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Article

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With the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Sustainer of the Worlds, and Peace be upon the Chief of Prophets and Messengers and his pure and chaste descendants.

Nahjul Balaghah is that most reputed collection of the utterances of Amirul Momineen Ali Bin Abi Talib, (peace and greetings be upon him) which was compiled by Sayyid Razi, brother of Sharif Murtaza, the ensign of guidance, towards the close of the 4th century of Hijra. Thereafter in the first decade of the fifth century he died, and from the style of writing of Nahjul Balaghah it appears that he had collected the utterances of Amirul Momineen from various places.

He left blank pages in between which must have taken a long time while the work of additions therein must have continued till his last days, so much so that if an utterance reached him after the compilation of the book he inserted it in haste in a place other than its due without looking for its proper location, but gave a note that according to some other tradition this utterance has been placed somewhere else.

This mode of collection and compilation is in itself enough to convince an unbiased person that Sayyid Razi's own style of writing or power of expression has nothing to do with it, but that he has confined himself to collecting Amirul Momineen's utterances from various places and putting them together. This diffusion and detraction which is a defect of compilation has become a source of confidence in the matter of trustworthiness.

He has devoted so much care to the copying of words in accordance with various scripts or the memory of different traditionalists that sometimes it bores the taste of the reader who feels what is the good in copying a statement that has already occurred just earlier.

For example, in regard to the vilification of people of Basra, the mention of its being flooded or the description of its Mosque, different statements such as Niamat al-Jathema or Kajuetair-in-filujjat al-Bahr or similar other words. This caution in copying correctly is the same as is done now-a-days by publishing photo-stats of books where in the mistakes of composition are left uncorrected and only on the margin it is indicated that such or such a word is apparently wrong and the correct one should be so and so.

The reader, of course, wishes that the wrong version in the original should have been struck off and the correct one inserted but the practice in view is adopted to indicate exactness of copying. For example, in

the Holy Quran where the calligraphist of the uthmani compilation committed mistakes of writing such as in the word "Laa azbahannahu" where the second Alif is wrong because the "la" is not for negative but it is the "lam" for emphasis followed by "Azbhannahu."

But the Muslims of later ages considered the removal of even such mistakes as against exactness of copying. In this way the script of the Quran has become slavishly rigid. In some places the word Ta in "Rehmat" is written in long, in some "Jannat" is written without "alif" in some even singular verbs like "Yadoo" have that "alif" which is written in plural verbs though not pronounced.

All these peculiarities are adhered to with intent to create weight in authenticity of copying. Similarly Sayyid Razi had inserted every sentence in the same form as he found it, so that the writing should not suffer any intermeddling. This is factual aspect which puts an end to the idea that this book is the product of Sayyid Razi.

The next aspect relates to the existence of the words "Minha" or "Minhu" i.e. "from the same" occurring in-between any two addresses wherein generally the later part is almost unconnected with the earlier one. In fact, it has also occurred that the first part relates to pre-Prophethood or early Prophethood period while the later part belongs to the period after the Prophet's death. This is also annoying to the reader's taste but it also strengthens this very purpose.

Had it been Sayyid Razi's product, naturally there should have been continuity, or in case the intended writing were on two subjects he would have written them in two separate addresses. Nevertheless what could he do when he had only to present the collection of the utterances of Amirul Momineen?

Thus wherever the first and the next part of an utterance differ in subject-matter and the intervening matter has not been inserted for some reason, he can neither fuse them into one whole nor retain them as two separate addresses but he has to distinguish them by "wa minha" (and from the same).

I think in some places this is due to selection, while in some places the reason may be that formerly the material existed in no other form than manuscript books while most copies of manuscript books were confined to individuals.

Now, if the intermediary part had been eaten by worms or the pages had been destroyed or the ink had spread due to moisture making the writing illegible, then at such places Sayyid Razi has been unable to copy the intermediary part. Yet in his anxiety for collection and preservation he has sought for the earlier, later or intermediary lines which carried some sustaining sense and recorded his failure in inserting them by writing "wa minha" (and from the same).

It is also a fact that at that time a large collection of knowledge rested in the bosoms of the memorizers, literatures and traditionalists. Suppose Sayyid Razi heard the earlier part of some address from his teacher or a traditionalists according to suitability of the occasion and put it down in writing, then on another occasion he heard some other sentences from the same address and preserved them but could

not find chance to enquire about and record the middle portion.

In this way he filled the gap by "wa minha". This is also a strong proof of the fact that he has attempted only to collect and preserve the writing of Amirul Momineen, and has not allowed any interference by himself.

The third witness to this is Sayyid Razi's own brief comments inserted here and there at the end of certain Sermons containing indication of his own feelings and ideas about them, or the explanations of words which he thought necessary to insert in some places. The contents of these comments being in close proximity to the speeches have made it definitely easy for anyone having taste of Arabic to realize that the author of these comments cannot certainly be the same who is the author of the speeches.

Just as Sayyid Razi has himself shown in his pride-worthy commentary of Quran titled Haqeeq-ut-Tanzi as a proof of Quran's miraculousness, that although Amirul Momineen's eloquence and expressiveness is super-human yet where there occurs a Quranic Verse in his speech it shines as a brilliant jewel among pebbles.

In the same manner Sayyid Razi was the most eloquent of his time and enjoyed the zenith of perfection in Arabic literature yet whenever in the Nahjul Balaghah his own words appear after those of Amirul Momineen every observer feels that his eye has fallen down in the deep.

Although Sayyid Razi has used his literary power and shown his ability to the full in these writings yet the greatness of the writing that precedes manifests itself clearly as an appreciable fact. This is also a great internal proof to falsify the impression that it is Sayyid Razi's composition.

The fourth point is that Sayyid Razi was not an unknown man of his times. He occupied responsible positions both secular as well as religious, and the period was one that was full of religious and national literates.

Baghdad, as the capital of the Abbaside Empire was also the centre of learning and literature. Sayyid Razi's master Shaikh Mufeed was himself living in the period of compilation of Nahjul Balaghah, because Shaikh Mufeed lived till after the death of Sayyid Razi as the pupil had died during the life time of his master. And contemporaries are, of course, in search of faults in a man.

Then, Sayyid Razi had also incurred opposition by the government of time by not signing the document prepared by the government against the Fatemides of Egypt, and which even Allama Razi's elder brother and his father had signed under pressure from Government; but Allama Sayyid Razi had refused to sign it not caring for the consequences.

Apart from the fact that a man of this character who maintained truth against such strong factors cannot commit an irresponsible act by writing a whole book himself and passing it as that of Amirul Momineen, whose being wrong could not remain hidden from the learned of those days, and even if he had done so

then in his own days the learned of the time and those holding rein of government would have made much of it and criticized it vehemently.

We have before us books by the learned of his very time and writings of authors up to a few centuries thereafter. They do not contain, even in the slightest form, among the accounts of his life any blame of this kind or any criticism in this connection.

It is clear from this that it is just a concoction of some fanatic individuals who finding some of the assertions in the Nahjul Balaghah being against their views, have tried to declare Nahjul Balaghah as the composition of Sayyid Razi. Otherwise in the days of Sayyid Razi himself its contents were accepted as the composition of Amirul Momineen without distinction of party or creed; and so no blame was leveled against him in this connection.

The fifth point is that it is not that before Sayyid Razi (may Allah heighten his position) the speeches of Amirul Momineen did not exist in the Islamic world. In fact a study of books on history and literature shows that an authentic collection of Amirul Momineen's speeches did exist before Sayyid Razi (r.a.).

Thus, historian Masudi who was in the period preceding Sayyid Razi, but had rather died before the latter's birth, since Sayyid Razi died in his youth in the year 406 Hijra whereas Masudi had died in 340 Hijra when not only Sayyid Razi's master Shaikh Mufeed was living but the latter's master Shaikh Sudduq Muhammad bin Ali bin Babwaih Qummi was also alive, writes thus in his history Murawwij-uz-Zahab:

"The speeches of various occasions of Ali Bin Abu Talib memorized by the people number something more than 480. They were uttered extempore, and people have related them continuously as his sayings and have extensively utilized extracts there from in their speeches and essays."

