and God knows best — is that he is not among those members of your family whom God had promised to save. For the intended meaning of “your family” in His saying “and your family — except those for whom the word has already preceded” is the righteous among his family. [Noah’s son] was not righteous, even though he was technically his son and thus a member of his family in the sense of personal association. Therefore, the statement “he is not of your family” is explained by His saying: “Indeed, he is [one whose] conduct was not righteous.” (ibid, p. 43-45)



D. Comparison of Commentaries by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and Allamah Tabatabai

Both scholars agree that Ahl al-Bayt includes close family members but insist that faith and righteousness are essential criteria for inclusion. Tabatabai places more emphasis on the spiritual and purified nature of the Ahl al-Bayt, while Razi focuses on the obedience and divine favor as signs of their status.

Aspect	Fakhr al-Din al-Razi	Allamah Tabatabai
Definition of Ahl al-Bayt	Primarily the immediate family of the prophet, emphasizing faith and obedience.	Emphasizes both blood relation and spiritual purification; Ahl al-Bayt are divinely chosen and purified.
On the family of Ibrahim	Focus on obedience and divine blessing as markers of Ahl al-Bayt status.	Views Ibrahim's family as a prototype for Ahl al-Bayt, highlighting spiritual purity.
On the family of Nūh	Stresses the exclusion of disbelievers even if kin by blood, highlighting faith as essential.	Differentiates between biological and spiritual kinship; only the faithful are true Ahl al-Bayt.
Overall approach	Rational and theological, focusing on obedience and divine favor.	Mystical and theological, emphasizing purification and divine selection.

IV. PROPHET MOHAMMAD'S AHL AL-BAYT IN THE QUR'AN

The Qur'anic reference to the family of Prophet Muhammad in relation to "Ahl al-Bayt" is debated between Sunni and Shi'a perspectives, particularly in Qur'an 33:33.

A. Sunni Perspective

Sunni exegetes generally interpret the preceding and following verses as addressing the Prophet's wives. However, the verse containing "Ahl al-Bayt" uses a masculine plural pronoun, prompting varied explanations. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Al-Rāzī, 1981, p. 225-226) posits that this shift broadens the addressees to include the Prophet's children, Hasan, Husayn, and Ali, alongside the wives, drawing on hadith sources. Conversely, Ibn

‘Āshūr argues the verse addresses the wives exclusively, and the masculine pronoun reflects the Prophet’s role as household head, maintaining the feminine pronoun in surrounding verses for the wives. (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 1984, p. 270) The grammatical shift suggests either a new group or an inclusive form, though interpretations differ on the addressees’ scope.

B. Shi‘a Perspective

Shi‘a scholars unanimously hold that the verse’s masculine plural pronoun, exclusivity particle (*innamā*), and emphasis (*tathīran*) indicate a distinct, exclusive group separate from the wives. Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī emphasizes that the pronoun ‘ankum (you, masculine plural) cannot refer exclusively to the wives, who would require the feminine plural ‘ankunna, thereby supporting an interpretation that includes males beyond the wives. (Al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, 2020, p. 131-135) This group corresponds to the spiritually purified Ahl al-Bayt, distinct from the general household. While Shi‘a views align partly with al-Rāzī’s notion of a new, exclusive group, they reject Ibn ‘Āshūr’s restriction to the wives alone.

Thus, the pronoun shift within the verse serves as a linguistic marker distinguishing the exclusive, purified Ahl al-Bayt from the general reference to the Prophet’s wives, shaping divergent theological interpretations within Sunni and Shi‘a traditions.

C. The *Hadīth* (Narration) Perspective

The Qur’ān generally employs broad terms to guide humanity, with specific details provided through the Prophet Muhammad’s explanations. Regarding the verse “And Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the house, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying” (33:33), both Sunni and Shi‘a traditions agree that Prophet Muhammad specified its addressees.

Al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 H) records a narration from Umar bin Abi Salamah, in which the Prophet gathered Fatimah, Hasan, Husayn, and Ali under a cloak, praying for their purification and identifying them as his Ahl al-Bayt, excluding his wife Umm Salamah, who was acknowledged as good but not part of this group (Al-Tirmidhī, 2007, p. 435-436). This narration is authenticated by scholars such as Al-Albani, Al-Dhahabi, and Al-Hākim. Al-Hākim further documents a variant in which Umm Salamah asks about her inclusion, and the Prophet distinguishes between his (specific) Ahl al-Bayt and his broader family (Al-Hākim, 1990, p. 158).

Ibn Kathīr, in his Tafsīr, records a similar narration through ‘Aisha, the Prophet’s wife, confirming the same identification of Ahl al-Bayt; and another narration from Abu Sa’īd Al-Khudri limiting the number to only five persons as at the time (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, p. 411-412). Additionally, Muslim Ibn Hajjaj’s Sahih and Shi‘a hadith sources such as Al-Kulayni



reference this “Hadith al-Kisa” (The Cloak), aligning on the purification and designation of Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn as the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (Muslim, 2007, p. 284; Al-Kulayni, 2007, p. 172).

In summary, the hadith establish two key points: first, the verse (33:33) was independently revealed; second, Prophet Mohammad explicitly excluded his wives from the Ahl al-Bayt mentioned in this verse, naming only Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn as its referents.

1. A Precise Explanation of Ibn Asakir Shafi’iy

Ibn Asakir (d. 1176 CE/571 A. H) also documents the hadith of Umm Salamah in yet another version:

From Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: This verse was revealed in my house (“And Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the house, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying”). She said: O Messenger of Allah, aren't I from Ahl al-bayt? He (Prophet) said: You are upon good, you are from the wives of Messenger of Allah, Peace be upon him.

She said: And the Ahl al-Bayt: Messenger of Allah, are ‘Alī, Fātimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, May Allah be please with them all.

Ibn Asakir comments: “This report is authentic...”

After discussing the chain of transmission and various version of the hadith, Ibn Asakir then comments:

“And her saying: [And the Ahl al-Bayt] are those whom she mentioned referring to those who were found in the house at that time [i.e the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fātimah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn], otherwise the entire family of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and all of them, are the people of his house (the Ahl al-Bayt), but the verse was revealed specifically over those mentioned. God knows.” (Ibn Asakir, n.d, p. 105-106)

In summary, Sunni and Shi’a scholars differ on the identity of the Ahl al-Bayt in relation to the verse “And Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the house, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying,” presenting three main views:

a) The verse exclusively refers to the Prophet’s wives, as argued by Ibn ‘Āshūr and supported by Ikrimah (the freed slave of Ibn ‘Abbas), who challenged dissenters to a Mubahala (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, p. 411-412). This view is widely rejected due to the masculine plural pronoun used, the verse’s independent revelation, and the Prophet’s own clarification excluding his wives.

b) The verse includes the Prophet’s wives along with others, explaining the shift between feminine and masculine plural pronouns. This position, favored by Ar-Rāzi and common among Sunni scholars, aligns with the

larger textual context addressing the wives. However, it is weakened by the consistent hadith specifying the Ahl al-Bayt without including the wives.

c) A minority of Sunni scholars and the entire Shi'a Imami School hold that the verse refers solely to five individuals: the Prophet, Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn, explicitly excluding the Prophet's wives.

2. The Verse of Malediction and The hadīth of Two Weighty Things

The Qur'ān uses the phrase "Ahl al-Bayt" to denote Prophet Mohammad's special family; however, the verse of malediction (Mubahala, Qur'an 3:61) does not explicitly use this phrase but identifies individual members clearly.

In this verse, Allah commands calling upon sons, women, and near relatives for a mutual invocation of God's curse on liars, between the Muslim community and the Christian community of Najran. Muslim bin al-Hajjaj records that upon its revelation, the Prophet summoned 'Alī, Fātimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, referring to them as his Ahl (family). (Muslim, 2007, p. 267-269) Despite the plural "Nisā-anā'" (our women), authentic narrations and historical context exclude the wives of the Prophet from this group.

Ibn Kathīr's Tafsīr clarifies: Jabir ibn Abdullah stated that "ourselves" refer to the Prophet and 'Ali; "our sons" to al-Hasan and al-Husayn; and "our women" specifically to Fātimah (Ibn Kathīr, 1971, p. 47). This further emphasizes that the special family mentioned excludes the Prophet's wives, aligning the members of the Mubahala with the core Ahl al-Bayt.

Hadīth Al-Thaqalayn, recorded by Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj, presents Prophet Mohammad's identification of two "weighty things" he leaves for guidance: the Book of Allah (Qur'ān) and his Ahl al-Bayt (Muslim, 2007, p. 267-269). During a sermon at Ghadir al-Khumm, the Prophet urged adherence to both. When asked about the identity of his Ahl al-Bayt, Zaid ibn Arqam distinguished between the Prophet's wives and the specific family members for whom zakat is forbidden—naming 'Ali, his descendants, as well as the descendants of 'Aqil, Ja'far, and 'Abbas.

This hadīth emphasizes the Prophet's legacy as encompassing both the Qur'ān and his family, expanding the Ahl al-Bayt to include extended relatives, although the wives were excluded in this context. While the literal meaning of Ahl al-Bayt may include this broader group, theologically and regarding post-Prophetic guidance, the focus is on a streamlined core group consistent with earlier traditions.

Al-Tirmidhi further affirms this in similar narrations where adherence to the Book and the Prophet's "itrah" or Ahl al-Bayt is necessary to avoid misguidance, and these groups will remain united until the afterlife (Al-Tirmidhi, 2007, p. 435-436). Jabir ibn Abdullah also confirms the



connection between the Ahl al-Bayt and the Prophet's "itrah" in his last Hajj sermon (ibid). These reports clarify that the Ahl al-Bayt in Hadith al-Thaqalayn refers broadly to the Prophet's spiritual lineage or itrah.

1. Meaning of 'Itrah

The term *'itrah* linguistically denotes a man's closest descendants and blood relatives. Ibn Manẓūr explains that the *'itrah* includes near kin from offspring and other relatives, with scholars offering nuanced interpretations. Abū 'Ubaydah and others define it as a man's nearest blood relations, while Ibn al-'Athīr describes it as the most special blood relations. Ibn al-'Arābī specifies it as descendants and progeny, particularly designating the Prophet's *'itrah* as the descendants of Fatimah. Abu Sa'īd uses a metaphor, likening the *'itrah* to the trunk of a tree that includes 'Abd al-Mutalib and his descendants. Another interpretation confines the Prophet's *'itrah* to his closest family, namely his children, 'Alī, and 'Alī's offspring (Ibn Manẓūr, 1955, p. 538).

In relation to Hadīth al-Thaqalayn, the statement "I have left among you, that which if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray" emphasizes the guidance left for the Muslim community after the Prophet's death, namely the Qur'ān and his Ahl al-Bayt. The hadith scholar Al-Nawawi interprets the term *thaqalayn* as denoting the significance and grandeur of these two legacies and stresses that both must be followed (Al-Nawawi, 1986, p. 180).

Therefore, considering the meaning of Hadīth al-Thaqalayn and the Prophet's specific use of the term *itratiy* (my offspring), the inclusion of extended relatives such as 'Aqil, Ja'far, and 'Abbas and their progeny within the Ahl al-Bayt is seen as inappropriate from the standpoint of guiding the Ummah after the Prophet's demise.

V. MERIT OF MOHAMMAD'S AHL AL-BAYT

A. Purpose of Qur'ān 33:33 - Verse of Purification

Whether the verse of purification is understood as addressing the entire family of Prophet Mohammad due to contextual and grammatical considerations, or as restricted to a specific group based on hadith evidence, its fundamental purpose remains the same: to declare Allah's spiritual purification of the Ahl al-Bayt from *al-Rijs* (the uncleanness).

The Qur'ān states: "And Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the house, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying" (33:33). Two key terms in this verse: *Al-Rijs* (uncleanness) and *At-Tahara* (purification), carry significant meaning when examined in the Qur'anic context. Their exploration reveals the verse's depth and central objective, which is the spiritual cleansing and sanctification of the Prophet's family.

B. Meaning of *al-Rijs* from Qur'anic perspective

In the verse of purification (Qur'an 33:33), the term *Al-Rijs* (the uncleanness) with the definite article *Al-* signifies a general concept encompassing both physical and spiritual forms of impurity. This dual meaning can be illustrated through examples in the Qur'an.

Physical *rijs* is explicitly mentioned in Qur'an 6:145, where forbidden foods such as carrion, blood, and pork are described as *rijs* (unclean). This indicates material impurity related to dietary prohibitions.

Spiritual *rijs* is described in Qur'an 6:125, where Allah places uncleanness upon those who do not believe, metaphorically narrowing their hearts. This spiritual uncleanness reflects misguidedness and rejection of faith. Similarly, Qur'an 5:41 refers to *rijs* in terms of impurity arising from disbelief or hypocrisy.

Further examples of spiritual *rijs* include Qur'an 22:30, which commands avoiding the uncleanness of idols—not the physical idols themselves, but the act of idol worship—as well as Qur'an 10:100, which attributes *rijs* to those overwhelmed by doubt and misguidance. Hypocrisy (*nifaa*) is also classified as *rijs* (Qur'an 9:95).

Sin, being of varying degrees and both open and secret, is also considered *rijs*. Qur'an 6:120 commands believers to avoid all sin, and sin is connected with misguidance (Qur'an 36:60-62), which itself is likened to a form of polytheism (*shirk*), categorized as *rijs* (Qur'an 31:13). Generally, unrighteous actions are sins and thus classified as *rijs* (Qur'an 3:162-163). These distinctions highlight that *rijs* exists on a spectrum of physical and spiritual uncleanness.

C. *Tahārah* (Purity or Cleanliness)

The concept of *Tahārah* (purity) similarly covers both physical and spiritual cleanliness in the Qur'ān. Physical purity includes practices such as ablution with water, as stated in Qur'an 8:11 and 5:6, where believers are instructed to purify themselves through ritual washing.

Spiritual purity is also emphasized, as seen in Qur'an 2:25, where purified mates are promised, and in Qur'an 2:13-15, which references purified books. The allowance of dry ablution (*tayammum*) in Qur'an 5:6 and the mention of *zakaat* (almsgiving) as a form of spiritual purification in Qur'an 58:12 further illustrate this duality.

Together, these examples from the Qur'an demonstrate that the verse of purification (33:33) addresses both the physical and spiritual purification of the Ahl al-Bayt from all forms of *rijs*, emphasizing a comprehensive sanctification.



VI. REMOVAL OF *AL-RIJS* (THE UNCLEANNES) FROM THE AHL AL-BAYT

In the Verse of Purification (“And Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the house, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying”), the definite particle *Al-* in *al-rijs* indicates a comprehensive scope, encompassing all forms of uncleanness—moral, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, and acts connected to anything other than Allah. This signifies that Allah removes all these forms of *rijs* from the Ahl al-Bayt.

The phrase *wa yutahirakum tathira* (“and to purify you a (thorough) purifying”) is an example of *maf’ul al-mutlaq* (absolute object) in Arabic grammar, which denotes absoluteness, perfection, and completeness. This absolute purification is unrestricted by any particular state or condition, whether of forgetfulness, ignorance, propagation, or others, meaning that the removal of *al-rijs* applies universally in all circumstances.

Shihāb al-Dīn Ālusi, commenting on the verse, explains that *al-rijs* metaphorically refers to sin, immorality, Satan, polytheism, doubt, miserliness, whims, innovations, and other spiritual impurities. Though some interpretations may vary in precision, the term covers all such impurity and shortcomings comprehensively (Ālusi, 1994, p. 14).

This removal of *al-rijs* is understood as a divine grace (*lutf*) bestowed upon the Ahl al-Bayt. Al-Tabarī states that the *ahl al-bayt* are purified from all evil and favored by God’s mercy, emphasizing this as Allah’s intentional act to cleanse them from the impurity found among the disobedient (Al-Tabari, 2001, p. 6-8).

Thus, the verse affirms an absolute and thorough spiritual purification of the Prophet’s household from all forms of uncleanness as part of Allah’s special grace.

A. Implicit Exclusion of the Wives of Mohammad

If the Verse of Purification aims to remove all forms of uncleanness from the Prophet Mohammad’s Ahl al-Bayt, then only those members who fulfil the Qur’anic criteria of true faith and righteousness within this context can be included in that purified group. Consequently, any individual lacking these qualities is excluded despite any marital or blood relationship.

Regarding the wives of the Prophet, the Qur’an explicitly addresses them in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:32), stating: “O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the (other) women provided you have *taqwa* (fear of God).” This verse clearly places spiritual status on the basis of *taqwā* and righteousness rather than on marital bond alone. The preceding verses (28–31) offer the wives a choice between worldly pleasure and the hereafter, outlining requirements such as fear of God, uttering good speech, decent

conduct, staying within their homes, maintaining prayer, giving charity, and obeying Allah and His Messenger (Qur'an 33:28-33).

