

## **An Analysis of the Opinions of Amina Inloes about Blaming the Women in *Nahj al-balāgha***

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(Received: February 15, 2020 ; Revised: May 30, 2020 ; Accepted: June 11, 2020)

### **Abstract**

One of the challenging issues that has been frequently studied is the way Imām 'Alī (a) addresses women in *Nahj al-balāgha*. Amina Inloes, the contemporary American researcher of Islam compares these statements with the Qur'ānic discourse and early Shī'a *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*. She believes that these statements are in conflict with the significations of the Qur'ān and the early books in terms of chain of transmission and content. From her viewpoint, these statements have entered the Muslim books after the Translation Movement under the influence of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle. She deems that as the general content of *Nahj al-balāgha* contradicts those cases, it can be concluded that those concepts are the cultural-religious reflections of Sayyid Raḍī's era that have been attributed to Imām 'Alī (a) after his demise. Although this is an interesting opinion, it suffers from some shortcomings such as limiting its sources to *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, ignoring other historical and biographical books, and ignoring to explain the process of the entrance of these statements to Shī'a texts and the way they turned into the dominant paradigm.

### **Keywords**

Alī b. Abīṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, Amina Inloes, Women, Mentally imperfect.

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## Introduction

During the history of Islam, there have existed many doubts about women's character, and since the Infallibles (a) have held an authoritative position with regard to the knowledge of the beliefs, their words have been highly taken into consideration in this regard. However, the adoption of a superficial stance to this issue without any historical analysis and document/content examination not only has resulted in degrading the women, but also has damaged the reputation of Islam. One of the sources important in this discussion is *Nahj al-balāgha*, which at the first glance and without comparison with the conduct of Imām 'Alī (a) seems to degrade women's character. Therefore, many have tried to figure out the truth in this discussion. One of these scholars is Amina Inloes who uses a negative approach to give in a different interpretation of these sentences. Making a comparison between *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* – i.e. the early Shī'a book from the 1<sup>st</sup> century LH that is void of any misogynist attitudes – and *Nahj al-balāgha*, she comes to believe that these thoughts are a result of the cultural and religious atmosphere of the 4<sup>th</sup> century LH and a reflection of Aristotle's thoughts transferred during the Translation Movement. The study at hand is an effort to analyze and complete her opinions.

The first part of this article is descriptive and explains the viewpoint of Inloes, while the second part is analytical.

Many articles have been written about the status of women in *Nahj al-balāgha*. Adopting a persuasive method and considering the content of this book as pure, they have mostly tried to justify its statements. Some articles such as "A reflection about *Nahj al-balāgha* narrations on blaming women" by Fathīyya Fattāhī Zāda, Muḥammad Riḍā Rasūlī, and Ilāha Ḥātāmī Rād believe in the non-authenticity of some narrations. The article "An extra-religious analysis of the blaming reports of women in *Nahj al-balāgha*" by Nigār Dhīlābī and Marḍīyya Muḥaṣṣiṣ proves that these narrations lack authoritative chains of transmission and states that the content of these narrations is congruent with a multitude of similar propositions in the literary texts of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century LH onward, and that this degrading viewpoint to women can be understood in the light of the cultural requirements of that era.

A review of literature indicated that there has been no study on the description and analysis of Inloes' stance to blaming women in *Nahj al-balāgha*. Therefore, confirming her viewpoint, this article analyzes and completes her opinions about blaming women in *Nahj al-balāgha*.

## Explanation of Inloes' theory about women's degradation in *Nahj al-balāgha*

From the viewpoint of Inloes, one of the most controversial Shī'a texts is the

80<sup>th</sup> sermon of *Nahj al-balāgha* that has been given by Imām ‘Alī (a) after the Battle of the Camel: “O people! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence, it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Inloes challenges the statements about women in three ways.

- A) **Traditional approach:** based on alternative resources and the examination of the chains of transmission of narrations;
- B) **Criticism of texts:** proving that these beliefs have originated from Aristotle but have been attributed to Imām ‘Alī (a).
- C) Comparing the two books of *Nahj al-balāgha* and Sulaym b. Qays as the early Shī‘a texts and the examination of the way women have been addressed in these two books (Inloes, 2015: 327).