It is evident that if these more than 480 speeches are collected together, they would make a book bigger than Nahjul Balaghah. When such a big mass was in existence from before Sayyid Razi's birth, what was the need for Sayyid Razi not to use this collection and to write a book like Nahjul Balaghah himself?

Such a thing is done for one who is nameless or who has no recorded performance of his own, and his successors or those attached to him produced some work on his behalf in order to make him conspicuous without rhyme or reason.

Only Allama Masudi's above quotation should be enough to prove the existence of this collection, whereas it also proves that this collection did not form part of some far-flung museum as an archaeological relic or the property left by some dead divine, difficult of access, but the words "memorized" by the people or "related continuously" clearly show that it was commonly available and current among the learned.

Besides, Allama Ibn Abil Hadeed has quoted in the commentary on Nahjul Balaghah, the following

statement of the reputed Secretary of the Abbaside period Abdul Hamid-bin-Yahya died 132 A.H. "I have memorized seventy speeches of Ali bin Abi Talib (as) and their advantages and blessings on me are quite evident."

After this, comes the admission of Ibn Muqaffa (d. 142 A.H.), quoted by Allama Hasan-an-Nadobie in his comments on Jahiz's Kitab-ul-Bayan wat Tabyeen. About Ibn Muqaffa he writes:

"Most probably in power of expression Ibn Muqaffa derived benefit from the speeches of Amirul Momineen Ali bin Abi Talib, that is why he used to say that he drank to satisfaction from the springs of the speeches and did not confine it to any single way, consequently the blessings of this spring grew and continued growing."

After this is Nabata (d. 374 Hijra), he also preceded Sayyid Razi and he says thus:

"I have memorized a treasure of speeches whose blessing multiplies as much as it is taken advantage of. I have crammed hundred divisions from the sermons of Ali bin Abi Talib". This statement of Ibn Nabata has also been mentioned by Ibne Abil Hadeed.

In Rijal al-Kishi it is written in connection with the description of Abu-us-Sabah Kinani that Zaid bin Ali-bin-Husain who is known as Zaid the martyr and was martyred during the Imamate of Imam Jafar-us-Sadiq (as) used to listen to the speeches of Amirul Momineen regularly.

Abu-us-Sabah says "he used to listen to speeches of Amirul Momineen from me". This relates to the second century A.H. and from it is evident that a collection of such speeches was in existence at that time, and it was admittedly taken as that of Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib (as).

In all these places the reference to the speeches of Ali as an accepted item shows that in those days, no doubt was felt in the matter. It was a few centuries later when writers thought it necessary for some purpose to cast doubt on this reality that they started saying "related to Ali", but in the earlier period no word indicative of doubt or questioning of this is found at all.

From Rijal al-kabir it is seen that Zaid bin Wahab Jehni (died 90 A.H.) who is himself one of the traditionalists of Amirul Momineen had compiled his speeches and thereafter several individuals compiled his speeches and sayings before Sayyid Razi, such as:

(1) Hisham bin Muhammad Saeb Kalbi (d. 146 A.H.). His collection and compilation is referred to at page 251, chapter 7 of the "Catalogue" by Ibn Nadeem.

(2) Ibrahim bin Zubair Faraazi. He is referred to in the Catalogue of Toosi as follows: "Wrote several books, including Kitab ul Malahim and Kitab al-Khutab al-Ali (The Book of Speeches of Ali A.S.). A reference to him exists in Rijal al-Najashi as well.

(3) Abu Muhammad Museda bin Sadaqa Abadi.¹ About him Rijal al-Najashi says:

"To him belong several books including one speeches of Ali (as)"

(4) Abul Qasim Abdul Azim bin Abdullah Hasani, whose tomb at a small distance from Teheran is known as Shah Abdul Azim; He was among the companions of Imam Ali Naqi (peace be upon him.) The speeches collected by him are referred to in Rijal al-Najashi as follows: One of his books is "Speeches of Ali (as)"

(5) Abul Khair Saleh bin Abi Hamad Raazi. He too was among the companions of Imam Ah Naqi. Najashi says: "Among his works is the Book of speeches of Amirul Momineen (as)."

(6) Ali bin Muhammad Bin Abdullah Madainea (d. 335 A.H.) He collected his speeches and those of his letters which he wrote to his officers. This is mentioned in Mojib-ul-Udaba of Yaqut al-Hamavi, Part 5, page 313.

(7) Abu Muhammad Abdul Aziz Jalawi Basri (d. 320 A.H.). His compilations include Sermons of Ali (as) the Book of letters, the Book of Preachings of Ali (as) the Book of Ali's addresses on lighting and Book of Ali's supplications. Shaikh Toosi has mentioned them in his Catalogue and Najashi has mentioned them in his Allah in connection with his large number of writings.

(8) Abu Muhammad Hasan bin Ali bin Sha'ba Halabi (d. 320 A.H.) writes in his famous book Tuhaf-ul-Uqool (Published in Iran, p. 13), after recording some sayings, proverbs and speeches of Amirul Momineen:

"If we desire to write his (Ali's) speeches and utterances only in regard to Unity of God, leaving all other subjects, it would equal this very book."

Now when a glance is cast at the above details it is observed that:

In the first century Zaid bin Wahab had prepared a collection of the speeches of Hazrat Ali. In the 2nd century in the days of Abd-ul-Hamid bin Yahya, the Katib and of Ibn Maqaffa that collection was admittedly in existence, while in the mid-period of that century those speeches were recited and heard as has been known from the account Zaid of martyr, and men of letters memorised them as has become apparent from the details given by Abdul Hamid and Ibn Muqaffa.

And in the 3rd century several authors compiled the speeches which had reached them. In such conditions what was the need of Sayyid Razi to ignore all these collections and exert his mind to write something himself in the name of Amirul Momineen.

The sixth point is that from the earlier existence of these collections it is evident that it was not possible for Sayyid Razi to get all these collections destroyed and to circulate what he had produced as the work of Amirul Momineen.

This was impossible, because it could be possible only if this collection had existed with one single author at some far-flung place, just as it is said that Shaikh Bin Ali Sena got all the works of Farabi from some individual and destroyed them, and then appropriated all of them to himself. Here this course was

impossible as the utterances in question were secure in the bosoms of men of letters, were current throughout the bounds of the Muslim World and a number of authors had compiled them.

Then, since these collections would have existed along with the product of Sayyid Razi, if Sayyid Razi's collected work was different from such collections or different only in style all the learned men of the time, the speakers of the days and the scholars of the age who had already seen those collections, or read them or memorized them would have raised a cry of protest.

There should have been an upsurge among them and Sayyid Razi would have earned bad name throughout the world. In the least some scholar out of his contemporaries might have written a book on the subject criticizing that the work of Amir-ul-Momineen.

But that was very different from the real opinion on Sayyid Razi, and the reason that prompted a group to create doubts and misgivings on his collected work, detail of which would be mentioned later on, was that Nahjul Balaghah contains objections or critical references to some personalities held respectable among the majority of Muslims.

It is apparent that Nahjul Balaghah was written in the capital of the Abbasi Kingdom which was the centre of Sunni learning. At that time there were very big scholars, memorizers (of Quran), men of letters, speakers, biographers and traditionalists among the Sunnis and their big crowd was concentrated within Baghdad.

If Amir-ul-Momineen's utterances that existed in the times of Ibn Moqaffa, Abdul Hamid bin Yahya Jahiz and other proved scholars were devoid of these objections and such subjects were not contained in them and naturally in such a case their contents could only be otherwise, then the Sunnis of that time would have created hell over it, would have faced it as an attack on their religion and would have torn it asunder.

But no such thing happened. Not the smallest voice was raised against it. This is a definite proof of the fact that there was nothing new in the compilation collected by Sayyid Razi, rather it was the same as was existent, current and preserved before that. The scholars felt no strangeness towards it, but were familiar with it and were used to hearing it and memorizing it.