Only after establishing these conditions does the verse of purification affirm Allah's desire "to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House, and to purify you a (thorough) purifying" (Qur'an 33:33). Therefore, those wives of the Prophet who meet these Qur'anic conditions of piety and righteousness are truly part of his purified Ahl al-Bayt. Conversely, those who do not fulfill these criteria are Ahl al-Bayt only nominally, not spiritually or in terms of divine purification. This framework clarifies inclusion within the purified Ahl al-Bayt as dependent on moral and spiritual merit rather than solely familial ties.

B. Spiritual Conduct and Accountability of the Prophet's Wives

The conduct and spiritual status of some of Prophet Mohammad's wives are critically examined in Surah At-Tahrim (66). The Qur'an reveals an incident where the Prophet confided a secret to one wife, who then disclosed it to another, breaching trust and faithfulness (Qur'an 66:3). This breach indicated a deeper deviation in their hearts, reflecting opposition against the Prophet. The subsequent verse warns them to repent, describing their hearts as "crooked" or "deviated" (Qur'an 66:4). Classical exegetes such as Ibn Abbas and Mujāhid interpret this deviation as a serious spiritual failing—sin and moral crookedness—underscoring that these wives did not fulfil the spiritual purity demanded by the Verse of Purification (Al-Tabari, 2001, p. 483).

Moreover, the Qur'an explicitly issues a stern warning, including the prospect of divorce, stating that Allah could replace these wives with others who are true believers—obedient, repentant, sincere in worship, fasting, emigrants for Allah's sake, whether previously married or virgins (Qur'an 66:5). This highlights that the acceptance into the purified Ahl al-Bayt depends not simply on marital relation but on genuine faith and righteousness.

The Qur'an sets a high spiritual standard for the Prophet's wives, emphasizing that they are distinct from other women only if they possess *taqwa* (fear of God) and obedience (Qur'an 33:32). Their elevated status entails double reward or punishment, reflecting their role as exemplars for the Muslim community.

Additionally, the Qur'an recalls the example of the wives of Prophets Nūh and Lūt, underscoring that unrighteous family members, even of prophetic lineage, are excluded from the pure Ahl (family) if they act treacherously (Qur'an 66:10). This serves as a precedent that lineage alone does not guarantee inclusion.



Historically, Surah At-Tahrim is generally accepted to have been revealed after Surah Al-Ahzab, addressing a specific private matter in the Prophet's household, while Al-Ahzab focused on broader social and marital issues, including the Battle of the Trench (5 AH) and marital laws. At-Tahrim, likely revealed around 7-8 AH, serves as the final Qur'anic revelation concerning the Prophet's wives.

The consequence of this divine standard is evident after the Prophet's death. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani records a prophetic narration about one wife who disobeyed the Prophet's commands by leaving her house, leading a faction that ignited the first Muslim civil war—the Battle of the Camel—resulting in thousands of deaths (Al-Asqalani, 2005, p. 55). This event exemplifies the violation of the conditions necessary for inclusion in the purified Ahl al-Bayt and affirms that spiritual and moral criteria govern true membership in this sanctified group.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The article addresses the highly nuanced problem of whom constitutes the Prophet Mohammad's Ahl al-Bayt, a problem which has occasioned so much debate amongst Muslims throughout history. By means of investigating the Prophet's companions' accounts—specifically Zayd ibn Arqam—and investigation of the Qur'anic revelations and hadiths, the study reveals that even early Muslims grappled with this issue. Classical Sunni and Shi'a scholars offer differing interpretations: Sunnis often include the Prophet's wives as part of Ahl al-Bayt, while Shi'a authorities, drawing on the Hadith al-Kisā' and the Verse of Purification, restrict the term to the Prophet, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn. The etymological roots of "Ahl al-Bayt" and its use in the Qur'an are discussed in the article, where it is noted that even though the term is employed to denote all close relatives in general, its scope narrows when the context of religious naivety and guidance is connoted. The research also considers the priority of earlier prophets such as Ibrahim, where his kinspeople were praised but whose covenant was not sealed with unjust descendants. Lastly, the article dispels the apparent paradoxes in early descriptions through emphasizing the necessity of context in interpreting "Ahl al-Bayt," arguing that the meaning of the term varies depending on theological and historical contexts.



Finally, the identity of the Prophet Mohammad's Ahl al-Bayt is a multifaceted and situationally relative issue in Islamic scholarship. The article establishes that while the common linguistic and societal meaning of "Ahl al-Bayt" is wives, children, and close kin, the Qur'anic and hadith evidence, particularly in cases involving spiritual purity and stewardship, rely on a more restricted meaning centered on the Prophet, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn. This distinction is reinforced by both Sunni and Shi'a sources, though each tradition emphasizes different aspects. The study underscores the necessity of contextual interpretation, recognizing that the term's application varies according to the theological and historical framework. By carefully examining primary sources and scholarly opinions, the article provides a balanced perspective that acknowledges the diversity of Islamic thought on this foundational issue. It not only sheds much light on the classical debate but also illuminates contemporary debates related to religious authority and the prophet's family heritage.



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The Foundations, Factors, and Obstacles of Islamic Education from the Perspective of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

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Abstract

Islamic education, rooted deeply in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), provides a unique and holistic framework that emphasizes not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social development of individuals. This article thoroughly examines the foundational principles underpinning Islamic education according to the Ahl al-Bayt (as), explores the multifaceted factors that influence this educational system, and identifies the complex obstacles that hinder its effective implementation in contemporary contexts. Drawing upon primary religious texts, theological scholarship, historical analysis, and contemporary educational theories, the study offers a comprehensive analysis relevant to modern educational discourse in Muslim societies. The findings underscore the critical role of divine guidance, ethical cultivation, community involvement, and the challenges posed by socio-political interference, cultural transformations, and pedagogical deficiencies. Ultimately, this work argues for a revitalization of Islamic education rooted in the authentic teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), adapted thoughtfully to meet modern challenges.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Ahl al-Bayt (as), Spiritual Development, Moral Education, Educational Obstacles, Divine Guidance, Holistic Learning, Intellectual Rigor.



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1- Introduction

Islamic education transcends the mere transmission of information or acquisition of skills; it represents a profound and all-encompassing process aimed at the holistic development of the human being. Unlike narrow or utilitarian models of education that prioritize technical competencies or rote memorization, Islamic education, particularly as envisioned by the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)—the revered family of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family)—encompasses multiple dimensions of human growth. It seeks to nurture the intellect, cultivate ethical sensibilities, awaken the spirit, and instil a deep sense of social responsibility and purpose.

This comprehensive vision of education is rooted in the belief that human beings are not merely material entities but spiritual beings created to know, worship, and serve Allah through the cultivation of virtues such as justice, wisdom, compassion, and humility. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) hold a unique and central role within Islamic tradition, especially within Shi'a Islam, as divinely appointed custodians and interpreters of divine knowledge and moral guidance. Their teachings provide a rich philosophical and theological foundation for an educational paradigm that integrates rational inquiry with spiritual insight, emphasizing the inseparability of knowledge and ethical conduct.

Historically, the pedagogical methods and curricula inspired by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have shaped some of the most influential Islamic scholarly traditions, particularly within Shi'a seminaries (hawzas), and have served as models for nurturing scholars, leaders, and ethical agents. Their approach to education underscores the importance of sincerity of intention, spiritual discipline, and community involvement, thus fostering learners who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually awakened and morally grounded.

In the contemporary era, however, Muslim educational systems face significant challenges that call for a renewed engagement with this foundational vision. Across many Muslim societies, religious education has often become fragmented, overly formalized, or secularized, reducing sacred knowledge to mere ritualistic learning or academic specialization devoid of its transformative ethical and spiritual dimensions. The pressures of globalization, technological advancements, cultural pluralism, and political dynamics have complicated the landscape, creating tensions between tradition and modernity. These realities raise urgent questions about how Islamic education can retain its spiritual core and ethical purpose while effectively engaging with the demands of the modern world.

This article therefore endeavours to explore the foundational principles of Islamic education as articulated by the Ahl al-Bayt (as), investigating the



philosophical, theological, and pedagogical underpinnings that distinguish their approach. It will analyse the key factors that influence the practical implementation of this educational model, including the role of sacred texts, the teacher's spiritual and ethical function, the learning environment, and the learner's disposition. Furthermore, it will examine contemporary challenges and obstacles that impede the full realization of this holistic educational vision in modern Muslim contexts.

By engaging deeply with these issues, this article aims to contribute to the broader discourse on educational reform and revitalization within Muslim societies. It advocates for approaches that remain faithful to the theological and spiritual roots laid down by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) while creatively adapting to contemporary realities. In doing so, it aspires to help cultivate a generation of learners who are intellectually capable, ethically conscious, spiritually connected, and socially committed—a generation prepared not only to understand their faith but to embody its highest ideals in the complexities of modern life.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the rich, integrated, and comprehensive framework for education provided by the Ahl al-Bayt (as), contemporary Muslim societies face substantial difficulties in actualizing this vision in practice. Educational institutions, curricula, and pedagogical methods often fall short of addressing the holistic goals of intellectual, spiritual, and ethical development. In many cases, Islamic education has become compartmentalized, either confined to rote religious instruction or assimilated uncritically into secular models that neglect spirituality and morality. This reality raises critical and multifaceted questions:

How can Islamic education maintain its holistic and integrative nature in the face of rising secular and materialistic influences that prioritize utilitarian knowledge?

What are the foundational theological, epistemological, and ethical principles proposed by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) that distinctly characterize Islamic education from other educational paradigms?

Which factors are essential to fostering a successful educational system grounded in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), especially regarding the role of teachers, community, curriculum, and learners themselves?

What are the major contemporary obstacles—historical, socio-political, cultural, and pedagogical—that impede the implementation of this form of education, and how might they be effectively addressed?

Engaging with these questions is vital for the revival and reform of Islamic education, ensuring it can continue to fulfil its divine purpose in

nurturing ethically grounded, intellectually competent, and spiritually aware individuals.

3. Foundations of Islamic Education from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) Perspective

The foundations of Islamic education, according to the Ahl al-Bayt (as), are deeply anchored in a theological worldview that integrates epistemology (the theory of knowledge), ethics, and spirituality. These foundations differentiate Islamic education from many secular and other religious educational models, creating a distinctive philosophy that insists upon divine guidance, moral integrity, intellectual rigor, and holistic human development.

3.1 Divine Origin and Spiritual Dimension of Knowledge

Central to the Ahl al-Bayt's educational vision is the belief that knowledge ('ilm) is fundamentally a divine gift rather than a purely human invention. This sacred origin of knowledge implies that learning is a means of drawing closer to Allah, the ultimate source and goal of all existence. The Qur'an explicitly commands believers to seek knowledge and reflect upon creation as pathways to understanding divine signs (Qur'an 96:1-5; 58:11, Mohammad Reza Aram, 2022). Seeking knowledge is described as an act of worship (ibadah) that elevates the human soul and aligns it with divine will.

Imam Ali (as), the first Imam according to Shi'a tradition and a primary source of educational guidance, stated, "Knowledge enlivens the soul" (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 176). This eloquent expression conveys that knowledge is not limited to factual information but is transformative, breathing life into the human spirit and enabling it to transcend the confines of material existence. Knowledge, thus, must nurture the heart (qalb) and soul (rūḥ), cultivating inner virtues such as sincerity (ikhlaṣ), humility (tawādhū'), patience (ṣabr), and reliance on Allah (tawakkul).

This spiritual dimension underscores a holistic educational model that develops the learner's entire being—intellectual faculties, moral sensibilities, and spiritual capacities—rather than focusing exclusively on external accomplishments or career-oriented skills. Unlike many modern secular educational systems, which tend to isolate cognitive skills from ethical and spiritual growth, the Ahl al-Bayt's approach insists that education is incomplete unless it fosters the soul's elevation and alignment with divine truth.



3.2 The Infallibility and Authority of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

From a Shi'a theological perspective, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are divinely appointed guides, whose authority in interpreting and transmitting Islamic knowledge is infallible (*'iṣmat*). This infallibility guarantees the authenticity and purity of the knowledge they convey, free from error, distortion, or personal bias (Momen, 1985). The Imams' unique epistemic status makes them not merely teachers but spiritual mentors who embody the knowledge they teach.

This foundational belief situates Islamic education within a framework where the transmission of knowledge is inseparably linked to spiritual authority and devotion. The educator is not just an instructor but a guide who facilitates the learner's moral and spiritual transformation, providing both intellectual understanding and ethical exemplification. The knowledge imparted by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) serves as a bridge between divine revelation and human comprehension, ensuring that educational content remains connected to its transcendent source.

This concept challenges modern notions of education as neutral or purely academic. Instead, the Ahl al-Bayt's model places education within the sacred relationship between Allah, the teacher, and the learner, where knowledge functions as a vehicle for spiritual growth and ethical discipline.

3.3 Integration of Rationality and Revelation

The Ahl al-Bayt advocate for a harmonious integration of reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*naql*) in the pursuit of knowledge. Imam Ṣādiq (as), one of the most influential Imams in Shi'a tradition, famously encouraged his students to use rational inquiry as a tool to understand divine scripture and prophetic teachings (al-Kulayni, 1998). This balanced epistemology legitimizes critical thinking and scientific inquiry within Islamic education, promoting intellectual rigor without compromising faith or spiritual truths.

This integration serves as a foundational pillar for educational methodologies that foster analytical thinking, questioning, and synthesis of knowledge. Rather than discouraging reason or blindly accepting tradition, the Ahl al-Bayt's approach encourages learners to engage actively with religious texts, applying reasoned understanding to derive applicable moral and spiritual lessons. This principle is essential for equipping learners to navigate complex contemporary issues, blending timeless divine guidance with contextual understanding.

By promoting this epistemological balance, the Ahl al-Bayt's educational philosophy counters extremes such as irrational traditionalism and secular skepticism. It provides a framework where faith and reason coexist productively, enriching both spiritual and intellectual dimensions of education.

3.4 Moral and Ethical Education as a Core Objective

The cultivation of moral character and virtues is central to the educational aims of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Education is not an end in itself but a means to produce the “perfect human” (al-insān al-kāmil), who manifests divine attributes such as justice (ʿadl), compassion (raḥmah), patience, wisdom (hikmah), and trustworthiness (amānat). Imam Ali (as) emphasized, “The best knowledge is that which benefits the soul” (Nahj al-Balaghah), highlighting the inseparability of knowledge and ethical purpose.

Thus, moral and ethical education is foundational rather than supplementary. It ensures that knowledge is applied toward righteous ends and social harmony, preventing the misuse of learning for selfish or harmful purposes. This moral education includes fostering personal virtues as well as social ethics, preparing learners to contribute positively to their communities.

Ethical training in the Ahl al-Bayt (as) tradition also involves self-discipline, spiritual purification (tazkīyah), and the development of consciousness of Allah (taqwá). Such training enables learners to embody the values they learn and reflect these values in their interactions and societal roles.

3.5 Holistic Human Development and Social Responsibility

The educational vision presented by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is comprehensively holistic, encompassing physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions of human life. Education is designed to develop balanced individuals who are not only knowledgeable and virtuous but also socially responsible and engaged.

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) emphasize that true education must prepare individuals for their dual responsibilities—to Allah and to society. This includes promoting justice, charity, and welfare, encouraging learners to act as agents of positive change. Education, therefore, transcends individual self-improvement and extends to the cultivation of communities grounded in Islamic ethics.

This communal dimension is critical, as it situates learning within a network of social relationships and responsibilities. The educational process is thus embedded within the family, religious institutions, and wider society, creating supportive environments that nurture both personal growth and social cohesion.

3.6 Historical Case Study: The Educational Legacy of Imam Ṣādiq (as)

One of the most illustrative examples of the Ahl al-Bayt’s approach to education is found in the life and teachings of Imam Ṣādiq (as), the sixth



Imam. His era (8th century CE) was a time of intellectual ferment within the Islamic world, witnessing the early development of the Islamic sciences and the flourishing of theological debate.

Imam Ṣādiq (as) is credited with establishing one of the earliest organized educational institutions, often regarded as a precursor to later madrasas. His school attracted students from diverse backgrounds, including many who later became prominent scholars in various fields such as jurisprudence, theology, and natural sciences (Momen, 1985).

His educational method integrated rational inquiry with strict adherence to revelation, exemplifying the balanced pedagogy emphasized by the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Imam Ṣādiq (as) encouraged questioning, debate, and scientific exploration, all rooted in a strong ethical and spiritual framework. This method contributed not only to the preservation of authentic Islamic knowledge but also to the advancement of knowledge in broader fields, including chemistry, medicine, and philosophy.

This historical example underscores the possibility and importance of an Islamic educational system that simultaneously fosters spiritual depth and intellectual rigor. It also highlights the role of the teacher as a central figure who embodies knowledge, spirituality, and moral excellence.

4. Factors Influencing Islamic Education According to Ahl al-Bayt (as)

The implementation and success of Islamic education grounded in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) depend on a complex interplay of multiple factors. These factors ensure that education is not only a transmission of knowledge but a comprehensive process that cultivates the learner's intellect, spirituality, and ethical character. The following sub-sections elaborate on these critical influences.