He believes that if the contents of these two books are significantly different, the content of *Nahj al-balāgha* can reflect a set of cultural-religious norms that were attributed to Imām ‘Alī (a) after his martyrdom.

According to Inloes, the opinion of some who take this sermon to be personal and its target to be ‘Āyisha is not true, because it is impossible that such words are articulated by Imām ‘Alī (a) as an infallible person, the criterion of justice, and the exemplar of an ideal spouse. These statements contradict on the one hand with the equality of the man and the woman suggested in the Qur’ān and on the other hand with the commonly accepted traditions and the everyday experience of people. From the viewpoint of Inloes, the logical and rational approach to evaluate the content of *Nahj al-balāgha* is to criticize all of it like other books. To this end, we should compare *Nahj al-balāgha* with other sources that entail the same content, and assess this content against the qur’ānic content (Ibid., 329).

### **Scientists’ opinions about the 80<sup>th</sup> sermon of *Nahj al-balāgha***

Inloes believes that the scientists’ viewpoints to this sermon can be divided into different categories:

- A) Taking the statements as real: people such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh believe that women’s mental capacity is fulfilled in their

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1. it should be noted that in Shī‘a tradition, the validity of the content of *Nahj al-balāgha* is rarely challenged.

responsibilities such as upbringing the children and doing household chores. Inloes believes that this stance reveals that such thoughts are not limited to the Shī'a.

- B) Taking the sermon as personal: some believe that the addressee of this sermon is 'Āyisha who provoked the Battle of the Camel as the main internal war with the highest rate of casualties. This view originates from Ibn abī al-Ḥadīd, and the author of *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ* has adopted this stance.

Inloes rejects this theory due to the following reasons.

1. There is a big temporal gap between *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ* author's era and the sermon issuance time.
  2. It is not acceptable to attribute a similar announcement to a minority group (i.e. the character of 'Āyisha cannot be attributed to all women)
  3. Instead of criticizing her due to her role as the leader of a rebellion, she is attacked because of her gender. The main criticism against 'Āyisha is ignoring the qur'ānic verse that orders women to stay at home, although this verse limits its addressees to the wives of the prophet. However, women such as Zaynab bint 'Alī are praised because of their presence in the battlefield.
  4. In the Battle of the Camel, tens of thousands of men joined forces with 'Āyisha and ignored the qur'ānic verses on avoiding fitna and internal war, but no criticism is made to them.
- A) The invalidity of the sermon due to its disagreement with the qur'ānic treatment of the women: 'Allāma Faḍl allāh and some others have adopted this viewpoint.
- B) Some say that this sermon is to damage the reputation of Lady Fāṭima (s) to weaken her claim for Fadak. This theory is also rejected, because this sermon refers to the lesser right of the women in inheritance and testimony, which both happened in the Fadak case.
- C) The disagreement of the sermon with the qur'ānic text and narrations that prove the rationality of women: Some such as Mihrīzī believe that (even young) women of that era provided consultation to their husbands. The foregoing statements in this sermon disagree with the image of Imām 'Alī (a) as a person who was far ahead of his time and as the husband of a woman and the father of girls who were outstanding in their era. Therefore, some scholars take this sermon as disagreeing with the qur'ānic verses and the historical activities of the female members of Ahl al-Bayt (a) (ibid., 332).

### **The texts that confirm the sermon**

Inloes has referred to some sources with similar statements, as follows.

1. **Kāfi**: A similar sentence in this book reads: Avoid women's vices, beware of their strangers, and do not obey their good deeds so that they do not expect you to follow them in their bad deeds.

In her view, although this narrations does not directly confirm the intellectual imperfection of women, but it is invalid because it is a loose narration.