They esteemed this literary treasure for its literary utility and were not victim to the narrow mindedness that since it 'contained material against their belief they should declaim it or evince strangeness to it.

The seventh point is that numerous books of the period before Sayyid Razi still exist which contain appropriate references of Amir ul Momineen's sayings or speeches of various occasions such as:

Al-Biayan wat Tabyeen of Jahiz (d. 255 A.H.)

Uyoon-ul-Akhbar and Gharib-ul-Hadith of Ibn Qateeba Dayanwari (d. 276 A.H.)

The reputed history of Ibn Wazeh Yaqubi (d. 276 A.H.)

Akhbar-ut- Tiwal of Abu Hanifa Dayanwari (d. 280 A.H.)

Kitab-ul-Mubarrid of Abul Abbas-al-Mubarrid (d. 286 A.H.)

Tarikh Kabir of the famous historian Ibn Jarir Tabari (d. 310 A.H.)

Kilab-ul-Mujtana of Ibn Duraid (d. 321 A.H.)

Iqd-u1-farid of Ibn Abd Rabbeh (d. 328 A.H.)

The famous book Kafi of Siqat-ul-Islam Kulaini (d. 329 A.H.)

The history Murawwijaz Zahab of Mas'udi (d. 346 A.H.)

Kitab-ul-Aghani of Abul Farj Isfehni (d. 356 A.H.)

Kitab-un-Nawadir of Abu Ah Qari (d. 356 A.H.)

Kitab-ut-Tauheed and other collections of traditions of Shaikh Sudduq (d. 381 A.H.)

Kitab-ul-Irshad and Kitab -ul-Jamal of Shaikh Mufeed (d. 416 A.H.) who with reference to the date of death is of later period than Sayyid Razi, but being his teacher is deemed of the earlier era.

When the speeches of Amir-ul-Momineen in these books are compared with those recorded by Sayyid Razi they often tally together. If there is anything in Nahjul Balaghah which is not in these books or these books contain any material not included in Nahjul Balaghah, then it certainly tallies with it by way of the mode of expression, style of speech, continuity, high-soundness forcefulness and truth of expression.

Wherein no one knowing Arabic can have any doubt that the work of Amir-ul-Momineen recorded in Nahjul Balaghah tallies fully with the works attributed to him and included in other books. And, as a corollary to this mentioned earlier, that it completely differs from Sayyid Razi's own writings which find place in Nahjul Balaghah as foreword or as commentary is enough to prove to an unbiased person that it is really Amirul Momineen's own word which Allama Sayyid Razi has merely compiled.

The eighth point is that Allama Sayyid Razi's own contemporaries or numerous persons of contiguous period made their own attempts to collect Amirul Momineen's works, and a few of them included the material in supplements of their books; such as:

Ibn Maskawaih (d. 421 A.H.) in Tajaribul Umam;

Hafiz Abu Naeem Isfahani (d. 430 A.H.) in Huli-at-ul-Aulia;

Shaikh-Ut-Taifa Abu Jafar Toosi (d. 460 A.H.) who through pupil ship of Shaikh Mufeed is a

contemporary of Allama Razi and being pupil of Sayyid Murtaza Alam-ul-Huda, and also by virtue of the year of His death is of later period, in his book Tahzeeb and the Kitab-ul-Amali.

And Abdul Wahid bin Muhammad bin Abd-ul-Wahid Amedi, who belonged to the same period, in his regular book Ghirar-ul-Hekam wa Durar- ul-Kelam, which covers short sayings of Amir-ul-Momineen and has been published in Egypt, Sudan and India. Its Urdu Translation has also been rendered.

Also Abu Saeed Mansur bin Husain Aabi Wazir (d. 422 A.H.) in his book Nuzhat-ul-Adab wa Nasr-ud-Durar which is mentioned in Kashf-uz-Zunoon: under the chapter "Noon"; and Qazi Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Salamah Qatai Shaafei (d. 453 A.H.) whose grand book on this subject is by the name of Ma'alem-ul-Hekam which has been published in Egypt.

All these are almost contemporaries of Sayyid Razi. The researches of all of them are before us, except the book of Abu Saeed Mansur which is mentioned in Kashf-uz-Zunoon. All the other books are published and current. The text contained in them is essentially similar or tallies in style with that recorded by Allama Sayyid Razi.

Then if it is supposed about Sayyid Razi that he himself composed the text, what should be said about all other compilers and those who inserted it as supplements to their books. The same should be imagined about them since most of them certainly do not appear to excel Allama Sayyid Razi in greatness of position, righteousness and fear of Allah.

If this is thought about them, well and good; but Allama Sayyid Razi was the wisest of God-seekers, while books on biography show him at the top with regard to literary qualities, eloquence and power of speech. But it is definitely wrong to imagine that all these people were equal to Allama Sayyid Razi in literary capacity. As such why should not there be the same difference in their mental efforts and pen-production as certainly exists in their extent of learning.

The people who have collected the compositions differ like heaven and earth but the material they have collected is of one and the same status. Seeing this, no one except he who is bent on refusing fact can have any doubt or misgiving that the work of these people is merely collection and compilation in which their own style and taste shows itself only in the manner of arrangement and mode of compilation. But their personal ability, wit, extent of learning and literary standard has not a lot of concern in it.

The ninth point is that although the above mentioned people are contemporaries of Allama Sayyid Razi with regard to their period of living yet with reference to the year of death of several of them it is certain that their period of collection and compilation is later than Nahjul Balaghah.

And after that there is a whole group which is completely later than Allama Razi, such as Ibn Abil Hadeed (d. 655 A.H.), Sibte Ibn Jouzi (d. 606 A.H.) and many other authors after them. Evidently Allama Razi's book Nahjul Balaghah was not unknown or hidden from these people.

What prompted these people to collection and compilation was only that during selection Allama Sayyid Razi had not copied many portions of Amirul Momineen's compositions because of lack of the original texts, or because the texts were either worm-eaten or incomplete. That is why authors had to resort to rectifier and rectifier of rectifier etc.

These series continued till Sheikh Hadi descendent of Kashif-ul-Ghita in the recent past, who wrote 'Rectification of Nahjul Balaghah that has been published in Najaf al-Ashraf.

If anyone from among the writers of Allama Sayyid Razi's period or thereafter would had thought that the writings and speeches contained in the Nahjul Balaghah were not authentic but written by Sayyid Razi himself then all of them, especially his contemporaries who did not allow any forgery, would have written in their books that these writing were not authentically from Amirul Momineen and they would have presented his real speeches and sayings.

But since there is no trace of such writings, it means that this objection against the compiled work of Sayyid Razi is unfounded, and we have to admit that according to all of these know authors the texts collected by Allama Sayyid Razi were authentically from Amir-ul-Momineen's speeches, and the only complaint they could have against Sayyid Razi was about his leaving some of the speeches or lack of collection and investigation or not adopting a more suitable mode of arrangement or manner of compilation for which they considered necessary to make an endeavor which continues till today.

In fact some writers may still wish to see the speeches included in Nahjul Balaghah in some other array. This is a different matter; but to entertain doubt or misgiving about the text itself is different.

The tenth point is that when an attempt is made, the speeches and utterances included in Nahjul Balaghah are traceable in their exact words in the books compiled before Nahjul Balaghah.

And when a greater part is found included in the earlier book then if a small portion is not available a moderate mind cannot entertain a doubt on this account when it is known that due to various happenings in the world so many collections of books have been destroyed that if they had existed they would have certainly been more than the existing ones.

Even those collections of Amirul Momineen's utterances which according to clues given to us by history, were compiled before Allama Sayyid Razi do not exist today. Thus if some contents are not traceable in the presently current books one must conclude that they must exist in the book to which we do not now have access.