4.1 Sacred Texts and Divine Guidance

At the heart of Islamic education, according to the Ahl al-Bayt, lie the Qur'an and the authentic teachings (hadith) of the Prophet Mohammad and the Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt (as). These sources do not merely provide content; they shape the epistemological framework and the methodology of learning itself. The Qur'an's emphasis on 'ilm (knowledge) as a means to understand creation, serve Allah, and improve society establishes the foundation for educational goals (Nasr, 2006).

Moreover, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) emphasize that the interpretive authority vested in the Imams guarantees that educational content remains true to the divine message. This ensures that knowledge is not subject to distortion by cultural biases or temporal shifts, preserving the spiritual and ethical essence of learning. Their role in exegesis (tafsīr) and jurisprudence (fiqh) enables dynamic understanding and application of sacred texts to evolving contexts. For instance, Imam Ali (as) instructed his students to seek the

“hidden meanings” behind texts, indicating that learning requires depth and reflection, not surface memorization (Nahj al-Balaghah).

Divine guidance also extends to the educational process: the manner in which knowledge is sought and applied should always align with the spiritual goals of seeking Allah’s pleasure and moral rectitude. The Qur’anic verses encouraging reflection (tafakkur), reasoning (‘aql), and the pursuit of wisdom (ḥikmat) form the methodological basis for Islamic pedagogy in this tradition.

4.2 The Teacher as a Spiritual Guide and Ethical Model

In the Ahl al-Bayt (as) tradition, the teacher transcends the conventional role of mere knowledge transmission. Teachers are spiritual mentors whose personal character—integrity, piety, humility—profoundly impacts their students’ learning and ethical growth. The importance of the teacher’s moral example is emphasized repeatedly in the narrations from the Imams. Imam Ṣādiq (as) asserted, “The student is like the mirror of the teacher,” underscoring the transfer of virtues alongside knowledge (Momen, 1985).

Teachers must embody the principles they teach, serving as living examples of the integration of knowledge and ethics. This personal dimension reinforces that education is a holistic endeavour aimed at internal transformation. It fosters spiritual awakening (taḥqīq al-rūh) and ethical development, which are considered as crucial as intellectual achievement.

The spiritual mentorship also includes guiding students through challenges of faith, doubt, and worldly distractions. Teachers facilitate the cultivation of sincerity (ikhlāṣ) and intention (nīyyat), which are vital for authentic knowledge acquisition. Thus, the educational relationship is deeply relational and nurturing, resembling a spiritual apprenticeship rather than a transactional exchange.

4.3 The Learning Environment and Community Support

Islamic education, especially from the perspective of the Ahl al-Bayt, is never isolated from its social and communal context. The environment in which learning occurs plays a pivotal role in reinforcing educational aims. Families, religious seminaries (hawzas), mosques, and wider communities collaborate to nurture learners holistically.

The family is the primary cradle of values and habits; early spiritual and ethical education begins at home through role modeling and inculcation of faith-based practices (Sachedina, 1981). The Ahl al-Bayt stressed the significance of parental involvement, especially mothers, in early education and character building. For example, Lady Fatimah (as), daughter of the Prophet, is revered for her role in imparting spiritual and moral education to her children, setting a model for family-centered learning.



Religious institutions like hawzas serve as centres for sustained intellectual, spiritual, and ethical training. They provide a structured curriculum supported by a community of scholars and students engaged in dialogue and collective worship, reinforcing values and knowledge. Community support extends beyond formal institutions, including peer learning, communal religious events, and ethical guidance.

A nurturing environment cultivates virtues such as patience, humility, and cooperation, encouraging learners to embody these qualities in social life. This communal reinforcement is essential for consolidating the values learned in formal settings and applying them in everyday behaviour.

4.4 The Learner's Intent and Disposition

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) emphasize that the learner's inner state—sincerity and intention (nīyyat)—is foundational to the educational process. Knowledge pursued without a sincere intention to seek Allah's pleasure is considered incomplete or even harmful, as it risks leading to arrogance or superficiality (Momen, 1985). The learner's disposition towards knowledge shapes the depth and outcome of the educational experience.

An open, humble, and curious learner is more receptive to spiritual and ethical transformation. This disposition includes readiness to question, reflect, and integrate knowledge rather than passively memorize facts. For instance, Imam Ali (as) advised, "Knowledge enlivens the soul and removes blindness," pointing to the transformative effect of sincere learning (Nahj al-Balaghah).

The cultivation of a proper disposition also involves struggle against egoistic tendencies (nafs) and worldly distractions. Education in this framework is as much about self-purification and ethical rectitude as it is about intellectual growth. Without these, knowledge risks becoming hollow and disconnected from its higher purpose.

4.5 Integration of Rationality and Critical Thinking

One of the defining characteristics of the educational philosophy of the Ahl al-Bayt is the harmonious integration of reason ('aql) with revelation (naql). Far from opposing rational inquiry, the Imams encouraged the use of critical thinking, questioning, and logical analysis within the boundaries of faith (Tabatabaie, 1975).

This approach equips learners with the tools to engage effectively with complex theological, ethical, and worldly issues. Critical thinking fosters intellectual independence and resilience, enabling students to navigate contemporary challenges—scientific developments, philosophical debates, social changes—without compromising their spiritual and religious commitments.

For example, Imam Ṣādiq (as) is known to have engaged in detailed discussions about natural sciences and philosophy with his students, encouraging inquiry and empirical observation as complementary to scriptural knowledge (Momen, 1985).

Educational methods, therefore, should encourage dialogue, debate, reflection, and problem-solving, moving beyond rote memorization to foster deep understanding and wisdom (hikmah). This equips learners to become active contributors to both religious scholarship and societal progress.

4.6 Curriculum Content and Methodology

Curriculum design in Islamic education grounded in the Ahl al-Bayt teachings balances religious sciences—such as jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (kalām), Qur’anic studies (tafsīr)—with worldly knowledge, including philosophy, ethics, and social sciences. The purpose is not merely knowledge accumulation but the ethical application of knowledge in service of Allah and humanity.

Methodologically, education should foster active engagement rather than passive reception. Teaching strategies include memorization balanced with reflection, discussion, spiritual exercises (such as dhikr and meditation), and practical ethical application. The aim is to develop learners’ capacity for self-reflection, moral discernment, and spiritual awareness.

This balanced curriculum supports holistic development—intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual—and prepares learners to face real-world challenges with wisdom and integrity.

4.7 Contemporary Example: The Hawza System and Educational Reform

The Hawza seminaries of Najaf and Qom represent the living tradition of Islamic education inspired by the Ahl al-Bayt teachings. Historically, these institutions have been centres for Shi’a theological learning, jurisprudence, and spiritual training. They have produced scholars who played pivotal roles in religious, social, and political spheres.

In recent decades, these seminaries have undertaken significant reforms to modernize curricula and teaching methods while preserving their classical epistemology. They have integrated contemporary social sciences, philosophy, and interfaith studies alongside traditional Islamic disciplines. This integration aims to prepare scholars to engage effectively with modern social, ethical, and intellectual challenges (Sachedina, 1981).

These reforms demonstrate that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) educational vision is adaptable and relevant in contemporary contexts. The challenge remains



to maintain a balance—innovating pedagogically and academically while safeguarding the ethical and spiritual essence that defines this tradition.

5. Obstacles to Islamic Education in Light of Ahl al-Bayt (as) Teachings

Despite the rich theoretical foundations and comprehensive vision of Islamic education as presented by the Ahl al-Bayt (as), numerous obstacles impede its full realization in contemporary Muslim societies. These challenges stem from historical, socio-political, cultural, and pedagogical factors, which collectively undermine the holistic objectives of education outlined by the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Understanding these barriers is essential to developing effective strategies for educational reform grounded in the authentic teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt.

5.1 Historical and Sectarian Marginalization

One of the primary obstacles has been the historical marginalization and political suppression of the Ahl al-Bayt's teachings, particularly in Sunni-dominated contexts. This marginalization has often resulted in limited access to authentic educational materials and institutions that fully embrace the Ahl al-Bayt's epistemology and pedagogy (Madelung, 1997; Momen, 1985). The resulting sectarian divides have fragmented Muslim educational traditions, leading to the exclusion or distortion of Shi'a educational paradigms and contributing to mutual mistrust between communities (Nasr, 2006).

5.2 Secularization and Materialistic Worldviews

The rise of secular education systems globally has introduced a worldview that often sidelines spiritual and ethical development in favour of purely empirical and utilitarian knowledge (Rahman, 1980; Esposito, 1998). This secularization has challenged the Ahl al-Bayt's educational emphasis on spiritual growth and moral rectitude, leading to educational models that fail to nurture the soul or integrate divine guidance into learning processes (Badawi, 1999). Consequently, many Muslim students are educated in environments that neglect the spiritual objectives crucial to the holistic development advocated by the Ahl al-Bayt.

5.3 Pedagogical Deficiencies and Rote Learning

Another significant barrier is the predominance of rote memorization and passive learning methods in many traditional Islamic schools (madrasas) and modern educational institutions alike (Bar-Asher, 2015). The teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt stress the importance of critical reasoning (ʿaql) and understanding over mere memorization (Tabatabaie, 1975). However, many institutions fail to engage students intellectually or spiritually, which hinders the cultivation of deep comprehension, ethical reflection, and personal transformation.

5.4 Lack of Qualified and Spiritually Prepared Educators

The effectiveness of Islamic education heavily depends on the character and spiritual preparedness of the educators, as emphasized by the Ahl al-Bayt (Momen, 1985). However, many educational systems suffer from a shortage of teachers who embody the holistic qualities of piety, knowledge, and pedagogical skills needed to guide learners both intellectually and spiritually. Without such mentors, the transmission of authentic knowledge and ethical values becomes superficial (Gulpaygani, 2002).

5.5 Political Interference and Institutional Challenges

In many Muslim-majority countries, political agendas and government control of religious education often distort the authentic teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt and Islam in general. Political interference can lead to curriculum manipulation, restrictions on religious freedoms, and the suppression of critical theological discourse, which undermines the freedom necessary for genuine educational growth (Madelung, 1997; Sachedina, 1981).

5.6 Cultural and Social Pressures

Rapid modernization, globalization, and cultural shifts have introduced values and lifestyles that conflict with traditional Islamic educational ideals. Youths in Muslim societies often face pressures that divert them from spiritual and moral development, such as consumerism, secular entertainment, and ideological pluralism (Nasr, 2003; Turner, 2006). These societal influences challenge the internalization of the virtues emphasized by the Ahl al-Bayt and complicate efforts to maintain a cohesive Islamic educational framework.

5.7 Inadequate Integration of Modern Knowledge with Islamic Ethics

A further obstacle is the lack of effective integration between religious sciences and modern secular knowledge. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) advocated for a balance between reason and revelation (al-Kulayni, 1998; Tabatabai, 1975), yet many curricula treat religious and worldly knowledge as separate or even conflicting domains. This dichotomy leads to educational gaps and leaves students ill-prepared to apply Islamic ethics in complex contemporary contexts such as science, technology, and social justice (Dallal, 2001).

These obstacles illustrate that while the vision of Islamic education from the Ahl al-Bayt is comprehensive and profound, its practical implementation is fraught with multi-dimensional challenges. Addressing these requires renewed commitment to the original principles, reforming educational methodologies, empowering teachers, safeguarding academic freedom, and fostering environments that nurture spiritual and intellectual



growth. Only through such comprehensive efforts can the holistic educational model of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) be realized effectively in contemporary Muslim societies.

5.8 Deeper Analysis of Contemporary Obstacles: The Digital Age and Islamic Education

The rise of digital technology and the internet presents a double-edged sword for Islamic education. On one hand, it offers unprecedented access to vast repositories of knowledge, opportunities for global scholarly collaboration, and novel pedagogical tools such as online courses and interactive media.

On the other hand, it exacerbates problems like information overload, the spread of misinformation, and the fragmentation of traditional scholarly authority. The absence of reliable vetting mechanisms on digital platforms often leads to the dissemination of distorted or superficial understandings of Islamic teachings, undermining the careful, authoritative transmission emphasized by the Ahl al-Bayt tradition.

Moreover, digital distractions and the commodification of knowledge threaten the spiritual focus and ethical commitment integral to Islamic education. Learners may engage superficially with content without the deeper reflection and moral transformation that true education demands.

Addressing these challenges requires innovative strategies: developing authenticated digital content endorsed by qualified scholars of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) tradition, fostering virtual mentorship programs that preserve the teacher-student spiritual bond, and educating students on critical digital literacy from an Islamic perspective.

6. Discussion

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) provide a comprehensive, integrated vision of Islamic education that aims at the development of the whole person—intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Their teachings stress that education is not merely about acquiring information but transforming the individual in alignment with divine principles. This educational model, rooted in the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition, offers a powerful antidote to contemporary crises in Muslim education caused by secularization, fragmentation, and loss of spiritual purpose.

However, the successful implementation of this model requires overcoming significant challenges. The historical marginalization of Ahl al-Bayt (as) teachings, political interference, and sectarian divisions have often obstructed the full realization of their educational ideals (Madelung, 1997). Additionally, the rise of secular educational systems, globalization, and cultural shifts present new obstacles, diluting the spiritual and ethical focus of Islamic education (Nasr, 2006).

Pedagogical shortcomings, such as an over-reliance on memorization and lack of qualified teachers capable of embodying the holistic vision, further hinder progress. To address these issues, educational reform must consider both content and methods, ensuring the integration of spiritual, ethical, and intellectual dimensions. This includes reviving traditional institutions such as hawzas and developing curricula that harmonize rational inquiry with revelation.

The community's role is vital; education cannot be confined to formal institutions but must be supported by family and social environments that embody Islamic values. Moreover, technological innovations should be harnessed to disseminate knowledge authentically while fostering critical thinking and spiritual growth.

Ultimately, the Ahl al-Bayt's educational vision offers timeless guidance, but it demands committed efforts by scholars, educators, and communities to adapt it effectively to contemporary realities.

Pathways for Revitalizing Islamic Education: A Multi-Pronged Approach

To overcome the obstacles and realize the foundational vision of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), a multi-pronged educational reform strategy is needed, including:

Curriculum Development: Designing curricula that integrate Qur'anic sciences, Hadith studies, philosophy, ethics, and modern disciplines with an emphasis on moral and spiritual development. Subjects like psychology, environmental ethics, and social justice can be explored through an Islamic lens, encouraging students to engage with contemporary issues meaningfully.

Teacher Training: Investing in the development of educators who possess deep religious knowledge, pedagogical skills, and personal spiritual maturity. Continuous professional development and spiritual retreats can sustain their capacity as ethical role models.

Community Engagement: Building educational ecosystems that extend beyond formal institutions to include families, mosques, and community centres. These environments reinforce ethical habits and spiritual practices.

Use of Technology: Harnessing technology thoughtfully to provide access while maintaining traditional values of authenticity and mentorship. Online learning platforms, mobile apps for Qur'anic memorization and ethics, and digital libraries can complement in-person instruction.

Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Encouraging dialogue between Islamic scholars and experts in science, humanities, and social sciences to produce integrated knowledge that meets modern needs without compromising Islamic values.



7. Conclusion

The educational vision of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) offers an inspiring and comprehensive framework that remains profoundly relevant for today's world. It envisions education as a transformative journey that nurtures not only intellectual capacity but also moral virtue and spiritual consciousness. Realizing this vision requires more than academic commitment; it demands a holistic, community-oriented, ethically grounded, and intellectually vibrant approach. By learning from historical precedents such as Imam Šādiq's educational model and contemporary reform initiatives within Hawza seminaries, Muslim societies can revitalize their educational systems to meet contemporary challenges. Ultimately, Islamic education rooted in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) can nurture generations of individuals capable of contributing justly, compassionately, and wisely to their communities and the broader world, fulfilling the divine purpose of knowledge as a path to Allah.

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**The Position of Intercession (*Shafā'ah*) by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in
 Light of Qur'anic Foundations and the Prophetic Sunnah:
 A Comparative Hadith and Theological Study**

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Abstract

The current research aims to elucidate the central position of intercession *shafā'ah* by the Ahl al-Bayt (as) within the Islamic creedal system, focusing on Qur'anic principles and shared narrations (Shia and Sunni). Employing an analytical-descriptive and comparative methodology, this study defines *shafā'ah* as authorized mediation for the manifestation of Divine Mercy, and precisely summarizes the verses both negating and affirming *shafā'ah*. The analysis of the verses (such as Qur'an 2:255 and 21:28) indicates that the negation of *shafā'ah* in the Qur'an is not absolute but is exclusively directed toward independent and unauthorized *shafā'ah*. This study invalidates the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* by referencing its contradiction with the explicit text of the Qur'an (the exception '*illā bi-idhnihi*' [except by His permission]) and the definitive Prophetic Sunnah (the Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith). Furthermore, by referencing the Major *shafā'ah* Hadith (agreed upon), the Hadith of the Two Weighty Things (*Thaqalayn*), and the verses of the Divine Covenant (Qur'an 19:87), the position of the Ahl al-Bayt(as) as the principal exemplars of authorized intercessors after the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is explained. The distinction between the view of the Majority of Sunnis (permissibility of *tawassul* [seeking means] and absence of shirk [polytheism]) and the Salafi/Wahhabi view (shirk in worship) regarding the request for *shafā'ah* is also examined, and the conditions for the recipients of *shafā'ah*, based on narrations (preserving the fundamental faith and avoiding the slighting of prayer) are mentioned.