2. **Amālī** and **al-'Ikhtisās**: these two sources entail content that is in part similar to the related content of *Kāfi*, but it is not related to the Battle of the Camel at all, has been issued in a different situation, and disagrees with the belief that the sermon in *Nahj al-balāgha* is about 'Āyisha. In this narration, Imām 'Alī (a) gives in ethical recommendations and says: "Beware of the women's badness and protect goodness among them; if they tried to promote the good among you, disobey them so they do not force upon you the satanic urges."

From the viewpoint of Inloes, distinguishing men from women makes the latter as marked creatures and makes men outstanding. This discourse style disagrees with the qur'ānic verses that mention the male and female believers beside each other. Moreover, similar to *Kāfi*'s narration, this narrations is also a loose one.

On the other hand, the existence of abū Jārūd and Muḥammad b. Sanān – two famous extremists – in the chains of transmission casts doubts on the authenticity of the narrations. Therefore, the content of these narrations does not corroborate this sermon (ibid., 333-336).

3. **Quwwat al-Qulūb**: from Inloes' viewpoint, *Quwwat al-Qulūb* is full of misogynist narrations. For example, it takes women and children as equal to the crazy people. It is suggested in this book that Luqmān said: "O' my son! Beware of the devilish women, because they make you old before you become old [physically] and beware of the women's badness, because they do not call to goodness." Therefore, she believes that this book cannot be used to approve the content of the sermon, it lack chains of transmission, and it is written six centuries after Imām 'Alī (a) and so, it cannot confirm the existence of the sermon in the early sources of Islam.
4. **Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ**: the aforementioned criticisms such as the temporal gap between the time the book is written and Imām 'Alī's (a) era are true for this book, too.
5. **Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī**: It is mentioned in this book that when the Prophet (s) went to prayer site for the Fiṭr prayer and faced women, he told them: "O' women! Pay charity, because I saw that many of the residents of

the Hell are women.” In response to their question on the reason for this, he said: “You repeatedly curse and you are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone lower than you in intelligence...” They asked: “What defect exists in our reason and faith?” He said: “Is the testimony of a woman equal to the testimony of a man? Can a woman say prayers or go on fasting during her menstruation period? These are the imperfections in her faith.” (ibid., 354).

According to Inloes, the issuance of this tradition from the Prophet (s) in a different situation strengthens the possibility of the accuracy of the sermon, but it brings about a new problem and is a totally novel source for the presentation of these beliefs that contradicts with the previous conditions of the sermon issuance. In addition, this book is a non-Shī‘a source (ibid., 354).

### **The similarity of Imām ‘Alī’s (a) statements with those of Aristotle**

In her studies, Inloes refers to the great similarity that exists between Aristotle’s statements and those of this sermon, as if these statements would be accepted fully if presented in the name of Imām ‘Alī (a). She believes that the idea that women are imperfect men and faulty originates from the ancient Greece, because from the viewpoint of Aristotle, women suffer from physiological and intellectual shortcomings. In his opinion, women are closer to the animals, and because men are wiser than women, they dominate them. Moreover, he believes that the levels of self-control, valor, and justness are not the same for men and women: one of them has the valor to order and the other has the valor to submit. This statement of Aristotle reminds us of part of Imām ‘Alī’s (a) words in *Nahj al-balāgha* that says valor is a virtue for men and a shortcoming for women, or that the beauty of women is in their face and the beauty of men is in their speech.

From the viewpoint of Inloes, since the ancient Greek thoughts had a significant effect on the developments that occurred in the first few centuries after Hegira, it is likely that some people have attributed the ancient Greek beliefs to the Prophet (s) and Imām ‘Alī (a). This gets more plausible when it is noted that the cultural limitations posed onto women in Byzantine empire and Mesopotamia, that were absent from the Muslim society during the lifetime of the Prophet (s), were inserted to the traditional Islamic culture. This is a fact that is endorsed by *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*. Therefore, these concepts have been effective on Shī‘a thoughts (ibid., 344).

### **The examination of menstruation and viciousness in women**

Inloes believes that the way menstruation is understood in the Shī‘a and Sunnī narrations is complex. There are some issues in this regard, including what follows.

1. Women do not fast fewer days; rather, they compensate the days that have gone without fasting during the other days of the year.