Even before the compilation of Mustadrak Nahjul Balaghah, Allama Sheikh Hadi Kashiful Ghita had compiled these references of the contents of Nahjul Balaghah as Madarik Nahjul Balaghah which was not probably published in complete form but a praise-worthy attempt has been made by a Sunni scholar of Rampur (India) named Arshi, published in "Faran", Karachi, in the form of an article. If further search is made there is possibility of further success in this connection.

The eleventh point is that the practice with the Shia research scholars has been that they are not prepared to accept every book or collection attributed to the "infallibles" without scrutiny on the only ground that it is so attributed but fulfilling the obligations of research whole-heartedly they openly reject what is due to be rejected, or if it is doubtful they indicate the doubt or misgiving.

In this way many collections which exist as productions of the "infallibles" have acquired different grades in the matter of authenticity. For example, the Anthology (Diwan) of Amirul Momineen is in circulation as the work of Ali but Shia scholars hold it wrong without any regard or consideration.

The position of the commentary of Imam Hasan Askari is a bit better than this, although in reputation it is no less than Nahjul Balaghah, and the high grade old traditionist like Shaikh Sudduq (A.R.) has relied upon it, yet most Shia scholars do not recognize it, so much so that the research scholar of our recent period Allama Shaikh Muhammad Jawad Balaghi has written a whole treatise on proving it wrong.

Fiqah-ur-Riza is attributed to Imam Riza (as), but its authenticity or otherwise has become a highly scholarly issue on which regular books have been penned. Similarly Jafariat or the booklet Zahabia of Imam Riza (as) etc., have not escaped criticism.

Despite this practice the fact that right from after Sayyid Razi till now no Shia scholar raised any voice against Nahjul Balaghah or expressed even doubt or misgiving about it is a decisive proof that in the view of all of them its position is unique and superior to all other collections.

In this regard if there is any book equal to Nahjul Balaghah it is only Saheefa al-Kamila which is similarly admitted as the collection of the utterances of Imam Zain-ul-Abedin (as). No other book ranks equal to these two in this connection.

The conclusion from the above grounds is that from after Allama Sayyid Razi, till about two or two and a half hundred years no voice is seen being raised against Nahjul Balaghah. Rather numerous Sunni scholars wrote commentaries on it, such as Abul Hasan Ali bin Abul Qasim Baihaqi (d. 565 A.H.), Imam Fakhr-ud-Din (d. 606 A.H.) Ibn Abil Hadeed (d. 655 A.H.), Allama Saduddin Taftazani, and others.

Probably it was because of these commentaries etc., written by Sunni scholars that Nahjul Balaghah became known among the commonality and unrest brewed among the Sunnis about those of its contents which concern the three Caliphs.

This led to argumentation among themselves as a result of which with a view to save their principles of faith and to appease the commonality, the need arose for the scholars to create doubts and misgivings about Nahjul Balaghah and to denounce it. Thus, first of all Ibn Khallakan (d. 681 A.H.) attempted to make it doubtful and wrote in the account of Sayyid Murtaza that:

"People differ about the book Nahjul Balaghah which is a collection of the utterances of Ali bin Abi Talib as to whether he (Sayyid Murtaza) compiled it or his brother Razi did so while it has also been said that

it is not at all the composition of Ali bin Abi Talib and that the one who compiled it and attributed it to him made it himself; but Allah knows best."

It is very noteworthy that the controversial voice against Nahjul Balaghah even after two and a half centuries did not rise from the centre of its compilation Baghdad or any city of Iraq but this voice rose through Ibn Khallakan from the western area where Omayyad rule existed and from Qerwan and Qartaba where scholars received patronage under the influence of the Government.

From there this voice rose through Ibn Khallakan, evidently the people about whom it is stated that they differ were not responsible individuals of the Muslims metropolis otherwise more sanguine words such as the "Scholars differ", "the researches differ" or "the learned differ" would have been used while the "people" are those Sunni commons of the western region patronized by the Omayyads.

They did not even know whether this book was the compilation of Sayyid Razi or of Sayyid Murtaza and it is concealment of true position by Ibn Khallakan that he does not put forth his own views which he certainly had about this book and its compiler.

In order to appease the feelings of the people considers it appropriate to just relate the differences of these very people namely that some people call it a compilation of Sayyid Murtaza and others of Sayyid Razi but the judgment of his own conscience comes first that whoever might be the compiler, it is the composition of Amirul Momineen.

Thus due to apprehension of injuring the popular sentiments he refers to the objections of some of the partisan, unknown and untraceable persons, who in their effort not to recognize its contents used to urge during arguments that they did not recognize it as the word of Ali, he resorts to the passive form (viz. has been said) or that some people hold that it is not the production of Ali, but that the person who compiled it has himself composed it.

The passive form "it has been said" was enough to prove weakness of this view, but since his own conscience was not satisfied with it so in the end he tries to cast further doubt and misgiving by saying "Allah knows best".

This only leads one to conclude that Ibn Khallakan does not intend to express his own finding in this matter due to pressure around him and he wishes to keep himself aloof by just recounting the gossip of vile common people. Evidently such doubting can carry no weight in the world of learning. Even a straw provides good support to one who is drowning.

Although Allama Ibn Khallakan had in response to his conscience to a great extent saved himself from the liability to declaim Nahjul Balaghah yet his words easily gave the hint to the later participants in the contest that they should reject Nahjul Balaghah as the work of Amir ul Momineen.

Consequently, a century after this Zahabi who was the most intolerant of his times picked up the courage

to raise the doubt to the degree of certainty when he wrote in the account of Sayyid Murtaza that:

"Whoever sees his book Nahjul Balaghah would come to believe that it is falsely attributed to Amirul Momineen, because it contains open abuse rather downgrading of the two leaders Abu Bakr and Umar."

Now look at this strange development that for two or two and a half hundred years from the compilation of Nahjul Balaghah i.e. up to the time of Ibn Khallakan there is no trace of any difference, or misgiving about Nahjul Balaghah.

Then sitting in the West Ibn Khallakan relates the difference of view of the common people in this regard as to whether it is a book compiled by Sayyid Murtaza or by Sayyid Razi and adds an unauthentic view to the effect that its attribution to Amirul Momineen is wrong and eventually makes this falsification doubtful by saying "Allah knows best".

This was when due to nearness of the time, the means of getting information could be numerous, and a century thereafter Zahabi, first by one stroke of his pen ends the difference that existed in regard to the compiler and declares it as the performance of Sayyid Murtaza and then, replacing this doubt by certainty, says that whoever studies Nahjul Balaghah would be convinced similarly.

This means that for three hundred years up to his days no one had studied Nahjul Balaghah or he had picked up a spectacle, no one before him had possessed, and now he was inviting everyone after his days to study Nahjul Balaghah through the same spectacle.

What is that spectacle, he himself indicates towards the end of his discussion. From a literary viewpoint, according to principles of relating the traditions and in keeping with the canons of criticism, it was incumbent on him to provide a proof.

That in proof of its wrong attribution towards Amirul Momineen he should have brought forth such accepted composition of Amirul Momineen which was reliable in his view, was taken from sources other than Sayyid Razi and which should have been different from the record adopted by Sayyid Razi.

He should also have referred to the criticisms of authors contemporary of Sayyid Razi to the effect that they too had held it false and should have recounted the eulogy or criticism of the other scholars and critics of these three hundred years.

But his research shows no such proof. His only ground for holding this attribution as false is that it contains abuse of his two leaders. Can this ground carry any value in the world of learning? It is just like this that after certain centuries after the descension of Quran some group of unbelievers refuse to accept Quran as Allah's word because it contains derogatory and abusive verses against their gods.

The fact is that if fact is judged by subjugating it to passions then no fact constant at all.

"And verily thou callest them unto the straight path; (Quran 23:73.)

With the opening of this doorway all the principles of traditionalism and observation become inoperative and useless, because a person with any belief or thinking would reject even the strongest authority on the ground that it militates against his belief or thinking.

As regards the arguments of Shias against the three Caliphs they rely on the Traditions of the Prophet (S) and even on the Traditions and transmissions contained in the six Sahihis and make use of the traditions of the Prophet (S) no less than the Nahjul Balaghah.