Keywords: *Shafā'ah*, Divine Monotheism in Action (*Tawhid Af'ali*), Ahl al-Bayt (as), Major *Shafā'ah* (*Maqām Mahmūd*), Guardianship (*Wilāyah*), Divine Permission (*Idhn Ilāhī*), Seeking Means (*Tawassul*), Shared Narrations.

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Introduction

The concept of intercession (*shafā'ah*) is one of the most critical theological discussions that has always been at the heart of attention for commentators, theologians, and hadith scholars of both Islamic schools, and it plays a central role in Islam's educational system. This concept, etymologically derived from the root *shafa'* meaning "to pair" one thing with another (Ibn Manzūr, 1414 A.H.: Vol. 4, p. 298), religiously denotes the mediation of an honorable person (intercessor) to a higher authority (God) for the forgiveness of an offender or the procurement of benefit for a person in need (recipient of *shafā'ah*). In the Divine system, this concept does not mean altering the Divine Will but rather signifies the realization of God's Will through a mediator.

The main challenge in understanding *shafā'ah* lies in how to reconcile the verses that negate *shafā'ah* (such as Qur'an 2:48) with the verses that affirm and condition *shafā'ah* (such as Qur'an 2:255), which ultimately leads to a duality in explaining the position of Divine Monotheism in Action (*Tawhid Af'ali*). In this context, the Ahl al-Bayt of Purity (as), as inheritors of the prophetic station and possessors of Divine Guardianship (*Wilāyah*), hold an unparalleled position in the Shia school as authorized intercessors. This research intends to academically and authentically explain the exclusive position of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in this Divine system by relying on authentic Qur'anic texts and the shared Prophetic Sunnah, while precisely explaining the concept of *shafā'ah*.

Problem Statement

Shafā'ah in the Qur'an has two seemingly contradictory categories of verses: those that absolutely negate *shafā'ah* (such as Qur'an 40:18) and those that affirm it conditional upon Divine permission and pleasure (such as Qur'an 2:255 and 21:28). This duality has given rise to different theological interpretations; such that some (like Wahhabism) consider the negation of *shafā'ah* to be absolute and deem seeking means (*tawassul*) through others besides God as an instance of shirk (polytheism), whereas the majority of both schools believe in conditioned *shafā'ah*. The main research question is: How can the *shafā'ah* of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) be explained based on Divine Monotheism in Action (*Tawhid Af'ali*) and Qur'anic verses, and how can their position be substantiated in light of the agreed-upon narrations (like the Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith) and Shia narrations (like the Divine Covenant)? Furthermore, what is the difference between this research and other studies on *shafā'ah*, and how can the justification for the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* be substantively refuted?



Research Background and its Difference from Other Studies

The subject of *shafā'ah* has been studied since ancient times. Theologians such as Shaykh al-Mufid in *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, Fakhr al-Rāzī in *Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (1420 A.H.), and contemporary scholars such as Ayatollah Subhānī in *Al-Shafā'a fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah* (1409 A.H.) and Murtaḍā Muṭahharī in *Divine Justice ('Adl Ilāhī)* (1377 S.H.) have addressed this topic. Previous research has often focused on proving the principle of *shafā'ah*, reconciling the negating and affirming verses, or criticizing the Wahhabi viewpoint.

The difference of this research lies in its special emphasis on the role of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the link between Guardianship (*Wilāyah*) and *shafā'ah*. The primary distinction is the methodical reference to Shia exegetical narrations (such as *Tafsīr al-Burhān*) to explain the timing of the negation of *shafā'ah* (the day of death/grave) and the instances of the Divine Covenant (Kulaynī, 1407 A.H.: Vol. 1, p. 437). Furthermore, the substantiated synthesis between the Major (shaf a⁻ 'a) Hadith (Sunni) and the position of the Ahl al-Bayt (Shia) to prove the continuation of the Praiseworthy Station (*Maqām Mahmūd*) in the Prophet's progeny (*'Itrah*), as well as the theological analysis of the majority Sunni position vis-à-vis Salafism, are methodological and content distinctions of this article.

A. Qur'anic Foundations of *Shafā'ah*: Negation of Independence, Affirmation of Permission

1. Explaining the Verses Negating *Shafā'ah* and Divine Monotheism in Action (*Tawhīd Af'ali*)

Verses such as: «وَأَنْقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ» (Qur'an 2:48) and «مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاغُ» (Qur'an 40:18) absolutely negate *shafā'ah*. Commentators believe that this absolute negation is directed toward independent and unauthorized (shaf a⁻ 'a) (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1374 S.H.: Vol. 1, p. 233). This is the very belief of the polytheists, who thought that idols or fabricated deities could intercede for them without God's Will, as alluded to in the verse «وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَبْصُرُهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ لَاءَ «شَفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ» (Qur'an 10:18). Emphasis on the negation of (*shafā'ah*) for the wrongdoers (like Qur'an 40:18) indicates that this negation includes those who have completely severed their connection to faith.

Tafsīr al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: In clarifying the verse (Qur'an 2:48), *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, based on the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), does not consider this negation of *shafā'ah* to be absolute and perpetual on the Day of Resurrection, but rather attributes it to a specific time or a specific type of *shafā'ah*. Attribution to the Day of Death: A narration from Imam al-Sādiq (as) states that, in interpreting this day, he said: "This is the day of death, so no intercessor or ransom will be effective in preventing it

[death], but on the Day of Resurrection, we and our Household will fully compensate the deeds of our followers" (Baḥrānī, Al-Burhān, Vol. 2, p. 311, under 2:48). This view interprets the verse as referring to man's inability to avert the certainty of death and initial accountability. Negation of Independent *shafā'ah*: Al-Burhān, also referencing narrations, interprets the negating verses as referring to the negation of independent *shafā'ah* and the *shafā'ah* of the polytheists to preserve the principle of Divine Monotheism in Action.

2. Affirmative Conditioned *Shafā'ah*: Divine Permission and Pleasure

Many other verses affirm *shafā'ah* conditional on two fundamental pillars:

Divine Permission (*Idhn Ilāhī*): «مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ» (Qur'an 2:255). The intercessor has no power of their own but is a mediator who executes God's Will. This verse is conclusive evidence for the affirmation of conditioned *shafā'ah*. Divine permission (the authorization to intercede) is directly linked to the station of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Negation of *shafā'ah* without Permission: Narrations in *Al-Burhān* emphasize that the verse «إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ» [except by His permission] is the boundary between monotheism and shirk regarding *shafā'ah*.

God's Pleasure: «وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَى» (Qur'an 21:28). This pleasure includes the recipient of *shafā'ah* (who must have preserved the minimum of faith and worthiness).

Confirmation of Conditioned *shafā'ah*: In confirmation of conditioned *shafā'ah*, Al-Burhān relates a key narration from Imam al-Kāẓim (as) who, in response to a question about the *shafā'ah* for grave sinners, stated: "The grave sinner, if he has not departed from our school and possesses Guardianship (*Wilāyah*), is a recipient of God's pleasure" (Baḥrānī, Al-Burhān, under 21:28). Therefore, true *shafā'ah* is a manifestation of Divine Mercy that reaches specific servants through mediators whom God Himself has designated.

B. Explanation of *Shafā'ah* in the Prophetic Sunnah and the Position of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

1. The Major *Shafā'ah* and the Praiseworthy Station (*Maqām Mahmūd*) in Prophetic Hadith Prophetic narrations link the station of *shafā'ah* with the "Praiseworthy Station (*Maqām Mahmūd*)" that God promised the Prophet (pbuh) in the Qur'an («عَسَى أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا» - Qur'an 17:79). This station is the highest degree of *shafā'ah* (Fakhr al-Rāzī, 1420 A.H.: Vol. 7, p. 96).

The Detailed *shafā'ah* Hadith: The most famous source explaining the Major *Shafā'ah* is the hadiths reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (the most authentic books among Sunnis) on the authority of



Expansion of the Scope of *shafā'ah*: In addition to the Prophet (pbuh) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as), Prophetic narrations have expanded the scope of authorized intercessors. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "The believers intercede, the prophets intercede, and the angels intercede" (Ibn Mājah, n.d.: Vol. 2, p. 1443, Hadith 4313). The *shafā'ah* of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in this system is considered the reference and head of *shafā'ah* after the Prophet (pbuh).

C. Critique of the Basis of the Absolute Negation of *Shafā'ah* by Others besides God: Theological Explanation and Comparative Jurisprudential Analysis

1. Argument to Refute the Absolute Negation of *Shafā'ah*

The justification for the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* by others besides God is a limited interpretation of the negating verses that fails to reconcile with the affirming and conditioning verses of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. The argument to refute this absolute negation rests on three main pillars:

1. 1. Distinction Between Ownership of *Shafā'ah* and Permission for *Shafā'ah* (Theological Basis)

Absolute ownership of (shaf a⁻ 'a) belongs only to God. The negation in verses like «وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ» (Qur'an 2:48) is directed toward independent and unauthorized *shafā'ah* that contradicts Divine Monotheism in Action. Conversely, the Qur'an explicitly affirms the occurrence of *shafā'ah* with Divine permission: «مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ» (Qur'an 2:255). This verse nullifies the absolute negation of (*shafā'ah*) and indicates that there are those who intercede by God's permission. Negation of *shafā'ah* is the negation of ownership, not the negation of mediation and mercy.

1. 2. Contradiction with the Agreed-upon Prophetic Sunnah (Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith)

The absolute negation of *shafā'ah* contradicts the most authentic narrations of both schools. The famous Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith (*Maqām Mahmūd*) in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* states that the Prophet (pbuh) intercedes by God's permission on the Day of Resurrection, and God says to him: «اشْفَعْ تُشَفَّعْ» (Intercede and your *shafā'ah* will be accepted) (Bukhārī, 1422 A.H.: Vol. 6, p. 19; Muslim, n.d.: Vol. 1, p. 186). Accepting this hadith means accepting the *shafā'ah* of one other than God (the Prophet), which is certainly authorized by God; thus, the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* by others besides God is void.

1. 3. Restriction of the *Shafā'ah* Recipient to "Those Whom He is Pleased With" (لِمَنْ ارْتَضَى) *shafā'ah* is restricted to those who are recipients of Divine Pleasure: «وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ ارْتَضَى» (Qur'an 21:28). This pleasure includes those who have upheld the Divine Covenant. The verse «لَا يَمْلِكُونَ» (Qur'an 19:87) emphasizes this condition of



Guardianship (*Wilāyah*), which is interpreted in Shia narrations as the Guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) (Kulaynī, 1407 A.H.: Vol. 1, p. 437).

2. Distinction Between Sunni Fiqhi-Theological Views on Seeking Means (*Tawassul*)

Regarding the request for *shafā'ah* from others besides God (especially after death), there is a significant distinction between the two main Sunni currents:

2. 1. The Salafi/Wahhabi View (Greater Polytheism – *Shirk Akbar*): Salafi and Wahhabi intellectual currents consider this request to be a form of worshipping others besides God and an instance of Greater Polytheism (*Shirk Akbar*), as they perceive the intercessor as having inherent and independent power.

2. 2. The View of the Majority of Sunnis (Permissibility of Seeking Means and Absence of Excommunication - *Takfīr*): The view of the majority of scholars from the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali) does not consider this act to be absolutely polytheistic, but rather classifies it under the jurisprudential discussions of Seeking Means (*Tawassul*) and innovation (*Bid'ah*). According to the Sunni majority, if the supplicant does not consider the intercessor independent of God's Will (believing in Divine Permission), the act is not shirk in worship. This position is confirmed by both early and later majority Sunni jurists, including the quote from Mohammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī on seeking means through the grave of Abū Ḥanīfa (Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, Vol. 1, p. 445). Moreover, later scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī in *Fath al-Bārī* (Vol. 11, p. 98) and Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī in *Shifā' al-Saqām* explicitly affirmed the permissibility of seeking help (*Istighāthah*) and *shafā'ah* with Divine Permission.

In summary, the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* by others besides God (authorized *shafā'ah*) is rejected in both Shia texts and by the Sunni majority because it contradicts explicit Qur'anic and Hadith principles (such as the exception «إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ» and the Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith). The (*shafā'ah*) of the Divine Proximity is the execution of God's Will on behalf of those who are worthy of mercy, not shirk. While Salafis deem it Greater Polytheism, the majority of jurists do not consider it shirk and examine it under jurisprudential discussions of Seeking Means (*Tawassul*).

D. Conditions for *Shafā'ah* Recipients and the Educational Wisdom of (*shafā'ah*)

Shafā'ah is not a license to continue sinning, but rather a remedy for repentant sinners. According to narrations, *shafā'ah* is available to those who: possess the fundamental faith (Monotheism and Prophethood); have preserved their spiritual and Guardianship-based connection (*Wilā'i*) with



the intercessors (especially the Ahl al-Bayt); and have avoided sins that cause the loss of faith at the time of death (such as slighting the prayer or great wrongdoing). Imam al-Şādiq (as) said: "Our (shafā'ah) does not reach anyone who slights the prayer" (Şadūq, 1403 A.H.: Vol. 3, p. 634). Educational Wisdom of *shafā'ah*: *Shafā'ah* has a dual function: 1. Fostering Hope: It keeps the door of return and hope in Divine Mercy open. 2. Strengthening Guardianship (*Wilāyah*): The conditionality of *shafā'ah* upon "Divine Pleasure with the recipient of *shafā'ah*" encourages individuals to strengthen their spiritual connection with the Divine Proximity (like the Ahl al-Bayt), which itself is a deterrent against major sins.

Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (as) refers to the negation of *shafā'ah* for absolute wrongdoers and disbelievers in several instances, such as his statement about the world, which he calls an obstacle to *shafā'ah*: «فَانْهَاهَا» «مَنْعَةً شَفَاعَةً مَنْ شَفَعَ لَهُ» (It prevents the *shafā'ah* of one for whom (shafā'ah) is accepted) (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 86), which indicates the conditional nature of *shafā'ah*. Furthermore, the Imam (as) restricts the right of *shafā'ah* to the Divine Proximity and the righteous, such as the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and the Ahl al-Bayt (as), especially for those who adhered to patience and piety in the world, and he never views *shafā'ah* as a license for the corruption of deeds. In a key statement, he introduces *shafā'ah* not as a means of altering the Divine Will, but as the execution of Divine Mercy for the qualified recipients of *shafā'ah* (people of faith and Guardianship).

Conclusion

The present research showed that intercession *shafā'ah* is a definite Qur'anic principle that in no way contradicts Divine Monotheism in Action (*Tawhid Af'ali*). The verses of the Holy Qur'an, by negating the independent *shafā'ah* of the polytheists, restrict it only to *shafā'ah* conditioned upon Divine Permission and Pleasure. This conditioned *shafā'ah* is an opportunity for the manifestation of vast Divine Mercy through the mediation of His close Proximity. The Ahl al-Bayt (as), due to possessing the station of infallibility and fulfilling the Divine Covenant in their existence, are the clear and principal exemplars of authorized intercessors after the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), and their *shafā'ah* includes their followers' *shafā'ah* and believers who, despite sin, have preserved their fundamental faith and Guardianship. The rejection of the absolute negation of *shafā'ah* is contingent upon the precise explanation of the exception «لَا بِإِذْنِهِ» and the acceptance of the definitive Prophetic Sunnah (the Major *Shafā'ah* Hadith). The view of the Sunni majority does not consider the request for *shafā'ah*, contingent on belief in Divine Permission, to be



polytheism. Therefore, *shafā'ah* is a manifestation of vast Divine Mercy that is realized based on absolute Divine Permission and Will and is executed through the close Proximity, particularly the Ahl al-Bayt (as), for the believers who have maintained their Covenant of Guardianship.

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**The Sources of Islamic Jurisprudence: A Comparative Analysis of
 Shī'ī and Sunnī Perspectives**

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Abstract

English academic works on Islam and Islamic sciences are often written from a Sunnī perspective, neglecting the rich Shī'ī heritage. This oversight leads to an unbalanced presentation of Islamic ideas and teachings, particularly in the realm of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This study examines the sources of Islamic jurisprudence from both Shī'ī and Sunnī perspectives using a comparative approach. Data were first collected from books and papers in Arabic, Persian, and English, and subsequently analyzed to provide a comprehensive comparison. The results indicate that while the jurisprudential sources are similar in terminology—namely, the Book, the Sunnah, consensus, and reason—their concepts, scopes, and methodologies differ significantly. These findings underscore that while the Prophet's companions hold a significant role in Sunnī thought, the Prophet's infallible Ahl al-Bayt (as) occupy a unique position within Shī'ī thought. Moreover, due to the centrality of the Imāms in Shī'ī Islam, based on their injunctions, the Sunnah is deemed reliable only if it aligns with the Qur'ān, consensus is accepted solely if it reveals the statements and ideas of an infallible Imām, and only certain rational arguments are considered valid, while conjectural arguments such as qiyas (analogy) are strictly prohibited.