2. Is it appropriate to blame women because of a natural issue?

Of course, the ancient views to menstruation have influenced Muslims thoughts in this regard, too.

In other parts of *Nahj al-balāgha*, Imām ‘Alī (a) introduces women as vicious and devilish. According to Inloes, however, the depiction of the woman as a devil is not seen in the *Qur’ān*. Rather, the illustration of the woman as a devil is among the Judaist, Christian, and Sunni interpretations of Eve. This originates from the ancient times but is still found in the modern literature.

Therefore, it seems that Imām ‘Alī (a) has not articulated these thoughts, and these statements are in conflict with his the way he treated Lady Fāṭima (a), which was full of empathy and familial agreement (Inloes, 2015: 348).

### **The examination of the Nawāqīṣ al-Uqūl sermon as a sermon with three distinctive parts**

Inloes believes that this sermon should not be viewed as a whole and no in/validity decree should be issued on it as a whole. Since parts of this sermon are found in other sources, this sermon might be a combination of three different sections. Due to the different styles of the three sections, this view is noteworthy. She believes that this sermon is consisted of the following parts.

A) Eloquent sentence: O people! Women are deficient in Faith, shares, and intelligence.

B) Interpretation of the statement: As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men.

C) Advice: Beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good.

From the viewpoint of Inloes, it is only the first part that is eloquent and robust, which has likely made Sharīf Raḍī to select it and so, attribute some ideas to Imām ‘Alī (a) that belong to ancient times, because the attribution of the wise people to the Prophet (s) and the Infallible Imām (a) is a famous way to forge traditions.

However, the second part lacks the eloquence of the first sentence and might have been added to the narration. This part not only differs from the previous part in eloquence, but also is logically challenging and irrational.

The sermon ends in the third (advice) part. It is possible that these statements are made of different parts that have been attributed to different people in different eras. This will help us understand that these words have not been about Āyisha in the Battle of the Camel, or even have not been articulated by Imām ‘Alī (a) (ibid., 352).

### **Grouping women with animals**

(Beasts are concerned with their bellies. Carnivores are concerned with assaulting others. Women are concerned with the adornments of this ignoble life and the creation of mischief herein).

In Inloes’ opinion, instead of criticizing people’s gender, their actions should be criticized. It is very unacceptable to say that a woman goes to war because of adornments, while ‘Āyisha has spent a simple, modest life as the wife of the Prophet (s), and so, it is unlikely that these words address her. The classification of women along with animals and carnivores is against the Qur’ānic text and the classic definition of the talking human (ibid., 354).

Then, Inloes uses books such as Kulaynī’s *Kāfi* and Ḥarrānī’s *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl* and says: There is a similar narration in *Kāfi* that verifies this text, in which the Prophet (s) says: “Animals worry about their belly [food], women worry about men, and the believers in accord are brave and cautious ...”

This narration has a loose chain of transmission and is thematically similar to the Judaist beliefs, and so is invalid. It is narrated in *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl*: Women are eager about this world and make fitna in it.

This narration suffers from several problems. First, it does not refer to the Battle of the Camel at all. Second, it does not have any chain of transmission. Therefore, none of the two foregoing sources can verify the aforementioned sermon in *Nahj al-balāgha* (ibid., 347).

### **Women and seclusion**

With regard to the seclusion of women, it is written in Imām ‘Alī’s (a) letter to his son, Imām Ḥasan (a): “Do not seek the advice of women, their verdicts are often immature and incorrect and their determinations are not firm. You must guard and defend them and act as a shelter to protect them from impious and injurious surroundings and infamous sights....”

For Inloes, this opinion that women are mentally weak and should not deal with issues beyond themselves is against the image that exists about Khadīja – the Prophet’s (s) wife – and other female members of Ahl al-Bayt who are motivated to learn.

The text of this narration is mentioned in *Kāfi* with a loose chain of transmission and in *Man lā Yaḥḍuruḥu al-Faqīhi* without citing the source.