The practice of cautious and principled Sunni scholars has been that they would resort to interpretation rather than daring to deny the contents of the traditions.

The tendency to reject reliable authorities initiated by Zahabi developed to this extent in the days of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian that in the beginning in confrontations with the Christians when he had to bear in mind the consideration about Christ's death, only with the idea that since the Christians put it forth as a distinction of Christ that he is alive it should be done away with.

He adopted this confrontational tactic as the basis and rejected all the Islamic authoritative pronouncements or the agreed traditions on the subject and eventually a way was carved for his own claim for himself being Christ.

By gradual rise the same feeling has now, through the people calling themselves adherents of Quran represented by Tulu al-Islam reached the stage that seeing that Tabari and other commentators have all given some matter or other advantageous to the Shias, they struck a blow against the traditions, commentaries and histories in total and the only ground for rejecting them all is that they have recorded things in favour of Shias, and therefore it is all false.

The building erected on a wrong foundation must face such an end. They should have faced reality as reality and then subjugated their feelings to it as is the religious obligation of common Muslims. What to say of those who regard themselves as scholars of Islam or pass as such in the world.

In the centuries that followed this door became wide open so that it became a common device of confrontation that whenever any quotation from Nahjul Balaghah was put forth it was held wrong. Thereafter in the present period some other considerations have also become operative.

For example, when the conviction of the modernist group that woman is equal to man in every respect is hurt by the contents of Nahjul Balaghah then to protect this belief an attempt is made to prove that it is not the word of Ali because it is detractor to women; and when modern science is found at variance with its holdings then maintaining science as the basic truth it is denied to be Ali's word.

Sometimes under the impression that in it there is mention of those of acts of science and arts which people of later times regard as their findings it is said that these utterances are a product of later period on the ground that these arts and sciences did not exist in Arabia at that time.

So much so that even one word such as Sultan is regarded as anachronistic and its occurrence in Nahjul Balaghah is taken as a proof that it could not have been uttered by Amirul Momineen (as) whereas all these are just excuses for satisfying their own wishes, and a result of regarding their own suppositions as the reality and subjugating facts thereto.

When are the facts recorded in Quran such as were known to the Arabs of those days, and when was the implication of many of the sayings of the Prophet (S) clear to the then world, so that no wonder is expressed on the discoveries of arts and sciences in Ali's sayings unknown to the then world.

When an old Arabic couplet is advanced as authority for a word, we do not evidently know the source of such word earlier to that couplet; otherwise we would not take the trouble of quoting the couplet as authority.

Should we then regard this hypothesis as correct and reject the couplet on the ground that the word was not in existence before that, or the correct course would be – and this is the principle commonly adopted – that from the occurrence of this word in this couplet we deduce that this word was current among the Arabs.

Similarly why should we not adopt the same course in respect of the word "Sultan" rather than treating our hypothesis as gospel and hold that this word is new, and was non-existent in Arab literature?

Why should not its use in the utterances of Janab Amir (as) be a proof that though this word was not current among the common majority yet it was not totally non-existent, and why should not the utterance of Amirul Momineen be taken as the authority for it?

Further, what is the need for holding "Sultan" to mean king in its literal sense when its root meaning namely government, power or control was in existence and its examples exist in Quran as well?

`Argument' has been termed `Sultan' only because of being a means of securing control, just as for the same reason it is termed "protest".

This root sense was eventually adopted in the sense of a noun meaning king, what is the difficulty that in the sentence "when sultan changes the times change" we take `Sultan' in the sense not of the ruler but of the `government' or `authority', since in our own language it is in use in the sense of authority or ruler.

Literally we need not say that `when the king changes the times change' but render the meaning that when the authority changes there is change in the times as well. The result remains the same, and our hypothesis, if very dear to us also remains intact.

In short these are all baseless points which do not accord with any principles of tradition or observation. Nahjul Balaghah does not certainly contain any such harsh word about the Caliphs as do not exist in other books, or which is not in accord with those feelings of Janab Amir (as) which find place in the other books of Sunnis.

As such, the occurrence of such words on his tongue is a proof that it is his own word. Of course if it had words contrary to his impressions then it would have been necessary to consider what their basis was; or they should be regarded as the result of some compulsion, as is the case with the sermon "God bless so and so" in the view of some scholars.

But in the case of an utterance which is a clear index of the speaker's thoughts there should be no hesitation in accepting its attribution to the speaker as true. That is why despite hesitation of Ibn Khallakan and the daring rejection of Zahabi the just-minded and truth-loving scholars and researchers without distinction of creed or group have been accepting Nahjul Balaghah as the word of Amirul Momineen (as) and have been expressing so. From among them a few who are presently in view are mentioned below.

(1) Allama Shaikh Kamal-ud-Din Muhammad bin Talha Qureshi (d.652 A.H.) writes in his book Matalib-us-Su'ool fi Manaqib al-Ale-Rasool which has been published in Lucknow as well, in the account of learning's of Amirul Momineen (as):

"Fourth is the science of eloquence and rhetoric. In this he was a leader near whom it was impossible to approach and was such a pioneer whose footprint cannot be paralleled. And for one who acquaints himself with his literary production known as Nahjul Balaghah the heard news of his eloquence becomes a witnessed phenomenon and his impression about Ali's (as) elevated position in this matter turns into conviction".

Elsewhere he writes: --

"The fifth category comprises those sermons and speeches which the traditionalists have related and trustworthy people have obtained from him, while the book Nahjul Balaghah which is attributed to him consists of his various types of speeches and sermons which fully clarify their do's and don'ts, present eloquence and rhetoric's through their shining words and meanings and exhibit the principles and secrets of the science of meanings and explanations in full form."

Herein the contents of Nahjul Balaghah have been categorically accepted is the composition of Amirul Momineen (as) by quoting references of reliable and trustworthy traditionalists. The appearance of the word "attributed" at one place should not create any misunderstanding, because that refers to the book in its shape as such since it is evident that the book is not the compilation of Amirul Momineen. (as)

The book is really that of Sayyid Razi but people superficially or through ignorance name it as if it is the book of Amirul Momineen (as). This attribution to the book is made in view of its contents and this is why Allama Ibn Talha has used the word "attributed" on this occasion, and it is quite correct. It does no harm to his trust and conviction about the reality of the contents.

(2) Allama Abu Hamid Abdul Hameed Bin Hilbatullah known as Ibn Abil Hadeed, Madaeni Baghdadi (d. 655 A.H.) who has written a comprehensive commentary on this book. Among the personal distinctions

of Amirul Momineen (as) under eloquence he writes:

"His eloquence is such that he is the leader of the eloquent and the Chief of the rhetoricians. It is about his utterances that it is below the word of the Creator but above the word of all creatures and from him the world has learnt the art of speech and rhetorics."

After this the opinions of Abdul Hamid bin Yahya and Abdul Hameed Nabatah have been quoted which we have already mentioned. Then he writes:

"And when Mohqin bin Mohqin, said to Muawiya, 'I have come to you from the dumbest man' Muawiya said "Woe to thee, how can he be called dumb when, by Allah, no one other than he has shown the Quraish the way to eloquence" And this very book whose commentary we are writing is enough to prove that Ali occupied such a high position that no one can keep pace with him, nor can he be paralleled in rhetorics.

At another place the same Allama writes:

'Numerous portions of this book can be termed miracles of the Prophet (S) because they cover assertions about the unknown, and are beyond human capacity.'

Although Allama Ibn Abil Hadeed is staunch in his beliefs which run counter to Shiaism, and therefore wherever there is matter in Nahjul Balaghah against his faith he has faced goodly difficulty, yet in spite of this he does not in any single place express his doubt that it may not be the word of Amirul Momineen. (as)

Even in regard to the Sermon of Camel's Foam (Khutba al-Shaqshaqia) which consists issues most militating against his feelings he forcefully agrees that it is certainly the composition of Ali bin Abi Talib (as) and refutes with arguments every conception against it. Under this sermon he has held that Allah has preferred the low over the high for some purpose.