Keywords: Sources of Jurisprudence, Shī'a, Sunnī, Qur'ān, Sunnah, Reason (*'aql*), Consensus (*ijmā'*)

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Introduction

In an interconnected world, the study of Islamic sciences can offer profound insights into how religious teachings and instructions shape legal and ethical systems and lifestyles. These sciences, the result of the efforts and struggles of the Prophet of Islam (pbuh), his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and generations of Islamic scholars over centuries, continue to guide Muslim life and thought in various aspects. Since *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) defines one's responsibilities and obligations towards Almighty Allah, nature, and other people, regulating both the affairs of livelihood and the afterlife, it holds a unique position among Islamic sciences. Its significance is underscored by 'Allāmah Ḥillī, one of the greatest Shī'ī jurists, who described *fiqh* as 'the best knowledge after knowing Almighty Allah' (Ḥillī, 1999, p. 40).

We are witnessing a growing interest in academic communities to familiarize themselves with the vast treasure of Islamic sciences. This is evident in the extensive efforts made by Orientalists in recent decades to understand Islam and Islamic sciences. However, although numerous works have been written in academic circles, particularly in recent years, the Western academic community remains largely unfamiliar with the advanced and robust scientific system of Shī'ī jurisprudence, its scholars, and their invaluable contributions. For instance, Lukianov et al. (2020, pp. 30-31) emphasize that almost no research in Ukraine's scientific community directly deals with Shī'ī jurisprudence. This gap is evident in bibliographies of Islamic law that often underrepresent Shī'ī sources or misclassify them. For instance, a prominent Western bibliography lists 305 sources of Islamic jurisprudence in Arabic but includes only two works from the Twelver Shī'ī tradition - Sharā'ī' al-Islām and Mukhtaṣar al-Nāfi' - while erroneously categorizing the Ibāḍī School as a branch of Shī'ism (Modarresi Tabataba'i, 1989, p. 7).

This gap is further highlighted by the responses of AI-based chatbots like ChatGPT, which often rely solely on Sunnī sources when queried about Islamic jurisprudential questions. Even when clearly asked to provide a Shī'ī perspective, these tools frequently provide answers based on Sunnī jurisprudence, underscoring the limited representation of Shī'ī jurisprudential thought in widely accessible English resources.

It is also important to note that although many Shī'ī jurisprudential studies in the forms of books and papers are carried out in Arabic and Persian, their availability in other languages, including English, remains sporadic. As a result, much of this rich tradition remains inaccessible to those outside the Muslim world or unfamiliar with these languages. This underscores the necessity of writing more scholarly works to introduce this



precious treasure to a global audience, especially in English as the prevailing academic language.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap in academic communities by introducing Shī'ī sources of jurisprudence and comparing them with Sunnī perspectives. By examining the Book (i.e., the Qur'ān), Sunnah, *ijmā'*, and *'aql*, the researcher will highlight areas of convergence and divergence, offering a balanced understanding of diverse Islamic jurisprudential schools.

Shī'a and Sunnī Schools of Thought

There are various denominations within the religion of Islam, which are classified into two main schools of thought, namely Shī'a (also spelled Shiite and Shī'ah) and Sunnī (also called Ahl al-Sunnah and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah).

The word Shī'a's (Shī'ah) literal meaning is follower and partisan (Fayyūmī, 1977, p. 329). It is historically derived from Shī'atu 'Alī (شيعته علي), a term first used during the Prophet's lifetime to refer to a group of Muslims who followed Imām 'Alī (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1977).

The word Sunnī is derived from the term "Sunnah", signifying a commitment to following the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) (Campo, 2009, p. 646). Historically, the term Ahl al-Sunnah emerged during the reign of the Abbasid Dynasty, specifically under the rule of Abū Ja'far Al-Manṣūr and Hārūn Al-Rashīd. This coincided with the rise of Abū Ḥasan Al-Ash'arī (d. 936), the founder of the Ash'arite School, and Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944), the founder of Maturidism, who both identified themselves as Ahl al-Sunnah (Hamid et al., 2023, p. 53).

Two important factors led to this classification. The first factor concerns who is referenced in disagreements and scientific disputes concerning the Prophet's words and Sunnah. As Abān ibn Taghlib, a disciple of Imām Moḥammad Bāqir (a), defines the Shī'a as those who refer to 'Alī, the gateway to the Prophet's knowledge¹, and the household of the Prophet (pbuh) when disagreements arise about the Prophet's words and Sunnah (Al-Najāshī, 1997, p. 12). On the contrary, the Sunnīs are those who refer to either of the Prophet's companions in such cases.

The second differentiating factor is successorship to the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh). According to the Shī'a, the holy Prophet did not leave his Ummah without specifying a leader who continues his ideals; rather, he explicitly appointed and introduced 'Alī as his immediate successor on different occasions, especially while returning from the Hajj pilgrimage in a place called Ghadīr Khum. They believe that after Imām 'Alī, eleven of

1. The Holy Prophet said, 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate. Hence, whoever seeks knowledge should come to the gate of the city' (Ibn 'Asākir, 1995, vol. 42, p. 379)

his offspring, the last of whom is Imām Mahdī, are the Prophet’s successors (Shomali, 2010, pp. 52-54). In contrast, the Sunnīs believe that the Holy Prophet, after 23 years of struggle to establish an Islamic society and government, left this world without appointing a successor for himself, and the designation of a successor (caliphate) was left to the Muslims, and they themselves were to decide on who would lead (Hamid et al., 2023, p. 51).

Both these factors are mentioned in the definition of Shī‘a provided by ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā‘ī (1975, p. 31):

Shi‘ah, which means literally partisan or follower, refers to those who consider the succession to the Prophet, may God’s peace and benediction be upon him, to be the special right of the family of the Prophet and who, in the field of the Islamic sciences and culture, follow the school of the Household of the Prophet.

It should be noted that there are currently three branches of Shī‘a Islam: Zaidi, Ismaili, and Jafari (also known as Twelver and Imāmī), with the latter comprising the majority. Twelver Shī‘a is meant by the word Shī‘a in this work.

Definition of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Before delving into the discussion, it is necessary to define the science of fiqh in Islam. Lexically, the word fiqh means understanding and comprehension (Ibn Manzūr, 1956, vol. 13, p. 522). In the terminology of the Qur’ān and Sunnah, fiqh means extensive and profound knowledge of Islamic teachings and instructions (Shahīd Muṭahharī, 1997, vol. 20, p. 65). However, in the context of Islamic studies, Shī‘a jurists define fiqh as “the knowledge of secondary religious rulings based on their detailed evidence and proofs” (Shahīd Awwal, 2008, Vol. 15, p. 3).

It is important to notice that the use of the term "*fiqh*" (Islamic jurisprudence) is only correct when the knowledge of rulings and their understanding are organized according to the established principles of *ijtihād*. Otherwise, neither *ijtihād* contradicting a clear text (*naṣṣ*) constitutes a legitimate "*fiqhī* operation", nor can knowledge derived from unsubstantiated speculations which are not based on *sharī‘ah* be considered to be "fiqh," nor should a person who acquires their knowledge through this way be called a "*faqīh*" (jurist) (Al-Majlis al-A‘lā lish-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmīyyah, 1997, pp. 10-11).

The “detailed evidence” in the definition mentioned above refers to the Holy Qur’ān, Sunnah, *ijmā‘* (scholarly consensus), and *‘aql* (reason) (Mar‘ashī, 2010, p. 17). In fact, these four constitute the primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence, which will be explored in this study, highlighting areas of their convergence and divergence from the Shī‘ī and Sunnī perspectives.



Research Background

Various motives have driven academics to conduct extensive studies on Islam, its sects, and their teachings. These motives include a growing desire to learn about other nations and cultures, to find common ground and foster connections, and to promote peace and justice globally. Additionally, there is an increasing interest in exploring others' scientific heritage. Furthermore, Islam and Muslims are now integral to many Eastern and Western societies; therefore, appreciating their beliefs and practices can foster more peaceful and understanding interactions among citizens.

1. Sunnī-Centric Works

Some authors have written about Islam in its entirety; however, most including Hodgson (1974), Goldziher (1981), Schacht (1983), Esposito (1998), Armstrong (2000), Lewis (2008), Winter (2008), Ruthven (1997), and Mabon (2013) have equated Islam solely with its major school of thought, namely the Sunnī tradition, while neglecting the Shī'a perspective. Unfortunately, some Western writers, such as Goldziher (1981), have evaluated Islamic law from a negative and biased perspective, attempting to undermine its ability to address contemporary issues. However, some other writers, such as Marshall Hodgson (1974, vol. 1), a professor at the University of Chicago, have examined Islamic civilization with a fair and scholarly approach and highlighted the civilizational dimensions of Islamic history. He introduces Sharī'ah as the core of Islamic civilization and the organizing principle of Islamic society. Esposito (1998) seeks to differentiate between real Islam and Islam as portrayed by media headlines and images. He provides a concise overview of Islamic beliefs, history, and practices. Joseph Schacht (1982, p. v) conducted a study on Islamic law; however, as he notes in the preface of his book, he limited his focus to the Sunnī community, skipping the developments of Shī'a law. Furthermore, he concentrated primarily on the doctrines of the Hanafi School. To demonstrate the capacity and credibility of Islamic law in addressing contemporary social issues, Abdur Rahman I. Doi (1984) explains the sources of Islamic law and elaborates on its applications concerning significant social matters, such as marriage and divorce, criminal law, and inheritance. Nevertheless, he, too, discusses only the Sunnī perspective.

2. Shī'a-Centric Works

Introduction to Shī'ī Law: A Bibliographical Study, is a rare English-language overview of Twelver Shī'ī jurisprudence by Modarresi Tabataba'i (1984), which, despite its precision, lacks a profound and thorough comparative approach.

3. Comparative Jurisprudential Works

Several studies have sought to analyze the perspectives of the two predominant schools of thought within the Islamic tradition, namely Sunnī and Shī‘a, regarding various jurisprudential topics, including the interpretation of the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, and the role of reason, etc., such as Hallaq (2005), Abisaab (2015), Karimi and Jafari Harandi (2021), and Nyazee (2003). Hallaq (2005) examines the development and evolution of Islamic law, concentrating on the four main Sunnī schools. Karimi and Jafari Harandi (2021) focus on the reasoning among four sources, aiming to elucidate the role and significance of reason in educating younger generations, with particular emphasis on comparing Shī‘ī and Sunnī jurisprudence. Abisaab (2015) examines the akhbārī jurisprudential school within the Shī‘a tradition and presents the thoughts of its founding scholar, Mohammad Amin Astarābādī, while attempting to trace their origins in Sunnī or Shī‘a traditions. Lukianov et al. (2020) have examined the Holy Qur’ān from both Shī‘ī and Sunnī perspectives.

As previously mentioned, there are numerous valuable works available in Arabic and Persian, such as *Maṣādir al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Manābi‘uh* [Sources and Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence] by Ayatollah Subḥānī, and *Manābi‘ Ijtihād az Dīdgāh Madhāhib Islāmī* [Sources of Ijtihād from the Perspective of Islamic Schools of Thought] by Ayatollah Jannātī. However, there is a notable scarcity of English-language works that adequately address Shī‘a jurisprudence and provide a fair comparison with Sunnī jurisprudential sources.

Sources of Jurisprudence

One of the most important issues in fiqh about which a multitude of discussions are presented is *Manābi‘ al-fiqh* or *Maṣādir al-fiqh*, which means the sources of jurisprudence. Sources of fiqh are the sources that a *mujtahid* relies upon when deriving religious rulings (Imām Ṣādiq Institute, 1997). As mentioned, according to the view of Shī‘a jurists, four things are considered to be the sources of fiqh: 1. The Holy Qur’ān, which jurists refer to as “The Book” (*al-Kitāb*), 2. Sunnah, 3. Consensus (*ijmā‘*), and 4. Reason (*‘aql*) (Mūsawī Bujnūrdī, 1999, p. 7).

When we refer to jurisprudential works in various Islamic denominations, we find that the sources of jurisprudence differ among them. Ḥanafī jurists have accepted the Qur’ān, *mutawātīr* (mass-transmitted) Sunnah, statements of the Prophet’s Companions, consensus of the Companions, *qiyās* (analogy), *istiḥsān* (juristic discretion), and customary practices of people as sources of ijtihād (Abū Zahrah, 1996, pp. 371-373).



According to the perspective of scholars following Mālik ibn Anas, the sources of jurisprudence are the Qur'ān, Sunnah, consensus of the people of Medina, considerations of public interest (*Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah* - a type of analogy), the statement of a Companion not based on personal opinion, and analogy (*qiyās*) with a stated reason (Mahmassani, 1975, p. 55).

The sources of jurisprudence in the view of Shāfi'ī jurists are: the Qur'ān, Sunnah, consensus, and *qiyās* (Faizi & Ali, 2024, p. 66).

Scholars following Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal considered the sources of *ijtihād* to be the Qur'ān, Sunnah, consensus of the Companions, the *fatāwā* of the Companions, and rarely *qiyās* (Ramadan, 2006, p. 71).

However, all these cases can be categorized into four groups: the Qur'ān, Sunnah, reason, and consensus. These four are common in Shī'a and Sunnī schools of thought in terms of terminology but have different definitions and examples. Therefore, since this study primarily aims at introducing Shī'ī sources of jurisprudence, first, the Shī'ī sources, their definitions, and applications will be examined, then their similarities and differences with Sunnī sources will be highlighted.

1. The Book

Tawḥīd (Monotheism) necessitates that we consider the right to legislate (*Tashrī'*) as exclusively belonging to God Almighty. Therefore, Allah is the sole Legislator, and other legislations only gain legitimacy if they have His permission (Imām Ṣādiq Institute, 1997, Introduction Volume, p. 11). The most important way to access divine legislation is to refer to His word, which is the Holy Qur'ān.

The Holy Qur'ān, which acts as the cornerstone of the religion of Islam and Islamic teachings and instructions, comprises the words of Allah that were revealed to the Prophet of Islam over 23 years. It consists of more than 6200 verses, which are classified into 114 surahs and 30 *ajzā'* (plural of *juz'*, meaning part).

Though the verses of the Holy Qur'ān address a wide range of topics and are not restricted to mentioning jurisprudential and legal rulings (*aḥkām*), approximately one-thirteenth of the Qur'ān's verses, meaning 500 verses out of the total number of verses, are dedicated to rulings. For this reason, Islamic scholars have authored numerous books regarding these verses, under the titles *Āyāt al-Aḥkām*, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, *Fiqh al-Qur'ān* and the like.

Some famous works among the Shī'a are:

1. *Āyāt al-Aḥkām* written by Moḥammad ibn Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 763)
2. *Fiqh al-Qur'ān* written by Sa'īd ibn Hibatullāh known as Quṭb Rāwandī (d. 1177), one of the first commentators of Nahj al-Balāghah and

the first Shī'a jurist who has compiled a book on the jurisprudential verses of the Qur'ān.

3. *Kanz al-'Irfān fī Fiqh al-Qur'ān* by Miqdād ibn 'Abdullāh known as Fādīl Miqdād (d. 1422 AH), a renowned Shī'a jurist and theologian

4. *Tafsīr Shāhī* (also *Āyāt al-Aḥkām*), the first Shī'ī work on jurisprudential verses of the Qur'ān in Persian by Abulfath Ḥusaynī (d. 1568)

5. *Zubdah al-Bayān fī Barāhīn Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by the renowned Shī'a jurist Mullā Aḥmad Ardabīlī, known as Muqaddas Ardabīlī (d. 1585)

6. *Āyāt al-Aḥkām* by Moḥammad ibn 'Alī Astar Ābādī (d. 1618), the Greatest Akhbārī (Scripturalist) jurist

The Infallible Imāms (as) used to refer to the apparent meanings of the Qur'ānic verses when explaining religious rulings (*Aḥkām*) and encouraged and guided their followers to derive rulings from them (Shaykh Anṣārī, 2016, pp. 101-105). That is among the reasons for the authenticity of the words of the Qur'ān and the permissibility of referring to it as a source for inferring and deducing religious rulings.

Some famous works among the Sunnīs are:

1. *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by Moḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 819) known as Imām Shāfi'ī, the head of one of the four major Sunnī schools of thought.