From the viewpoint of Inloes, secluding women and hiding them from the



society is a masculine norm based on an Aristotelian approach, which disagrees with the qur'ānic attitude that takes the woman as responsible for her chastity, because in this perspective, the man forces her to chastity and so, her own role and agency is removed.

It is noted that the Qur'ān considers the seclusion of women as the punishment of unlawful behavior rather than a norm. It is interesting that the aforementioned narration mostly emphasizes ḥijāb – in the interests of the women – notwithstanding the fact that this statement attributed to Imām 'Alī (a) represents the cultural norms at the heart of the Islamic empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century LH when women were not expected to be present in the public domain. Such a text is accepted because it agrees with the presumptions of what is Islamic; it is then used to strengthen this belief that the seclusion of women is Islamic (ibid., 351).

**An illustration of women in *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*:** In order to assess the content of *Nahj al-balāgha*, Inloes uses *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* as an early Shī'a book that reflects the pre-Abbasid social customs and worldview.

**A brief introduction to *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*:** This book involves narrations attributed to 'Alī (a) or ones that are about him. These are transmitted by one of his followers, Sulaym. Although there are doubts about its content, its discussion of women is clearly different from the narrations of *Nahj al-balāgha* and some other narrations, and presents traditions similar to those of the Prophet's (s) era. This book helps know the Shī'a's broad attitude to gender roles. In Inloes' opinion, one of the main features of the book in its illustration of women is its equal treatment of men and women, and both genders are addressed in important issues. In one occasion, it narrates that Imām Ḥusayn (a) wants men and women to oppose Mu'āwīya ....No narration in this book suggests that women should stay at home or should be illiterate.

Lady Fāṭima and 'Āyisha attend the funeral, while Umm Ayman debates with Abū bakr in the mosque. Lady Fāṭima is present in Mubāhila event, and investigations have proved that maternal lineage was more important during the Prophet's (s) era. Lady Fāṭima elegantly debates with Abū bakr and 'Umar about Fadak. The important point in this book is that it puts emphasis on two men – i.e. Ṭalḥa and Zubayr as motivators of 'Āyisha – in the Battle of the Camel, removes the gender aspect in accusing her, and deems the male actors in this incident to be liable, too. This part makes it clear that the order to women to stay at home only regards the wives of the Prophet (s), not all women. In this book, women are not criticized as mentally imperfect or because of their menstruation, and the description of the residents of the Hell is gender-free. The clothes of Imām 'Alī (a) is

described as tainted with flour, because he grinded grains at home. Therefore, misogyny is attributed in this book to the opponents of Imām ‘Alī (a) rather than him. Consequently, the content of this book enhances the idea that misogynist narrations are the product of later eras (ibid., 349).

### **The evaluation of Inloes’ opinions**

Although Inloes has tried to examine the closest work to that historical era in the Shī‘a sphere and believes that studying it familiarizes us with the Prophet’s (s) era, it seems that limiting her investigations to a doubted source is insufficient and it is necessary to complete her work through the examination of other sources such as *Bihār al-Anwār*, *Ālām al-Nisā’ al-Mumināt*, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, etc. This way, the depiction of that era conditions will be more accurate and the practical conduct of the Infallibles (a) in their treatment of the women will be better explained. For instance, the presence of the women in swearing allegiance to the Prophet (s), immigration to Ethiopia and Medina that was sometimes done alone and with great difficulty – such as the case of Umm Hishām – (Ḥasūn, 1991: 262), presence behind the front lines and treating the wounded (Ṭabarī, 1983, vol. 3: 178), and even presence in the middle of the battles, saving the life of the Prophet (s), self-praises before battle by women such as Umm ‘Ammāra who defended the Prophet (s) in Uḥūd, Khaybar, and Ḥunayn battles (Mjliṣī, 1989, vol. 20: 53; Wāqidi, 2003, vol. 1: 96), along with the women’s social and political presence during the time of Imām ‘Alī (a) and their presence in battles, their lecturing, and their self-praises before battles to motivate the men, the significant role of women such as Umm Salama and Laylā Ghaffārīyya in talking to ‘Āyisha in the Battle of the Camel (Ḥasūn, 1991: 651) are all examples that disagree with the foregoing sermon of *Nahj al-balāgha*, as they were against ‘Āyisha, and their lecturing – especially in front of male warriors – is incongruent with mental imperfection. The acceptance of women’s testimony by the Prophet (s) meant accepting their authority in issues whose decrees needed witness and supervisor. There are 2210 traditions transmitted from ‘Āyisha, out of which 300 traditions have been accepted after the strict filtering by Muslim and Bukhārī (Aḥmad, 1992: 77). ‘Āyisha and Ḥafṣa had a high status in the society and after the death of their fathers supervised the women’s issues. The fact that some people followed ‘Āyisha shows the difference between her society and that of the Abbasid era in which even talking about women’s participation in politics was unimaginable (ibid.).