Similarly in the various explanations under the Khutba al-Shiqshaqiyya and other he has expressed his beliefs and has held Amirul Momineen's words the outcome of (God forbid) human feelings. These points put a stop to the impression that in this book he has kept in view the pleasure of the Shia overlord in whose name he dedicated this commentary.

Ibn Alqami was doubt less a Shiah but he was a minister under the Abbasides and this book was written during his term as Minister before the downfall of the Abbasides. Firstly, if flattery were his aim it was necessary to pay regard to sentiments of the Caliph rather than the Minister.

Secondly, evidently being a minister of the Abbaside government Ibn Alqami could not proceed against a person who wrote anything in favour of the religion of the Government of the day; nor did he openly declare such feelings. Further, if he intended flattery, why should Ibn Abil Hadeed in this very book refute Shiaism and why should he have from beginning to end tried to strengthen the Caliphate as much as

possible.

This behaviour of his clearly shows that in this he has constantly adhered to own ideas and feelings. If he had expressed a small doubt or misgiving about Nahjul Balaghah that would not have been so painful to Ibn Alqami as the accusing Allah of such an evil act that sometimes He prefers the low over the high, or to attribute Amirul Momineen's sayings to human frailty as he has written in the commentary on the Khutba al-Shiqshaqayya.

In fact the rejection of these words as Amirul Momineen's utterance is not so painful to a Shia nor so derogatory to Ali bin Abi Talib (as) as the view that he has, God forbid, used these words against reality and only in response to his personal animosity.

This makes it clear that Ibn Abil Hadeed did not aim at pleasing Ibn Alqami through expression of his views, and if Ibn Alqami gave any price for this book it is only due to his large heartedness, large sightedness and forbearance that he appreciated the literary production of a scholar of differing beliefs mainly as a literary production which also contained points against his own religious beliefs and convictions.

In my view Ibn Abil Hadeed has, in this book, published his Sunnism so much more than needed that it is wrong to attribute any partiality or bias to him.

(3) Abus Saadat Mubarak Majiduddin Ibn Aseer Jozavi (d. 606 A.H.) has resolved the words of Nahjul Balaghah in very many places in his reputed book Nihaya which is on the subject of explanations of words used in the books of traditions and "records".

Ibn Aseer's position is not of an ordinary lexicographer but he is a traditionalist as well. If it was necessary for him to resolve these words only because of literary importance he would have included them only with the name of Nahjul Ba1agha.

Again, the fact is that if he did not regard it as the utterance of Amirul Momineen (as) he would not have found place for them in a book written exclusively for traditions and records because technically "record" means only the words uttered by Companions or prominent post-Companions.

Words of a book of any later scholar are included neither in tradition nor record, his including these words is itself a proof that he regards them as the utterance of Amirul Momineen (as) and not of Sayyid Razi.

Then again, while recording these words in every place he clearly uses the words "Ali's tradition", such as under the word "Jawa" or 'Fatq'ul-Ajwa' or 'Shaqq-ul-arja', everywhere these words are mentioned with the epithet "Tradition of Ali".

At some places it is "Sermon of Ali" at such as under the word "Loot" the words "Khutabat Ali" In one place under the word "Aem" the words are "utterance of Ali". Similarly under the word "Asl" the words

"Utterance of Ali" occur and the same is the case in one or two more places; in all the other places he has written "Tradition of Ali".

We have quoted all these places in extension in our book "The Authenticity of Nahjul Balaghah" which has been published by Imamia Mission, Lucknow.

(4) Allama Sadruddin Taftazani (d. 791 A.H.) writes in Sharh al-Maqasid, "He was the most eloquent of them as the book Nahjul Balaghah evidences".

(5) Jamaluddin Abul Fazl Muhammad bin Mokarram bin Ali Afriqi Misri (d. 711 A.H.) too has, like Nihaya, solved the words included in his celebrated book Lisan-ul-Arab by calling them "Words of Ali".

(6) Allama Alauddin Qarshaji (d. 875 A.H.) writes in his explanation of scholar Toosi's words "the most eloquent of them in speech" that this is evidenced by the book Nahjul Balaghah while rhetoricians have held that his utterances are below the words of the Creator but above the words of the created.

(7) Muhammad bin Ah bin Taba Taba known as Ibn Taqtaqi writes on page 9 of his book Tarikh-u1-Eakhri fil Adaabis-sultania wad-duwalil Islamia, published in Egypt: "Many people turned towards Nahjul Balaghah which comprises the utterances of Ali bin Abi Talib because this is the book from which are learnt wisdom, precepts oneness of Allah, renunciation and courageousness while its lowest advantage is eloquence and rhetoric.

(8) Allama Mohaddis Mulla Tahir Fitni Gnjrati too has written Mujmai Bihara Anwar, like Nihaya in explanation of words appearing in traditions and records and he too has explained the words of Nahjul Balaghah recognising it as the composition of Amirul Momineen (as).

(9) Allama Ahmad Bin Mansur Kazrooni writes in his book Miftahul Futooh under the account of Amir-ul-Momineen (as): "Whoever casts a careful glance over his words, letters, speeches and writings will find that his knowledge was not like that of others or his distinctions, of the type of distinctions of others after the Prophet (S) (that is, they were far higher), and among them is the book Nahjul Balaghah."

(This implies that the writer bore this fact in mind that Ali's utterances were in existence in abundance beside Nahjul Balaghah and that this book is only a part of that collection). "And by Allah before his eloquence the eloquence of all the eloquent, rhetorics of all the rhetoricians and wisdom of the sages of the world become paralyzed and thwarted."

(10) Allama Yaqub Lahori writes in his book Sharh al-Tahzib- ul-Kalam under the explanation of the word "Afsah", "Whoever wishes to see his eloquence or enjoy hearing his rhetoric's must have a glance over Nahjul Balaghah; and to attribute such eloquent and rhetoric utterance to a Shia Scholar is totally misfit."

(11) Allama Sheikh Ahmad Mustafa known as Tashkeeri-zada writes in his book Shaqaeq al-Nomania Fi Ulema al-Daulat al-Usmania, under the list of writings of Qazi Qiwan-ud-Din Yusef: "The

commentary on Nahjul Balaghah of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib, Allah may honour his face."

(12) Mufti of Egypt Allama Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh (d. 1323 A.H.): The success of whose beautiful effort cannot be denied, because he managed to acquaint the Sunni Centers of learning in Egypt and Beirut with the advantages of Nahjul Balaghah and through whom the inhabitants of these areas were introduced to this eminent book. He got Nahjul Balaghah published in Egypt with his explanatory annotations and its numerous editions have so far been published.

In the preface which finds place in the beginning of the book recounting the stupefaction and astonishment which the study of the truth bearing contents of Nahjul Balaghah caused in him. He writes: "At every place during its perusal I was getting the impression as though wars are being waged. Onslaughts are going on, rhetoric's is in full swing and eloquence is in action with full force. Superstitions are getting defeated doubts and misgivings are retreating.

The armies of public speaking are ready in array. Battalions of sharp-tongues are busy like swords and lances. Evil thoughts are being slain and the corpses of superstitions are falling while all of a sudden it is felt as if truth has overcome. Falsehood has been defeated. The flame of doubt and misgiving has been extinguished and the reign of untruth has ended. And the credit for this victory goes to its Standard Bearer Asadullah-il-Ghalib Ali bin Abi Talib (as).

In fact as I proceeded in the perusal of this book from one place to the other I felt the change of scenes and shifting of stands. Sometimes I found myself in a state where the sublime souls of meanings clad in the gowns of beautiful words rotate round pure creatures and approaching near clear hearted ones betoken them to tread on the right path, to kill the desires of the heart and making them hateful of slippery points lead them to tread on the path of greatness and perfection.