2. *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* written based on Ḥanafī school which is almost the lengthiest work of the type by Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 980)

3. *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* written based on Shāfi'ī school by 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī known as al-Kiyā al-Hirāsī (d. 1110)

4. *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (also *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*) written based on Mālikī school of thought by Moḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 1273)

5. *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām* by Moḥammad 'Alī al-Sāyis (d. 1976) a renowned professor at al-Azhar University

6. *Rawā'i' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām min al-Qur'ān* by Moḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī (d. 2021)

Shī'a scholars consider the Qur'ān to be the primary source of deriving rulings in jurisprudence, and the indications of its general statements to be definitive. The definitive Sunnah, including the solitary report, can specify the Qur'ān's general statements (Jannātī, 1991, pp. 5, 21).

From the perspective of Abū Ḥanīfah, the Qur'ān is the primary source of deduction, and the indications of its general statements are definitive. Specific Sunnah, if widely transmitted (*Mutawātir*) or well-known (*Mashhūr*), can specify the Qur'ān's generalities. Otherwise, that report will be deemed incorrect (Abū Zahrah, 1996, pp. 283-284).



In the Mālikī school of thought, the Qur'ān is the first source of jurisprudence, but the indications of its general statements are not definitive. A solitary report (*Khabar Wāḥid*), and *qiyās* can specify the Qur'ān (Āl-i Ja'far, 1984, p. 237). Mālik believes that the commands in the Qur'ān indicate obligation until they are accompanied by phrases that indicate recommendation or permissibility (Ibn Rushd, 1988, vol. 2, pp. 276-277).

In the Shāfi'ī school of thought, the Qur'ān is recognized as the reference for legislation. However, scholars within this school hold varying opinions regarding its significance and position among other sources. Shāfi'ī himself considers the Qur'ān to be the first and most important source. For this reason, he asserts that the Sunnah, even if widely transmitted, cannot abrogate the Qur'ān (Shāfi'ī, 2009, p. 132). Nevertheless, the current principles of this school indicate that the implications of the Qur'ān's general statements are not definitive and are considered on par with the Sunnah. Both solitary reports and widely transmitted reports can abrogate the Qur'ān, specify its generalities, and clarify its ambiguities (Abū Zahrah, 1996, p. 447).

From the perspective of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the Qur'ān and Sunnah hold equal validity and authority, with no distinction that would allow one to be prioritized over the other. Consequently, the Qur'ān can be elucidated and specified by any hadith that offers an explanatory or specifying aspect (Abū Zahrah, 1996, p. 283).

Both Shī'a and Sunnī schools of thought believe in the centrality of the Holy Qur'ān in deriving Islamic rulings. Therefore, they reject hadiths and interpretations that contradict the Qur'ān (Baru et al., 2017, pp. 63-64; Subḥānī Tabrīzī, 2002, p. 81). However, their understandings of the verses may differ according to theological doctrines, moral principles, and historical accounts.

Aspect	Shī'ī Jurisprudence	Sunnī Jurisprudence
Interpretive Authority	Imāms as living exegetes	Scholarly Opinions
Hermeneutical Method	Bāṭin-Zāhir balance	Zāhir-first approach
Abrogation Handling	Rejects post-Prophetic <i>naskh</i> (abrogation)	Accepts chronological abrogation
Legal Expansion	Reason (<i>'aql</i>) as a supplement	Analogical reasoning (<i>qiyās</i>)

Case Study: *Wuḍū*

Take the verse of *wuḍū* (Qur'ān 5:6) as an example. Shī'a jurists believe that when performing ablution (*wuḍū*), washing the hands must be done from the top down. However, Sunnī scholars state that an individual has the choice to wash their hands from bottom to top or vice versa, although washing from the bottom (from the fingertips) upward is recommended.

From the Shī'a perspective, the word "إلى" (meaning "up to") in "إلى المرافق" (meaning "up to the elbows") is only to indicate the limit of washing, not the manner of washing because the word "يد" in Arabic can refer to the hand from the fingertips to the wrist, to the elbow, or to the shoulder. This verse states: wash the hand up to the elbow to clarify the scope of washing; however, Sunnī scholars have interpreted the word "إلى" to imply that washing should be from the tip of the hand to the elbow.

Regarding wiping the feet, Shī'a scholars believe that the feet should be wiped, while Sunnī jurists believe that one must wash the feet. The Shī'a hold that according to Arabic grammar, the word "أرجلكم" (meaning "your feet") is an apposition to "رؤوسكم" (meaning "your heads"); therefore, just as the head must be wiped, the feet should be wiped as well. Many have even read "أرجلكم" with a جَزْ (a vowel sounding 'e'); even if it is read in the نَصْب (a vowel sounding 'a'), the obligation of wiping can still be inferred from it, since "رؤوسكم" (meaning "your heads") is the object of "امسحوا" (meaning "wipe"), making it in the accusative case. However, Sunnī scholars have considered the word "أرجلكم" as being in apposition to "وجوهكم" (meaning "your faces") and have derived the necessity of washing the feet in ablution from this (Rezvān Ṭalab, 2009, pp. 96-100).

2. The Sunnah

The Sunnah is regarded as the second source after the Qur'ān in both Shī'ī and Sunnī fiqh. The Prophetic Sunnah sometimes serves to explain and interpret the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. God Almighty, in the Qur'ān 16:44, assigns the responsibility of clarification and explanation to His noble Messenger. Therefore, the Prophet clarifies the concise statements of the Qur'ān, specifies what is general, and qualifies what is absolute. Sometimes, the Sunnah independently addresses rulings and issues that are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān (Subḥānī Tabrīzī, 2006, pp. 82-86).

2.1 The Definition of Sunnah in Shī'a and Sunnī Jurisprudence

According to Sunnī scholars, the Sunnah is strictly defined as the words, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Moḥammad (pbuh) (Al-Zuḥaylī, 2006, p. 185). However, when examining Sunnī scholarly works, we observe that the Sunnah of the Ṣaḥābah (the Prophet's Companions) is treated as equal to that of the Prophet. In contrast, Shī'a jurists consider Sunnah to encompass the sayings, actions, and approvals of both the Prophet and the infallible Imāms from his household (peace be upon them). They regard the Sunnah of the Infallibles as equally authoritative and valid as that of the Prophet, considering it a reliable source for deriving God's religious rulings (Mūsawī Bujnūrdī, 1999, p. 24).

Based on the Ḥanafī school of thought, in the absence of a Qur'ānic ruling on a particular subject, one should refer to the Sunnah of the Prophet



(pbuh). If the Sunnah is also silent on the matter, the statement of a *ṣaḥābī* (companion) is considered, and if the companions do not have a unanimous opinion on the matter, the opinion of one of them will be acted upon. However, the views of the *tābi'īn* (the next generation after the companions) are opinions that have been derived through *ijtihād* and thus cannot be considered a source of deduction (Abū Zahrah, 1996, pp. 370-371).

Mālik believes that the Sunnah (both *musnad* and *marfū'*) encompasses the views of the companions and the *tābi'īn* (Āl-i Ja'far, 1984, p. 184).

This implies that the statements of the Prophet's companions are also considered Sunnah in the view of some Sunnī scholars and schools. On the contrary, Shī'a scholars accept the statements of companions only as a means of showing prophetic Sunnah after examining the chain of narrators (Shahīd Thānī, 2015, pp. 220-226).

Consequently, when examining the hadith collections from which the Sunnah is derived, we observe a significant disparity between the two schools of thought. Sunnī texts infrequently narrate ahadith from Ahl al-Bayt (a), while a substantial portion of their collections consists of hadiths transmitted by the companions of the Prophet. In fact, they tend to prioritize the companions over Ahl al-Bayt (as). For instance, Bukhārī has recorded 446 hadiths from Abū Hurayrah, who, according to his own account, accompanied the Holy Prophet for only three years (Abū Rayyah, 2010, p. 96; Al-Hasanī, 1978, p. 124). In contrast, Bukhārī has documented only 29 hadiths from Imām 'Alī, who was with the Prophet from his birth until the Prophet's passing—a period of 33 years. Additionally, he has narrated only one hadith from the Holy Prophet's esteemed daughter, Fāṭimah. Notably, Sunnī hadith collections include 5,374 hadiths from Abū Hurayrah, despite his brief companionship with the Prophet, while they contain only 536 hadiths from the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Imām 'Alī (Ibn Ḥazm, 1992, pp. 37, 44).

On the contrary, according to the Qur'ānic verses such as 33:33, 4:55, and 4:59, and based on prophetic narrations including Hadith al-Thaqalayn and Hadith Safīnah, the Shī'a prioritizes the Ahl al-Bayt (as) over the companions.

2.2 Sunnah vs. Hadith

Sunnah, encompassing the statements, actions, and tacit approval of the Prophet (or, in a broader sense, an infallible figure), is transmitted via *hadith*. Nevertheless, the terms “sunnah” and “hadith” are occasionally employed as substitutes for one another.

2.3 Hadith Collection

Due to the important position of hadith in Islam, both Shī‘a and Sunnī scholars have made a tremendous effort to save this precious treasure by compiling hadith collections. However, it is important to note that despite the Prophet’s recommendations and encouragement for documenting hadith (Abī Dāwūd, 1999, v. 3, p. 315), not only did narrating and recording hadith become prohibited in the Sunnī community for nearly a hundred years but also a great number of existing hadiths were burned and destroyed under the rule of the first two caliphs (Muttaqī Hindī, 1980, vol. 10, p. 285). Naturally, this long gap caused several problems:

1. The disappearance of many prophetic hadiths: Sha‘bī had stated, ‘I spent a year with ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, and I did not hear him narrate anything from the Messenger of Allah (as)’ (Ibn Mājah, 1998, v. 1, p. 61).
2. Spread of fake hadith: Not compiling the hadith provided an opportunity for hadith forgers in the future.
3. Disagreement among hadiths: The failure to record hadiths led to discrepancies among the narrations due to errors, forgetfulness, and negligence of the narrators who relied solely on their memory.
4. Providing the ground for accusing Islamic culture: Some orientalist, such as Goldziher (1981), questioned the authenticity of the narrations.

Nevertheless, Shī‘a, who continued their written culture from the time of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) until the end of the era of Imām ‘Askarī (as) and during the minor occultation of Imām Mahdī (as), were immune to these harms.

Al-Kutub al-Arba‘ah in the Shī‘a

Four collections of Hadith are of the highest importance among the Shī‘a.

1. Al-Kāfī by Shaykh Kulaynī, which consists of 16000 hadiths.
2. Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhū al-Faqīh by Shaykh Sadūq that contains 6000 hadiths.
3. Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām by Shaykh Ṭūsī, containing 13590 hadiths.
4. Al-Istibṣār fī mā Ikhtalafa min al-Akḥbār by Shaykh Ṭūsī, including 5511 hadiths.

Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah in Ahl al-Sunnah

The six most important collections of hadith among Sunnī scholars are:

1. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī by Moḥammad Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, which contains 7275 hadiths, which, by removing duplicates, becomes four thousand hadiths.
2. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Nayshābūrī, consisting of 7395 hadiths.



3. Sunan al-Tirmidhī by Moḥammad ibn ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī, including approximately 5000 hadiths.

4. Sunan al-Nisā’ī by Abū ‘Abdurrahmān al-Nisā’ī, which contains 5758 hadiths.

5. Sunan Abī Mājah by Abū ‘Abillāh ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī that consists of 4341 hadiths

6. Sunan Abī Dāwūd by Sulaymān Abī Dāwūd al-Sajistāni, including 4800 hadiths.

As Nawawī (2009, p. 58), one of the greatest Sunnī hadith scholars, states, the Sunnī school has agreed on the authenticity of these two books (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim) and the necessity of acting upon their hadiths. In contrast, Shī‘a scholars do not evaluate narrations based solely on the book in which they appear; instead, each narration is meticulously examined in terms of its narrators and its alignment with the Qur’ān.

Aspect	Shī‘a View	Sunnī View
Participants	Prophet and Infallible Imāms	Prophet and Companions
Temporal Scope	Till the beginning of the major occultation	Till the end of Companions’ life
Authenticity	No completely authentic book. Each narration must be examined separately.	Two Ṣaḥīḥ books are totally authentic

3. Reason or Rational Proof

The concept of ‘*aql* (reason) is also different from the perspective of Shī‘ī and Sunnī jurists.

3.1 Reason in Shī‘ī Jurisprudence

In Shī‘ī jurisprudence, ‘*aql* is considered a primary source of jurisprudence, especially within the Uṣūlī School (Scharbrodt, 2022, p. 316). The emphasis on reason is rooted in the belief that rationality is divinely endowed and serves as a tool for discerning what is right and what is wrong and for guiding us to understand divine will when explicit textual evidence is absent or ambiguous. In this sense, rational proof and narrative proof are alike (Jawādī Āmulī, 2021, pp. 43, 66-67).

Unlike the Sunnīs, Shī‘a scholars only accept pure rational argumentation as a source for jurisprudential ruling. Therefore, according to Shī‘a, reasoning based on rational premises, resulting in a rational conclusion, is called rational proof (*dalīl ‘aqlī*) (Muḥaffar, 2008, vol. 2, p. 262). The rational proof is divided into two categories: independent rational arguments (*al-mustaḥillāt al-‘aqlīyyah*) and dependent rational arguments (*ghayr al-mustaḥillāt al-‘aqlīyyah*) (Muḥaffar, 2008, vol. 2, pp. 262-263).

1. Independent Rational Arguments (*al-Mustaḥillāt al-‘Aqlīyyah*)

If both premises of reasoning are rational, it is said that reason alone, without relying on religious sources, can derive a legal ruling (*ḥukm sharʿī*). This type of reasoning is called independent rational arguments. Examples include the rational judgment of the goodness of fairness and truthfulness or the evilness and undesirability of oppression and injustice (Muzaffar, 2008, vol. 2, pp. 263-264).

2. Dependent Rational Arguments (*Ghayr al-Mustaqillāt al-ʿAqlīyyah*)

If one premise is rational and the other is taken from canonical sources, this reasoning is called a dependent rational argument. An example is the rational judgment of the obligation of a prerequisite when the main action is mandatory (*wājib*). Since the rational premise dominates the other, it is termed rational reasoning. However, as reason alone cannot reach the conclusion (i.e., the ruling), it requires the support of a religious premise, making it a dependent rational argument (Muzaffar, 2008, vol. 2, p. 264).

Akḥbārī scholars (scripturalists) are considered the most significant opponents of deriving religious rulings using rational reasoning in Shīʿa Islam (Muṭahharī, 1997, vol. 20, p. 169).

Application in Modern Issues

Shīʿī jurists permit dissection, organ donation, and stem cell research based on the rational principle of preserving life and minimizing harm (Imām Khumaynī, 2006, vol. 2, pp. 660-661; Makārim Shīrāzī, 2001, pp. 320-321, 328-329; Muʾmin Qumī, 1994, pp. 135-137, 174).

3.2 Analogical Reasoning in Sunnī

It must be noted that by “reasoning or *ijtihād*” the Sunnī scholars mean *qiyās*, which means reasoning by analogy (Weeramantry, 1988, pp. 40-41). In Sunnī jurisprudence, *qiyās* is seen as a secondary source of law used when explicit evidence from the Qurʾān or Sunnah is unavailable. It involves deriving legal rulings for new cases by drawing analogies with established precedents (Nyazee, 2003, pp. 149-150).

However, since the analogy is a speculative argument, not a certain one, and also due to the abundant narrations from the infallible Imāms that strongly criticize and forbid analogy, *qiyās* is not valid in the Shīʿa school of thought (Mīrzāyī Qumī, 1999, p. 443).

In the view of Ḥanafī jurists, *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), and *ʿurf* (custom) are considered rational sources of *ijtihād* (Āl-i Jaʿfar, 1984, pp. 172-173).

Istiḥsān (juristic preference), *Istiḥāb* (presumption of continuity), *maṣāliḥ mursalah* (considerations of public interest), *sadd al-dharāʿi* (blocking the means), *ʿurf* (custom), and the practice of the people of



Medina are among the accepted sources of the Mālikī School (Āl-i Jaʿfar, 1984, p. 185)

Although *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) is considered authoritative by Shāfiʿī (Abū Zahrah, 1996, p.455), he does not consider *istiḥsān* (juristic preference) and *maṣāliḥ mursalah* (considerations of public interest) valid, and he considers the use of these two sources to be forbidden (Shāfiʿī, 2009, pp. 426-431).

In the Mālikī school, reason can be applied to *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *maṣāliḥ mursalah* (considerations of public interest), *istiḥāb* (presumption of continuity), and *urf* as sources of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) (Āl-i Jaʿfar, 1984, p. 185; Faiz & Ali, 2024).

This array of arguments provides Sunnīs with more options for addressing contemporary issues and answering questions where no Qurʾānic injunction or evidence from Sunnah exists. However, these arguments often lack authenticity and credibility as they are based on speculation and uncertain assumptions rather than sound reasoning and rational discourse. Consequently, while the limited scope of reason in Shīʿa jurisprudence makes *ijtihād* based on rational arguments challenging for Shīʿa scholars, their rulings benefit from a greater degree of authenticity and credibility.

4. *Al-Ijmāʿ* (Scholarly Consensus)

The term *ijmāʿ* refers to a jurisprudential concept meaning the consensus of jurists regarding a religious ruling (Narāqī, 1996, p. 702).