Therefore, women’s enjoyment of sociopolitical and material rights during the time of the noble Prophet (s) and Imāms (a) disagrees with the content of the foregoing sermon, and the examination of the practical

conduct of the Infallibles (a) indicates that these words could not have been issued by them.

### **The process of the misogynist language entry to the Shī‘a sources and *Nahj al-balāgha* has not been examined**

Inloes believes that these words do not belong to Imām ‘Alī (a) and rather originate from Aristotle. However, she does not point out how these sentences have been transferred and changed into an accepted paradigm.

Although the identification of this process needs research and to some extent conjecturing, a precise exploration and investigation of the status of women in different eras might help us put the pieces of this puzzle together.

### **The woman status in the Ignorance Days**

The qur’ānic verses illustrate the pitiful conditions of the women before Islam: burying the baby girls alive was common among many Arabs (Ālūsī, 2009, vol. 3: 43; Qurṭubī, 1938, vol. 3: 79).

The historical records also testify the women’s deprivation from inheritance, the existence of various types of compulsory marriages, and men’s unlimited polygamy. In addition, a look at the common proverbs of that era that consider women as snakes, deem their thoughts as weak, and introduce men who consult women as unwise (which was attributed to the Prophet (s) later) (Jawād ‘Alī, 1972, vol. 4: 618) reveal the opinions about women during the Ignorance Days.

### **The advent of Islam and the efforts of the Prophet (s) to improve women’s status**

An exploration of the history indicates that the Prophet (s) tried to bring about a fundamental evolution in the culture of his society, set the grounds for the growth and elevation of women, and remove the degrading view to them. He introduced the man and the woman as equal in their creation and opposed beating women. He deemed that with regard to learning, the women had equal rights to men (Wāqidī, 2003, vol. 2: 613; Ṭabrisī, 1988, vol. 1: 74; Karājikī, 1990, vol. 2: 107). The emphasis of the Prophet of Allāh (s) on the presence of the women in the mosque as the learning site of that era (‘Abd al-Razzāq Ṣaṅānī, 2010, vol. 3: 146), consulting with Umm Salama in the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya (Wāqidī, 2003, vol. 2: 613), emphasizing the double divine reward for teaching the girls (Bukhārī, 1990, vol. 6: 120), considering women as loveable, and the pioneering role of women in the promotion of knowledge (Ibn Sād, 1997, vol. 8: 31) all show the Prophet’s (s) efforts to help women evolve and be present in the various spheres of the society.

### **The role of ‘Umar b. Khaṭṭāb in downgrading the women**

The caliphs’ policy toward the women disagreed with the viewpoints of the Qur’ān and the Prophet (s). When the second caliph rose to power, he banned writing Islamic traditions to prevent the spread of the Prophet’s (s) sunna. Contrary to the Prophet’s (s) sunna, he banned women’s learning and their presence in religious congregations (Jāfar Nīyā, 2010: 70).