And sometimes such sentences appear before me that seem as though frowning and showing out their teeth they are advancing with fearful features. There are sprits in the shape of tigers with talons of birds of prey ready to attack and which do in an instance fall on their victim. They snatch away the hearts from the circles of ill-wishes desires, forcefully separate the conscience from low sentiments and destroy and the evil desires and false belief.

Sometimes I witnessed that a spiritual being which in no way resembled with corporal beings separated itself from Heavenly audience and coming close to human soul took it out from physical curtains and material screens took it up to the celestial surroundings, raised it to the centre of divine effulgence and seated it in the heavenly atmosphere.

In some moments it seemed as if a speaker on philosophy is challenging the holders of authority and power, calling them to tread on the right path, cautioning them on their mistakes, teaching them delicacies of politics and serious issues of administration and policy and perfecting them by creating in them the capability for governmental positions, administration and politics."

Herein just as Allama Muhammad Abdoh has definitely acknowledged it as the word of Amirul Momineen; he has also admitted the truth of its subject matter and veracity of its contents. He says that the subjects of this book are a success of the truth, defeat of the untruth, death of doubts and misgivings and destruction of superstitions and evil thoughts, and that from beginning to end they bear for the human race sound instructions in spiritualism, purification, majesty and perfection.

Allama Muhammad Abdoh has so much veneration for Nahjul Balaghah that after Quran he regarded it as deserving of preference over every other book. He expressed his belief that the circulation of this book in the Islamic University to the maximum extent would be real service to Islam only because it is the utterance of a dignified world reformer like Amir-ul-Momineen.

So he writes: "Among those who know Arabic there is none who does not agree that after the word of Allah and the word of the Prophet the word of Amirul Momineen is more sublime, more meaningful and more beneficial than any other utterance. So for the seekers of the nice treasure of the Arabic language this book is the most deserving to be accorded an important position in their record and written acquisitions and at the same time they should try to appreciate the meanings and intents that lie hidden in its words".

It is a fact that this effort of Allama Muhammad Abdoh bore fruit fully. In an atmosphere of short-sightedness in which the deplorable behaviour of the literary world is such that those books of even Sunnis which concern the infallible Ahl al-bait or Ali bin Abi Talib have been mostly printed by Shia presses of Iran while the Academic Centres of Egypt, Beirut etc. have never regarded them fit for publication.

For example, Sibte Ibn Jauzi has been mentioned in books on biographies with full literary eminence. But his book Tazkera has not been deemed fit of attention among the great majority only because it mostly covers account of the family of the Prophet (S) with regard to Khasaes of Nisai and others.

But Nahjul Balaghah despite its contents with which the majority may differ enjoys popularity and centrality among the scholarly circles, its consecutive editions are published and it is prescribed in the curricula of schools and universities.

It is the confrontational atmosphere of India and Pakistan and its poisonous climate that in the educational institutions here this book is often meted out treatment which should be meted out to a purely Shia book. Allama Muhammad Abdoh not only wrote annotations on this book and got it printed but he used to continually plead for it in his conversation.

The magazine Al-Hilal of Egypt in its issue No. 1 of volume 35 for November 1926 A.D. on page 78 published four questions for the attention of the literary group in which the first question was this, namely: "What is the book or books which you studied in your youth and which benefited you and left impressions for your life?"

The reply given to this question by Professor Shaikh Mustafa Abd-ur-Razzaq was published on page 15 of issue No.2 for December 1926 A.D. Therein he wrote:

"At the instance of the late Professor Shaikh Muhammad Abdoh I studied Anthology of Hamasa and Nahjul Balaghah." Abdul Masih Antakee whose opinion would be related later, has also stated that "Allama" Muhammad Abdoh told me that if you want to acquire eminence in writing you should take Amirul Momineen Ali as your teacher and regard his utterances as the guiding lamp."

The Professor's belief that Nahjul Balaghah was in its entirety the word of Amirul Momineen (as) was so eminent that all his pupils who from after him till now have been among eminent teachers of Egypt knew this fact.

Thus Professor Muhammad Mohiuddin Abdul Hamid, reader in the faculty of Arabic language in the University of Al-Azhar, whose own ideas would be related later in his own words, wrote in the Preface to the Edition published by him:

"It is possible you may like to find out in this regard the opinion of Imam Shaikh Muhammad Abdoh who brought this book out from oblivion and no one can equal him in the extent of information and sharp-sightedness."

So the reply to this question would be that we can say with certainty that he regarded the whole of this book as the word of Imam Ali. The preface by Allama Muhammad Abdoh extracts from which have been quoted by us itself enjoys great importance in the world of learning.

Thus Sayyid Ahmad Hashmi has quoted it in full in his book Jawahir-ul-Adab, Part 1, pp. 317-318, and has given it the title "Account of Nahjul Balaghah by the late Imam Shaikh Muhammad Abdoh" (d. 1323 A.H.).

(13) The reputed Arab author, orator and writer Shaikh Mustafa Ghalaeeni, Professor of Quranic Commentary, Theology and Arabic Literature in the Islamic University, Beirut, in his book Areejuz Zahar under the subject Nahjul Balaghah and Styles of Arabic Expression writes under a detailed treatise:

"The best material whose study is compulsory for the seekers of high standard in literature is the book of Amirul Momineen Ali (as), Nahjul Balaghah, and it is this book for which this preface has been mainly written. This book contains such eloquent utterances, astonishing styles of expression, beautiful subject matters and numerous sublime imports that if the student practices them properly he can, in his composition, speaking and conversation, attain perfect standard of eloquence."

After this he writes that "From this book large number of persons rather communities, have drawn advantage, among whom this writer is also included. I invite all those who are in search of high style of Arabic writing and eloquent way of expression to appropriate this book".

(14) Professor Muhammad Kurd Ali, Head of the literary circle in Damascus, in reply to the third out of

four questions of Al-Hilal which was, "which books you advise the youth of today to read," wrote: "If rhetoric's is sought in its perfect form or eloquence which is untarnished by smallest flaw then you should resort to Nahjul Balaghah, the collection of lectures of Amirul Momineen Ali Bin Abi Talib (as) and his letters to his governors.

For details may be seen the chapter on writing and writers in my book Al- Qadeem Wal Ahadith printed in Egypt in 1925 A.D.". This reply appeared on page 572 of Issue No.5, volume 35 of Al-Hilal for March 1927 A.D.

(15) Professor Muhammad Mohiuddin, Professor in the Faculty of Arabic Language in Al-Azhar University has written notes on Nahjul Balaghah and retaining the annotations of Allama Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh, has added numerous researches and explanations. With these additions this book was printed at the Matba Isteqama in Egypt.

In the beginning of this edition he has written a preface of his own wherein he has undertaken a conclusive discussion on the authenticity and trustworthiness of Nahjul Balaghah. Its salient portions are quoted hereunder: "This book Nahjul Balaghah is that selection of the utterances of Amirul Momineen Ali bin Abi Talib (as) which was adopted by Al-Sharif Razi, Abul Hasan Muhammad bin Hasan Moosavi.

This is the book which contains in its covers eminent jewels of rhetoric's and the finest exhibits of eloquence; and it should be so since it is the utterance of a person who, after the Prophet (S) was the most eloquent in expression.

The biggest master of words and reasoning and one who had the greatest control over Arabic words so that he molded them as he wished, a high ranking philosopher whose utterance ushered forth springs of wisdom, a speaker whose oratory filled the hearts, and a scholar who from early age enjoyed such advantages as the closest contact and association with the Prophet, writing down of revelations, fighting both with sword as well as tongue in defense of the religion advantages which no one else could enjoy.

Such is the book Nahjul Balaghah. I have been studying it from the beginning of my youth and have been its lover from early age, because I saw my father often reading it and found my uncle spending long hours it pondering over its expressions appreciating its meaning and admiring its style; and the two had great effect upon me as it forced me to tread on their footsteps so that I gave this book the foremost place in my heart and took it as the companion in my solitude who always provides solace to me".