The Criteria for Validity of *Ijmāʿ*

In the view of Sunnī jurists, *ijmāʿ* (consensus), in itself, is considered valid proof and an independent source for deriving religious rulings (Rāzī, 1997). It is valid if all Muslim mujtahids belonging to a single determined period after the demise of the Messenger of Allah agree upon a religious ruling (Nyazee, 2003, pp. 183-185).

According to Shīʿa jurists, consensus is only valid if it reveals the statement of an infallible (*maʿṣūm*) (Ibn Shahīd Thānī, 1991, p. 208). Unlike Sunnī scholars, Shīʿa jurists who regard consensus as authoritative proof never recognize it as an independent source of juristic inference alongside the Qurʾān and Sunnah. Instead, they consider *ijmāʿ* to be a subset of the Sunnah. This is because, through consensus—provided all its conditions are met—the statement of the infallible is ascertained. What serves as the basis for jurisprudential reference, reveals Allah’s rulings, and acts as a source of understanding religion and religious authoritative proof is the Sunnah of the *maʿṣūm*—that is, their words, actions, and silent approvals—not the consensus or agreement of jurists. This is because *ijmāʿ* itself never directly reveals Allah’s ruling (Jawādī Āmulī, 2021, pp. 1152-

153). However, due to the Sunnīs' disconnection from the appointed successors of the Prophet and the interpreters of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, namely the Ahl al-Bayt, after the demise of the Holy Prophet, they were compelled to seek an alternative source beyond the Book and Sunnah through which they could exercise ijtihād. This led them to resort to ijmā' as an independent source of ijtihād alongside the Qur'ān and Sunnah (Abū Jayb, 2011, p. 25).

Temporal Scope

Based on the mentioned criteria, the valid ijmā' is restricted to the period of the presence of infallible Imāms (up until 940) according to the Shī'a scholars. In contrast, ijmā' can remain valid to the present day from the Sunnī jurists' perspective.

Evidence-Based Consensus

According to the Shī'a perspective, if ijmā' is based on narrations, this consensus loses its authority, prompting us to scrutinize the evidence (Subhānī, 2008). If we consider that evidence to be authoritative, we will act upon it; if not, we refrain from taking action. In contrast, the majority of Sunnī scholars maintain that evidence-based ijmā' is indeed authoritative, with some arguing that consensus cannot be reached without supporting evidence (Ibn Hājib, 1986).



Conclusion

The study of Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, reveals a rich and complex tradition that has evolved over centuries, shaped by the diverse interpretations and methodologies of both Shī'ā and Sunnī scholars. This paper has sought to introduce Shī'ī jurisprudence by providing a comparative analysis of the sources of Islamic jurisprudence from these two major perspectives, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. By examining Islamic jurisprudential sources—the Qur'ān, Sunnah, *ijmā'* (consensus), and *'aql* (reason)—the author has explored how the Shī'ā school of thought approaches the sources of religious rulings, reflecting their unique theological and historical contexts in comparison to the Sunnī school of thought.

The Qur'ān, as the foundational text of Islam, is universally recognized by both Shī'ā and Sunnī jurists as the primary source of Islamic law. However, differences arise in the interpretation of its verses, particularly in cases where the Sunnah or reason is invoked to clarify or expand upon its rulings. The Sunnah, which includes the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), is equally central to both Sunnī and Shī'ā traditions. However, Shī'ā jurisprudence extends this authority to the infallible Imāms, considering their teachings as an extension of the Prophetic Sunnah. In contrast, Sunnī thought often includes the Prophet's companions within the scope of the Sunnah. This distinction underscores the Shī'ā emphasis on the continuity of divine guidance through the Imāmate, a concept that remains a defining feature of Shī'ā thought.

The role of *ijmā'* (consensus) and *'aql* (reason) further illustrates the methodological differences between the two schools. While Sunnī jurists often regard *ijmā'* as an independent source of law, Shī'ā scholars view it as valid only when it reflects the teachings of the infallible Imāms. Similarly, the use of reason in jurisprudence is more pronounced in Shī'ā thought, particularly within the *Uṣūlī* School, where rational proof is considered a legitimate means of deriving rulings in the absence of explicit textual evidence. In contrast, Sunnī jurisprudence tends to rely more heavily on analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) and other secondary sources, such as juristic preference (*istihsān*) and customary practice (*'urf*).

This comparative analysis underscores the importance of understanding the diverse approaches to Islamic jurisprudence, not only for academic purposes but also for fostering greater mutual understanding and respect between different Muslim communities as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Shī'ā tradition, with its emphasis on the infallibility of the Imāms and the role of reason, offers a unique perspective that differs from the Sunnī approach, which prioritizes the consensus and the analogical

application of established rulings. Both traditions, however, share a common commitment to the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the ultimate sources of divine guidance.

In conclusion, the study of Islamic jurisprudence is a dynamic and evolving field that reflects the rich intellectual heritage of Islam. By exploring the similarities and differences between Shī'a and Sunnī perspectives, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the sources of Islamic law and the ways in which they continue to shape the lives of Muslims worldwide. It is hoped that this work will encourage further research and dialogue, bridging gaps in knowledge and fostering a more inclusive appreciation of the diverse traditions within Islam.



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Topic-Based Research method in the Qur'ān
Part1: Stages and Steps

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Abstract:

Because of Three major problems we must seek a method in order to studying different topics in the Qur'ān; The First is that we do not know actually, when a question is raised in our mind, whether the Qur'ān has an answer to it or not. The Second is the lack of a method to classify and analyze the verses we have gathered anyway; the third, is that we don't know through which principles and rules we should "read" the verses? How we should analyze and classify the gathered data? How can we get the ideas, set forth there? This article is going to take a step in providing a method for topic-based research in the Qur'ān. Some of the main stages and rules that should be followed in topic-based researching the Qur'ān are: Selecting a topic, Finding the keywords & determining the Title; Preparing Identical papers of the Research; Preparing the list of the main verses; Preparing Rokouaat's list; Reciting the verse Repeatedly; writhing the verse ideas and points; Noting the raised Questions; Considering the Context; Noting the discovered orders & harmonies in the process of research and so on.

Keywords: Research Methods, Topic-Based Research, Main Verse, Context.



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Introduction

Topic-based Research or Study in the Qur'ān, in spite of its great importance and the need for it in understanding the Qur'ān, due to the obstacles often encountered, hasn't taken its original, real (actual) and deserving place among the Moslems.

The First major Problem is that we do not know actually, when a question is raised in our mind, whether the Qur'ān has an answer to it or not. Often, sometimes by others' ideas – our answer – with no Survey – is “No” .we pressure that Qur'ān is not supposed to have an answer to such a question. On the contrary, when we find some verses in answering the raised question, we don't know How to get it through them?

In most cases – with no keyword of our question – we read – or skim I should better say – in hope of finding some ideas, related to our question, but often in vain, we get tired and disappointed , since we will face a great deal of verses, each speaks about one aspect of the raised question.

For example we are going to search about the topic “Freedom in the Qur'ān”. We passionately start to scan the text, but after a while we find that no verse is directly related to the given topic. Or we may find the whole text related to the topic indirectly; in both Cases we didn't get a reasonable answer and are convinced that we should look for the answer somewhere else, we drop the search! We will find the verses, talking of theological & ethical problem, talking of the sky, land, mountains, seas etcetera, related to the topic. But we will get perplexed soon.

The Second main problem is the lack of a method to classify and analyze the verses we have gathered; we don't know where the start – point is? Which verse or (group of verses) should be analyzed at first? How should – the gathered data be classified and analyzed? How can we get the ideas, set forth there? And so on...

A, Lack of such a method can be seen in most of topic – based survey conducted by Moslems in Qur'ān.

The third main problem is that we don't know through which principles and rules we should “read” the verses? How we should analyse and classify the gathered data? How can we get the ideas, set forth there?

Usually we refer to exegetical texts or translation of the text and this avoid us from direct observation of the text that leads to indirect conceptualizing. Such a thing fails to lead us to obtain distinct answer and practical guidance as we expect. And at last we miss the interest of consulting the Qur'ān, when lacing a problem.

These three problems has caused a new – born problem in Islamic world. The researches that bear the title of “ ... in Qur'ān” , “... in Islam” , “... from Qur'ān's point of view” or “... from Islam point of view” and so on,



are not considered as an academic research – unfortunately sometimes considered funny Even some Islamic Scholars believe that the academic researches would better not bear such a titles. Obviously, such problems close the way to look for the divine guidance of Qur'ān, through which man can have a better life.

This article is going to take a – perhaps the first – step in providing a step by step method for topic-based research in the Qur'ān.¹

Stage 1: primarily steps

1. Selecting a topic, Finding the keywords & determining the Title

Determining the Title and finding the Keywords, Selecting a topic is the first and the prime stage of any research, Moreover, Choosing a distinct title for the work is of prime importance. Selecting a poor-defined topic mislead the research and may make the researcher to begin the work with a revised, distinct topic & title from the beginning.

One may say that, since we are surveying God's word and dealing with it, at any rate, makes us to get more familiar with it. That's quits true; however we should notice that researching unsystematically in the Qur'ān, prevent us to get what we were seeking. Further, we may think that the Qur'ān has no distinct idea about the selected topic. Therefore, it is reasonable to define the subject and identify the title in a quit precise phrase.

Getting familiar with subject of the topic as the title is yield by the subject we've chosen, we should be familiar enough with it in other words we should know some aspects of the subject and be able to define it exactly, that is, knowing its subject class. The more we are well-informed of the subject, we can better find Qur'ān idea of the given topic.²

The topics we select for our research are divided into two parts:

Some the (1) either form the Qur'ān itself or (2) what becomes a problem of ours.³ Sometimes, when reciting the Qur'ān, some words or phrases get our attention. For example, “Abraar”(ابرار), “Sharh e Sadr”(شرح صدر) or the Question combination “Alam Tara”(الم تر) or the “Kallaa”(كلآ), for such

1. The next part of this article –God willing- will offer a sample of Topic-based Research in the Qur'ān (Orphan in the Quran) based on the method offered in this part.

2. SeeAlso: Jalili, H. Raveshshenasi e tafasiremozoeei e Qura'n p.182; Yadollahpoor B. Mabanivaseir e tarikhi e tafsiremozoeei e Quran, p.14; Qarzavi y. simayesaberandar Quran p.17

3. Some scholars know just the second kind authentic, for example see: Sadr S.M.B. Moqaddamaat fi al tafsir al mozoeei le al Quran p. 19-21; Hakim S.M.B. Tafsir e sourehHamd, p.94; Sadr S.M.B. Ensan e mas'oulvatarikhsaz. P.8; sadr al dini, Kelidhayefahm e Quran, V.2, P.86



topics, the keywords are the topic themselves and we can easily continue in research process.

In the second case in which some problems raise out of the Quran, we should find the keywords, such a prime & vital stage. In this case we'd better consults the dictionaries, encyclopedias, or knowledgeable people of our topic. They can analyze our topic, shedding the light in dark aspect of the topic helping to find the keywords. When the chosen topic is not selected from the Qur'ān's text it should be translated in Arabic. But we should be cautious to translate it carefully, not just word for word of finding the corresponding word in dictionary. Then, we can refer to book of Al-Mu'jam al Mufahras¹ or different software to search our keywords in the Qur'ān.

2. Preparing identical papers of the Research

After you're found the right Corresponding of the keyword, at first you should prepare some papers identical in size and shape. This is because you won't become tired and perplexed during the research; it is also make you more stimulated and interested in moving for word in research, Most of the time, the tiredness, the researcher fed during the research is because of such little, not considered, tip.

It is strongly recommended to write on just one side of the papers; Otherwise, when you want to read the ideas you have gotten from the text, in writing step, you will not get tired soon and have not the necessary consisting and cohere and to write the text.

4. Preparing the list of the main verses

Main verses involve the keywords and their derivations. In order to prepare such a list, we refer the Qur'an's index (Al-Mu'djam Al-Mufahras). You'd better arrange the verses from the end of the Qur'ān to beginning, so that you start the research from shorter statements to longer and more detailed. It also helps you start approximately from Meccan verses and Suras and go to Madinian verses, so that you save the God's order in stating the ideas.

After arranging the verses in text according to End to Beginning order and then list, write the address of each verse in the Qur'ān in the second paper sheet of the research, entitled "Address of Main verses"; You'd better have a list like this:

Row Number	Verses Number – Suruh's Name – Smah's Number	The very word of used in the verse
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1. Abd al baghi M.F. Almo'jam al-Mofahras Li Alfaz al Qur'an al-karim, Tehran, Eslami pub. 1372.



5. Preparing *Rokouaat's* list

Another list which must be prepared is Rokouaat's list. The Holy Qur'an, according to the Holy prophet's teaching has been divided into 555 thematic Units.¹ Such a Miraculous division, known as Rokou'at in Qur'an from the ancient time, is so, because the Holy prophet read one of them after Surah "Hamd" in the prayers and then bow "Rokou'". This division has been marked in Qur'an's copies by the letter "ع". This letter is the border of a Rokou'. In the contemporary age this division has not been considered so important. Therefore most printed copies of the Qur'an doesn't contain this letter or there are misplaced. Rokou' is actually the context for a verse contains the keyword and should be analyzed in the way to find the idea of the given verse.²

6. Recording the number of Keyword's usage, main verses & context's (Rokou'aat) verses

Most often these numbers reveal a marvellous order. You should write down any system and arrangement you see in these numbers and statistics.

Stage 2: study of gathered verses

1. Writing the whole verse and its address

The first step in this stage is writing the whole of the main verse on the top of a paper sheet, and its row number and its address in the Qur'an (number of verse & Surah).

At the case of the long main verses, we may think that writing the phrase that includes the keyword(s) is enough and other parts of the main verse can be neglected. Yet you should notice that all parts of a verse are correlated and should be studied to find their relations.

2. Reciting the verse repeatedly

When you have written the whole verse, it is recommended to read and recite that repeatedly. You should always consider the nature of Qur'an that it is a reading book as its name introduces. We shouldn't imagine that we are doing a research on some parts of a book like other books. The Reading – based nature of the book when not deemed, the research will not lead us to Qur'an's real answers.

While reciting the verse, you should pronounce each letter and word loudly, distinctly and slowly and a way that at least you can hear yourself. It is also suggested to read with no melody and preferably rhythm, so that we can face the verse in the way it shows off. Reciting the verse provides a speculation in which you can reflect on it. While reading the verse you can

1. see the table of these units in: lessaniFesharaki M.A., Ravesh e tahqiq e mozoeidar Quran p.59; lessaniFesharaki M.A. sourehshenasi p. 228

2. for more studying about Rokouaat see: lessaniFesharaki M.A. sourehshenasi p. 88-105



hear it repeatedly and Hearing the verses is the way to reflect on them. Therefore the more the researchers accompany his survey to reciting, the better he proceed in his research.

3. Writhing the verse ideas

It is time to start to study the main verse. You should write down all ideas and pivotal points you see in the main verse and then write each on in a numbered sentence.

Tips:

* The ideas and points must be listed, each in a sentence. This method helps found later, which idea or points related to which verse or phrase. Also it helps omit the ideas & points we find not correct later. It also can be so helpful in compiling stage of the research, when we are going to construct Qur'ān's opinion of a topic. Actually we, have, are listing a great deal of idea – natured – unit and at the end we just should find the right place to put them.

* It is suggested to point out the phrase, from which you have written down an idea (directly or indirectly).

* In this part you would better just concentrate on the main verse, despite what appears to you in depending the main verse understands to other verses. However, reviewing the previous and later verses doesn't harm your way, but we suggest you let your research to go ahead naturally.

* Sometimes it seem that a part of the main verse has no relation to the topic. You should not leave then and go to next main verse. They are with no doing related to each other; otherwise they didn't come to gather in a verse. You should survey the verse to find the relation. You should write every kind of relation you find. Do not ignore them, due to the idea of irrelevant. However you'd better always consider the topic in finding the relation.

* Numbering the perceived ideas is actually a way of identifying them. Each number is identification number of the idea. For example, (1-2) means the second idea of the first main verse. In this way we don't need number the papers of the research.

* In a topic – based research , the process of writing the ideas and points you perceive never ends; when the paper specialized to a verse is finished, you can simply take another paper go ahead. As an Islamic teaching, we have learned that the ideas and points of a verse are infinite. Two people can perceive many different ideas from a verse. Therefore we do not number the papers in order not the research to be out.

* At the beginning you should try to understand the verse by yourself; when you have problem with some words or phrases, you can refer to dictionaries or ask others. If this consultation was even not helpful, you



may refer to translations or exegesis texts but be cautious not to take the ideas from them. They are not God's word; It is suggested to write at first what you understand even when you are uncertain of your understanding. To be clearer you must blend the reference when you use a translation or exegesis. This helps you not confuse what you have understand from Qur'ān and from other words.

* During the process of writing down the ideas, you should concentrate on all parts of the verse, words, phrases, letters and even the intonations and stresses of words. It's God's word so it is of great important. Each part of the word conveys ideas and points.