He was stern toward women, considered them as a vulnerability, and recommended men to hide their wives at home and do not talk affectionately with them, deemed them corruptible like the meat on the desert (Ibn Qutayba, 1998, vol. 4: 77; Ghazzālī, 1988: 268), and used to beat women (Ibn Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, 1992, vol. 4: 364; Ibn Sād, 1997, vol. 8: 165). Despite the emphasis put by the Prophet (s) on the presence of women in the mosques and Friday prayers, ‘Umar disliked this stance and prevented his wife from attending suchlike situations (Ḥajar ‘Asqalānī, 1992, vol. 4: 364). This way, after the demise of the Prophet (s), the tendency to women’s social presence faded (Jāfar Nīyā, 2010: 82). Māwirdī writes: Once a women composed a poem to describe women: “Women are fragrant plants and all men desire these good smells.” Umar answered: Women are devils that have been created for us and we seek refuge in God from the viciousness of these devils (Dhīlābī, 2018: 20). This narration indicates his and some Companions’ opinion about women, while the words and conduct of the Prophet (s) show his serious efforts to eradicate this thought that originated from the Ignorance Days.

### **The policy of Mūāwīya and Umayyads in degrading the women**

The Islamic society witnessed the advent of a noble class from the end years of ‘Uthmān’s caliphate. Instead of referring people to the Qur’ān, Mūāwīya invited them to read the poems of his ancestors (Ibn Khullakān, 1977, vol. 5: 241).

The desanctification of the Prophet (s) and his trustees started with the usurpation of the caliphate and reached its apex during the reign of Abū Sufyān’s progeny. Mūāwīya prohibited people from narrating traditions except for those that were permissible during ‘Umar’s era, and the fabrication of traditions was one of his effective tools to strengthen the Umayyad reign and fight Banī Hāshim.

Ibn Bakkar mentions that Mūāwīya summoned 12 women to his presence due to their opposition to him, mostly in the Ṣaffayn battle when they fought in the company of Imām ‘Alī (a) against him, and notes that Mūāwīya tried to satisfy them (Ibn abī Ṭāhir, 1972: 50). This shows that women were allowed by Imām ‘Alī (a) to be present in the political sphere. Therefore, the fabrication of traditions to pretend that Imām ‘Alī (a) downgraded women

was a policy to scatter away the women from around him and imprison them in their houses. The prohibition of writing traditions and the reference to the People of the Book such as Tamīm Dārī and Kāb al-Aḥbār – which culminated at the time of Muāwīya – set the grounds for the injection of Judaist beliefs such as the creation of the woman from the lowest rib of the man (Genesis, 2: 23) and the agency of the women in the First Sin (Genesis, 2: 4) (Kāzimī, 2019: 253).

This situation continued until the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century LH and the early years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century LH, when the oral narrations of the narration transmitters and their personal notes were introduced into Ḥadīth collections (Jāfar Nīyā, 2010: 82). Therefore, in the chain of transmission of these narrations, there are seen the newly converted Judaist scholars, the Baṣrī transmitters, and some agents of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties who are accused of transmitting weak narrations. Even if we believe in the authoritativeness of some transmitters in these chains of transmission, due to the disagreement of the content of the narrations with the Islamic discourse, the possibility of distortion and forgery still remains in these narrations (Jāfar Nīyā, 2014: 109).

#### **The effect of Islamic victories on changing the women's position**

The Islamic victories made Muslims richer, made Arabs blend with non-Arabs, and opened the windows for a widespread presence of strangers in the Muslim lands. These set the grounds for the creation of a kind of open cultural atmosphere (Jāfar Nīyā, 2010: 81). In this era, corruption got ubiquitous and the woman turned into a means for fitna. Women even attended Ka'ba to seduce men, and men went to Ḥajj in order to visit them and encroached them during ritual circumambulation (Ibn Qutayba, 1998, vol. 4: 2; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, 1999, vol. 6: 116). Some women even wrote letters to stranger men and recited sexual poems to them at the presence of their husbands (Ibn abī Ṭāhir, 1972: 267). Therefore, due to the lust-oriented policy of the government, the revival of the customs of the Ignorance Days, and the widespread corruption in the society, Muslims who were bound to the observation of Islamic teachings advised women to veil and staying at home (Jāfar Nīyā, 2010: 85). It is in such a situation that Ibn Maṣūd recommended that women might stay at home (Ibn Jawzī, 1970: 149). It was narrated from 'Āyisha that it is better for women to say prayers at home rather than in the mosque (Ibn Manzūr, 1988, vol. 14: 27). In that era, some traditions were attributed to the Prophet (s) that disagreed with his practical conduct. Therefore, what has been narrated from Imām 'Alī (a) on degrading the woman was not far-fetched considering these conditions, and was in fact personal (Alhūyī Nazārī, 2004: 51), especially because some of these

statements are exactly narrated from Ibn Muqaffā, too (Ibn Qutayba, 1998, vol. 14: 78). In some cases, it is asserted that Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf Thaqaḥī recommended “Don’t tell your wife your mysteries, make her know no one other than you, do not consult women because their ideas are fast-changing, do not accept their intercession, and avoid meeting them too much so as to prevent ignorance” (Mašūḍī, 2001, vol. 3: 167; Ibn abī Ṭāhir, 1972: 172). Therefore, it is possible that the statements of the thinkers and other people have been mixed with the words of the Infallibles (Alhūyī Naẓārī, 2004: 54).

### **The Abbasid era and the Translation Movement**

In this era, the women were significantly absent from all important affairs. They were not present in the battlefields and mosques (Aḥmad, 1992: 88). It is noteworthy that the translation of Greek works started during the Maṣūḍī era and culminated during the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd and Māmūn (Jān Aḥmadī, 2000: 97). In these works, special attention was paid to the Greek thoughts and thinkers such as Socrates and Aristotle. However, their ideas are filled with misogynist assertions, in a way that Ibn abī al-Ḥadīd has written in the interpretation of the saying 29 of *Nahj al-balāgha*, “Socrates was asked about the most beautiful animal. He answered: ‘Woman’” (Ibn abī al-Ḥadīd, 1999, vol. 9: 165).

Therefore, based on what we said, the misogynist ideas started from the time of Umar ibn Khattāb and the stories of the Bible, and continued during the Umayyad era through Mūāwīya’s policies to remove the women and their defense off Ahl al-Bayt (a). During the Abbasid era, this process continued and through the translation of Greek works and the spread of their misogynist thoughts among people, this view turned into a paradigm. This way, the fictitiousness of these narrations was not identifiable due to their acceptance in that intellectual and cultural situation and the need to protect the virtuous women from the vulgarity of the society.

Therefore, we observe that the majority of sources which entail a content similar to that of the aforementioned sermon – no matter if Shī‘a or Sunnī – belong to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries LH. This indicates that the misogynist efforts had turned into unconscious preconceptions in the society and the exegetes and Ḥadīth transmitters inadvertently moved in this path, accepted the fictitious traditions injected by others as true traditions, and tried to persuasively justify them.

### **Conclusion**

In order to prove her opinion on the freedom of Imām ‘Alī (a) from misogynistic ideas, Amina Inloes has examined the accuracy of the content of *Nahj al-balāgha*. Substituting the resources, inspecting the chains of

transmission, criticizing texts, and comparing *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* with the content of *Nahj al-balāgha*, she concludes that the chains of transmission of the similar narrations in other Shī'a and Sunnī books are loose and have been issued in a different atmosphere. Since this content disagrees with the qur'ānic text, the conduct of Ahl al-Bayt (a), and the sociopolitical atmosphere depicted by *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, she contends that these narrations are not issued by Imām 'Alī (a). Due to the extreme similarity of these narrations with the thoughts of Greek thinkers such as Aristotle, she asserts that these have entered the Shī'a sources through translation of the Greek works and have been attributed to Imām 'Alī (a). To complete the discussion, it should be noted that people such as the second caliph who had a misogynist spirit and supported this viewpoint under the influence of soothsayers and the Bible, Mū'āwīya who forged traditions to put off the love to Imām 'Alī (a) and keep women away from politics and from supporting him, and the Umayyads and Abbasids who continued this same method and spread the Greek works and the ideas of Aristotle and Socrates, promoted corruption in the society, and secluded the religious women in their houses to stay away from the corruptions in the society, made the women's seclusion the dominant paradigm.

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