* Sometimes you can find no idea from the verse. Don't worry! You leave it for the next row (and next verse). How you have survey some next verses, you will be back to the left verse, usually can understand the verse better and write the some ideas you perceive.

* During the process of idea – finding, we are not supposed to endeavour hard to get more. Certainly, the more ideas we write, is better obviously, the more he explore and study the text, the more ideas we perceive. Yet, we must proceed with the research to come a reasonable conclusion we read the nonce depending on our need and to a reasonable extend.

* Usually in this step an important question raises to our mind: “Do I understand the text as it is meant”? Most of the time we stop continuing the research, fearing not to be wrong in understanding the verse. Sourly, moving in a newly discovered path has always put the walker of this path in the position of hesitation. But, mostly this path comes to a new idea or invention.

“Tadabbor” (reflection) in Qur'ān's verses is a duty for all Moslems according to the Qur'ān's call for it” (47:24) All people in the world are addressed in the mentioned verse, not just Islamic Scholars. The only prerequisite for starting a topic – based research is a pure heart, in which nothing devilish lies.

God has called people to read the Qur'ān and he save them from any mistake in the way: “والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا” (69:29) If we made a mistake in understanding the text, nothing particular would happen. By continuing the research the ideas we have perceived will be corrected by other verses, Or other researchers of the selected topic conducted by others, can remove the mistakes.

The most important thing is your endeavor to understand the Qur'ān; what God has called for. We do not try to impose our idea through Qur'ān's word. We are to listen to Qur'ān's word, to benefit from God's word, and that is the difference between “Tadabbor” and what has been known as “Tafsīr bi ray“(Qur'ān's interpretation upon one's idea)

The most important thing is that we face the Qur'ān with; Intention to understand or construe that in a particular way. This point differentiates what you're doing and what is known as (*Tafsīr bi ray*).

However, you'd better add at the beginning of your sentences, in the case of hesitation, some adverbs like "maybe", "Possibly", "seemingly" or "phrases like" it "seems that" ... or put a question mark between two Parenthesis at the end of the ideas & points.

It should be noted that, such practices make perfect and are so helpful to reach the pure ideas of Qur'ān. Like a scholar in a particular field of study, through practicing to dealing with the text, we got acquainted well enough with it to manage to understand the text not in a particular way. A scholar in his way to understand his case of study properly, does not always go in a straight path. He will certainly make some mistakes that cause him come to false conclusion. But she owe the mistakes made to find the correct answer or more in straight path. So both correct and doubtful ideas you have perceived are, in your research, of the same value.

Facing the word of God immediately has been so affirmed in Islamic teachings system and is - as Qur'ān and Hadith stress - a must for every Moslem. It is annoying for the Satan to see that a Moslems particularly a young one, tries to understand the text immediately and with no intervention of other Sources in order to benefit from its mercy and cure his injuries and diseases.

* While studying the main verse, you start from the key word on ward and survey the phrases of main verse to the end; then you come back and survey phrases locate after then before the keyword.

4. Noting the raised Questions

While studying the verse, when a question raises to your mind, to which you find immediately, write it down anywhere it raises.

* Write the raised question immediately and numbered in the list of ideas you perceived through reading the verse. Be cautious not to write them after you are finished with the ideas of the verse. Do not part them to write them on another paper. You should just record and reflect the natural process of your study of the verse; or else, you will lose some minute, while so significant points that are very decisive in forming the ideas you are seeking. Note that you are researching God's word, not man's. So it definitely worth your while and attention.

* A question raised equals a point gained, so when you could just a question, while studying a verse, do honor to it.

* You may ask from the connection between each part of a verse, their connection with each other and their connection with the topic of your research. Through questioning you will gain some signification decisive



points to your topic. The holy Qur'ān itself has emphasized on the question as a way to understand its (actually God's) word.

* We are not supposed to know the answer to all questions raised in the process of the research. The sole significant is that we shouldn't ignore them. You should exactly write them. Surly During the research we will face the verses involving phrases that answer your questions. Be cautious not to re-direct your research way to a way leading to your question's answers. Yet, when you already have an answer in your mind, note it.

* During the research, when you final the answer to a raised question, addressing the question, write the answer.

5. Considering the Context

To study the major verse more thoroughly, and receive more points and ideas, we must consider the verses lie before and after the major verse, known as context. In order to do that, you should survey first there verses after main verse and then verses before it to make some supplementary and explanatory notes of the topic and also record the raised question from them.

You should number these ideas, following the number ideas and points perceived from the main verse.

Important notes:

Studying a verse, taking account of its context, lies on the principal that all verses of the context (*siaagh*) are co-related and connected; the main verse is the central verse of the context. Therefore to have a closer sight of the main verse and to confirm, support of developed concepts ideas we have perceived you should study the context, considering the *siaagh* (context).

* In principle, to a better understanding of an object, we must try to know the environment enveloped it. If not, our understanding is probably incomplete; As an instance, I a person, if we acquire some information about his family, friends, job, life... and everything con learns him, we will know him more accurate and better. Everything we see in the word has a relation to environment around it. Obviously, god's word like his creatures does not violate this rule. So, the *siaagh* can be weighed as environment of the verse.

* The numinous units (Qur'ānic Rokuaat) can be considered as the context for a verse. Some scholars believe that these units matches the occasions the revelation has been sent down; If so, the verses of a unit are connected so much as verses of a Sura & therefor you can consider a thematic unit (Roku) as a Sura. Consequently the best boundary for the context of a verse is the Roku (thematic unit) involves the verse dividing the long or relatively long Suras in to thematic parts, the prophet has provided us the best context for studying verses.

Yet, when you're not convinced to stop your study of the context according to thematic units, you can go ahead as far as you'd like, even you can study the Surah all as the context of your major verse. End examine its relation with other verses, and its Roku's relation with other Rokuaat of the Sura , since all verses and thematic units of a Sura are correlated and aim have to the same goal.

* You don't need to write all verses of the context on the paper like main verse, but you should point to verses & phrases and words from which you have drew the concepts. Sometime, you get some concepts not from a particular verse, phrase or word, but from a group of verses; here, you should point to the number of that verse or those verses.

* To study the context of a verses it is not needful to study all verses so close and accurate as the main verse and need just to investigate and question the relation between the verses of context with keyword, major verse and topic of the research and record whatever comes into you mind, including concepts, ideas and questions.

The concepts you perceive from the context, but still appear irrelevant to the topic, must be recorded. But be cautions not to stop at them. Pass them over somehow superficially; otherwise you will lose your way of research.

Most of these irrelevant – like concepts are actually relevant. This relevancy will be emerged more and more, when you study more verses and Rokuaat; therefore they must not be ignored. Qur'an's expression style acts so that it usually set forth some concepts near beside others so that some are prerequisite for others. As an instance, the concept “صلاة”, while you research it topic – basely in the Qur'an, has been set forth, beside the concepts *صبر* , *زكاة* , ... We must pay a deserving attention to these connections.

You should record all these relations and conjunctions. The Qur'an declare these apparently inconsistent concepts to get our mind acquainted with their syntagmatic relation and then inform us of their relevancy. You should be concerned enough of the themes and problems, set forth throughout the context of your main verse, seeking their relation - even with a question – to the keyword and the topic, but not as much and deep as the main verse. When a topic attract your attention, while studying a verse, get it down as a topic worthy of a new research, helpful for the research at hand for exam.

* while, you are studying the context of a major verse do not endear or to bring out forcefully some concepts, but you should just study it normally , not so far to put yourself in trouble Even when no idea crême to your mind, go forth to study next main verses and their contexts.



* You would better part your papers and mark from where starts the perceived concepts from the verses before the major verse in the *siaagh* (context) or those after it, you write “Concepts of previous verses” or “Concepts of next verses”.

* The reason why you should study the previous verses of the main verse, after the next verses, lies on the base that we here intend to study the verses not just read them. In the case of reading, no matter from there you start, beginning to end or vice versa. An example may clarify what we mean:

When you start to study – not just read – an essay or a book – in a short time – it is reasonable to scan it first and specify key points, in a way: such as highlighting or underlining them – to attract our attention much more. Seeing the marked words or phrases get busy our mind little by little with themselves. So that we get interested to know even more about them. Consequently, we will follow the text to see what has been set forth, then to learn even more, we return back to the materials expressed before to cover what we lack.

While reading the information expressed after the key ideas, we are seeking an explanation, or condition or consequences the key ideas may carve. Since logically they come after the expressed materials: In this case we learn more about the ideas set forth.

Finding the keywords in the Qur'ān's text, we are somehow scanning the whole text to mark key ideas of our topic. Then in order to learn more about them, we follow the text after them (Since logically, the explanation of a point comes after it in a text). Then we come back and study the verses before the marked ideas to understand the grand in which the idea has been declared.

Sometimes the key ideas are the beginning of the text; so we do not need to refer to previous materials (though in the stretched texts it may help in spite). Sometimes the key ideas are at the end of the text, then obviously we just should study the previous concepts.

Here, also, sometimes the major verse lies at the beginning or end of the *siaagh*. It means it is at the beginning or end of a paragraph. In this case you should just study the next or previous part of the main verse.

Studying a *siaagh* in the way mentioned above will provide us with the way, through which we can come to more concepts and ideas from the verses. If not, and study the *siaagh* from beginning to the end, we may lose some key ideas of the topic. In this case we may consider the location of keyword and main verse in the structure of a *siaagh* not enough. We don't care what has come before the key word, and what after, & why it is so. Yes, you should note that if you just are going to read the Qur'ān, it doesn't

matter from where you start your reading. But in the case of study & research, it is quite decisive.

* Before getting started to study the *Siaagh* of a major verse, you are recommended to recite it distinctly & plainly for few times, in a way that you hear yourself, few times. To do so, recite first the each verse, located after the major verse, then study it, and others go to near verse, to the end of *siaagh* then start with the verse located before the major verse and recite it, then study it and then more back ward in a singular way to the beginning of the *siaagh*. When finished, it is so deserving to recite the whole *siaagh* from beginning to end.

* note the number of verses, studied with the major verse at the end of the paper in a diagram; for example, if you studied 2 verses after and 4 verses before the major verse, you write: “6 verses” 2 after and 4 before the major verse. It helps know how many verses we have studied at each row. If you studies no verse, but the major verse in a *siaagh*, note it. It is necessary to know that you have studied no verse in the context of the major verse.

* You can also prepare a copy of all the *siaagh's* you're going to study, each in a paper or a cart to study them more easily and accurately this work brings to you more concentration when you are studying the *siaagh*, since you do not need more to refer to the original book each time. You already have those parts you need for your study. This papers or carts are somehow the portrait of the *siaaghs*. You'd better underline the major verse so that you can so easily its location in the *siaagh*, between other verses of the *siaagh*.

6. Noting the discovered orders & harmonies in the process of research, especially

When you are studying the major verses& their *siaagh's*, you should record accurately all orders or harmonies you discover between the verses. It will be so helpful later, in the process of the research and provides you with some helpful guidance. You should appreciate them, not consider them unimportant and helpless the orders or harmonies you find may be from every aspect. Do not worry about them. You should just not ignore them. Here we bring, as sample, some aspects of orders or harmonies. But they don't stop here; you may find some other kinds of orders of harmonies.

A) Last part of a verse

for example: last part of all verses of this *siaagh* is “ون”, or all major verses of the research, in different Suras, are brought to their last part with the some alphabet, or in each *siaagh* of the research, one verse is brought to its last part with “ون”, the other verses with “ين” and soon.

B) Verses numbers and number of verses



for example: major verse's numbers in this *siaagh* and the previous one are identical; major verse's number in this research are even & uneven every other one; the number of verses of all studied *siaaghs* is uneven; the first *siaagh* contains 9 verses, the second *siaagh* 7 and the third 5 ; last verses number of the first *siaagh* is 23 and for the second *siaagh* is 46, and soon.

C) Number of verse's phrases

for example: Generally speaking, the major verse of this research contain 3 phrases; for the first major verse, the first and last phrase are long and the Middle phrase is short, while this is vice versa about the second major verse and soon.

D) Key word's location in major verse

for example: In a large number of verses, the keyword lies in the first part of the verse; in the first row the keyword is the first word of the major verse, while in the last row, the keyword is the last word of the major verse, and soon.

E) Major verse's location in *siaagh*;

for example: In the first row, the major verse located in the beginning of *siaagh*, in the fifth row, the major verse lies in the Middle of *siaagh*, and in the ninth row, it lies at the end of the *siaagh*.

F) Location of the *siaagh* in Sura;

For example: all of the *Siaagh's* locate at the last part of the Surah; The first, second and third *siaaghs* locate at the end of surah and forth, fifth and sixth *siaaghs* lie at the beginning of Sura and soon.

G) Location of Suras in the Qur'an

for example: this topic has been dealt with in the Suras all located at the end of Qur'an, this topic is talked of at the Suras located of the beginning and the end of the Qur'an, this topic is considered just in Suras begin with Moghatta'ah letters, and soon.

H) Minor and marginal themes of *siaaghs*

for example: in all *siaaghs* of the main verses of the topic, is dealt with the topic Hereafter (آخرة); this topic is considered in the first *siaagh*, before the main verse; in the second *siaagh*, after the main verse and in the third *siaagh* also before the main verse and so on.

As mentioned above, you are not restricted to the given aspect. Just record every order or harmony you find between parts of the text. They will be surely so helpful in the process of moving in the direction of your research.



7. Supplementary points

A) Keep in mind the concepts & questions

You should try to keep in mind the perceived ideas and the raised question during the process of the research, so that you can move easily find the relation between the perceived concepts or even connect them in order to form an idea about the selected topic. You also can write the address of a question at the end of its answer with no difficulty. When you have in mind the question of the answer you already have.

You will lose some subtle relations between the perceived ideas if you forget the concepts and questions you have already acquired, or sometimes you have at hand the answer to a raised question, but you are not aware of it.

B) Learn the main verses by heart

You are suggested to learn the major verses of your research by heart, through of the persistent and continuous reciting during the research. In this way you get more acquainted with the verses and can communicate with them much better. Even learning the *siaaghs* of each main verse by heart can aid you to do better the research.

C) Keep your drafts

Do not reform your notes and drafts of the research. Keep them all in their original order. Once you are going to present your findings in a form such as article, book, or in a conference of in form of a poem, you should form your notes and draft of your research, not change them.

This can help you know the precise ideas and questions you have found. You'd better even not tear the papers with false notes. You should just explain near them – preferably with a red pen – that they are wrong.

8. Reviewing the perceived ideas

Once you are finished with the study of the main verses and their *siaaghs*, you should review all concepts you have perceived from the verses. This job may be done also by someone else. Here are some tips deserving of attention.

A) Add new ideas: sometimes, during the reviewing of concepts a new idea or concept comes to you mind, take it soon at the end of the perceived idea's list.

B) Complement the deformed concepts

Sometimes, some of concepts you have perceived are of deficiency. You should complement them by adding a supplement; such as a condition, exception, appendix, and soon.

C) Reviewing the writing Marks:

As we said before, you should put a mark at the end of a sentence in the process of finding concepts, compatible to our certainly of the truth a



falseness of it. In this step, you should review these marks too. You may have put a wrong mark at the end of a sentence. Or you may have changed your idea their trash or falseness, concept during the process from certainly point of view and what to modify its mark.

D) Part true ideas from false ones.

In this step, you should also divide the concepts; you definitely know to be wrong from the true ones. Just do not omit them from your notes, list or draft. Mark them preferably with a red pen to be outstanding from true ones.

E) Connect the related ideas:

You should connect the ideas related somehow to each other in the process of reviewing. For example one is explanation or supplement for another concept. Here you should note the address of each at the end of other one. As an instance, if the second concept of the third row (2-3) was related to the fifth concert of the 4th row (5-4), write the address of each at the end of the other one.

F) Connecting the answers & questions

You may find some concepts during the process of research, which are actually the answer to questions raised before. Connect then with than address like the related ideas in the previous point.

9. Referring to exegetical texts

This is the last word you should do in finding concepts from the Qur'ān. As we have insisted before, the researcher of the Qur'ān, while studying the verses should not consult the exegesis or translations of them as far as he/she can go on without them. How every when the study of them has come to end, it is recommended to refer to these texts to compare your finding to theirs. This work will help you become confident of your finding, and see what you have found.

More important tips:

* Referring to exegesis & translations should be in the same order as you have moved through the list of your main verses & their *siaaghs*, except for one thing: you move from the end of main verses List to its beginning. It means from beginning of the Qur'ān of its end. Most of the times the exegeses interpret the Qur'ān's verses from beginning to its end (recitation order *Tartib-e-Tilaavat*)

* Write the ideas you have found in exegesis & translations, in you papers of concepts, following them.

* Write the exact address of materials you quote from exegesis; so that they are not mixed with your concepts.

At the end, we should make it clear that referring to exegetical texts is not actually a stage in this research method.



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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 Kurasani, 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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