After this the Allama has mentioned those persons whose way is that they regard it as the book of Sharif Razi himself. Surveying their views the Allama says that the most important grounds advanced for this book not being the word of Amir-ul-Momineen (as) are only four:

Firstly, it contains such criticism of companions of the Prophet (S) whose coming out from Hazrat Ali (as) cannot be agreed to, particularly the abuse of Moawiya, Talha, Zubair, Amr-bin-Aas and their followers. Secondly it exhibits worldly decoration and ingenuity of expression of a degree that was non-existent in

the days of Hazrat Ali (as)

Thirdly, its similes, metaphors and picturing of scenes and events are so perfect that they are not found elsewhere in early Islam. Along with this the use of technical terms of logic and philosophy and of statistic in the statement of problems which were not in vogue in those days. Fourthly, numerous statements in the book savour of claim to fore-telling of events which is far from the position of a truthful person like Hazrat Ali (as).

Turning down these considerations the Allama writes: – "Allah is witness that we do not find any of these grounds or all the grounds collectively to be a true ground, or even a ground-like thing in proof of the statement which is their aim; in fact they cannot even be regarded as doubts and misgivings so as to create the least hitch in the acceptance of truth and which it may be necessary to refute."

Then he has refuted each and every point one by one. What he has said about the first point is briefly this that after the Prophet (S) the policy adopted with regard to Khilafat was such that Hazrat Ali (as) should naturally have objection against it, and the insurgence of the people of Sham (Syria) during his caliphate must have pained him. Thus his words for each period are just in accord with historical conditions.

What then is the occasion for any doubt or misgiving therein? The reply to the second and third points is that no person was equal to Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib (as) in eloquence and wisdom. How then can the characteristics of his utterances be found in any other person of that period? As regards the blame of rhyming and rhythms, that is not in his expressions of a type that may mean concoction or may tell upon the meanings.

Moreover rhyming etc. to this extent was quite in vogue in those days. What the Allama has said in reply to the fourth point does not accord with our own religious convictions but it bears out his own point of view. He says 'What is regarded as fore-telling, we regard it as fore-seeing and the result of understanding the times, which is not discordant with a wise man like Ali.

As we said this reply has been given by him according to his own notions, but the fact is that if expression of knowledge of the unknown given by Allah is taken as a standard for rejecting, then numerous traditions of the Prophet (S) would fall within its mischief. Again, expression of knowledge of the unknown by Allah is evident from a number of verses of the Quran.

As such the verses of the Quran should also be disbelieved. But if on the basis of knowledge of Allah these verses are believed in there should be no occasion for laying objection on the inclusion of similar topics in the utterances of Ali (as) who was given knowledge by Allah.

(16) Professor Sheikh Muhammad Hassan Nae-u1-Mursafi too has written a commentary of Nahjul Balaghah which was published from Darul-Kutub-al-Arabia. In its preface under the title 'A Word about the Arabic Language,' he writes:

"In this field Ali (as) was the foremost, and the greatest proof for this is Nahjul Balaghah which Allah has made a clear proof of the fact that Ali bin Abi Talib (as) was the light of the Quran and the finest living example of wisdom, knowledge, guidance, miracle and eloquence.

In it many things have been collected at one place by Hazrat Ali (as) which cannot be found in one place even after putting together the utterances of great sages, matchless philosophers and world-reputed divine scholars, comprising high pinnacles of wisdom, canons of correct politics, astonishing sermons and effective contentions.

In this book Ali bin Abi Talib (as) has plunged in the streams of knowledge, politics and religion and proved himself as the most prominent in all of them.

(17) Professor Muhammad-az-Zohri-ul Ghumravi wrote a preface to the above mentioned commentary by Mursafi. Therein under the caption "Classes of the Eloquent" he writes:- "From none of these classes of persons such performance has come down to us as has come from Amir-ul-Momineen Ali (may Allah honour his face).

His utterances cover renunciative sermons, political course of action and religious admonition, nice philosophical statements, moral instructions, jewels about oneness of Allah, clues about the unknown, retort and refutation of the opponent and common advices, and the book containing his bright utterances is Nahjul Balaghah which has been compiled by Abul Hasan Muhammad bin Tahir known as Sharif Razi, may Allah have mercy on him, reward him and be pleased with him."

(18) Professor Abdul Wahab Hamoodah, Professor of Modern Literature in the Faculty of Literature, University of Fawad the First in Egypt has written in his article, "The Collective Opinions on Nahjul Balaghah" published in the Magazine Al-Islam of Cairo, vol. III, No.3 for Ramzan. 1370. A.H. corresponding to July 1951 A.D.:

"In the book Nahjul Balaghah all those things have been put collected by Ali bin Abi Talib (as) which can be collected from all the great scholars, world famous philosophers and reputed vines put together. High pinnacles of wisdom, canons of pure politics, astonishing sermons of all sorts, effective contentions and collective conceptions, all these are an open testimony to the distinction and highest performance of the Imam (as).

(19) Allama Abu Nasr, Professor, University of Beirut has in Chapter 31 of his book "Ali bin Abi Talib" mentioned Nahjul Balaghah among the Arabic relics of Amirul Momineen and has written in this regard that this book is an index to the great personality of Ali but Abi Talib (as).

(20) Qazi Ali Bin Muhammad Shookani the author of Nail-ul-Autar has, in his book Ittehaf-al-Akabar be Asaneed-id-dafatir published in Hyderabad under the Chapter of "Noon" written about Nahjul Balaghah, after recording his continuous authorities writes as follows: "Nahjul Balaghah is the word of Ali, may Allah be pleased with him."

This is a fact which has been admitted by numerous Christian researchers as well:

(1) Abdul Masih Antakee, editor of the Magazine Al-Imran who has written his famous book "Sharh al-Qaseedae Alavia" on the life of Amirul Momineen (as) and it has been published at Matba al-Ramesees, Fujala, Egypt on page. 530; thereof he writes:

"There is no dispute that Sayyidina Amirul Momineen Ali (as) is the leader of the eloquent and master of rhetoricians and the biggest among Arabic speakers and writers. This is the utterance about which it has been correctly said that it is above the word of the creatures and below that of the Creator.

This is the opinion of everyone who has knowledge of the art of composition and engages himself in writing. In fact, he is the master of the Arabic writers and their teacher. There can be no literary scholar wishing to acquire the art of writing but he should have before him the Quran and Nahjul Balaghah the one as the word of the Creator and the other the utterance of the noblest creature.

And on them depends everyone who wishes to be listed among good writers. Perhaps the highest position among those who served the Arabic language is that of Sharif Razi who collected these sermons, sayings and sagacious utterances of Amirul Momineen (as) from the memories of people and manuscripts. And he quite aptly named them Nahjul Balaghah. Doubtlessly it is the right path of rhetoric's for the person who desires to reach that goal."

After this he has recorded the opinion of Shaikh Muhammad Abdoh and has there after written that once Shaikh Ibrahim Yaziji who has been unanimously admitted as the perfect writer of Arabic and the leader of all teachers of the language, told him that the perfection achieved by him in this art was only due to study of Quran and Nahjul Balaghah. The two are such living treasures of the Arabic language which can never exhaust.

(2) Fuward Afram-ul-Bustani, Professor of Arabic Literature in the Academy of Qadees Yusuf (Beirut). He has commenced a series of instructional books by the name of 'Rawae' (admirable things) wherein he has compiled from literary relics and compositions of numerous high ranking authors short selections, accounts of the author, performances, history of the book and historical research etc. in small collections and they have been published at the Catholic Christian Press, Beirut.

The first collection of this series concerns Amirul Momineen (as) and Nahjul Balaghah about which the compiler writes in his preface: "We first begin this series with sonic selections from Nahjul Balaghah which is the book of the very first thinker in Islam". There after begins the series which is the first serial in the series of Rawae.

Its first topic is Ali bin Abi Talib (as) in which under various captions the life and chief characteristics of Amirul Momineen (as) have been discussed, which being the writing of a Christian may not be fully in consonance with Shia view point yet it contains lots of jewels of fact and justness.

The second topic is Nahjul Balaghah. Among its sub-topics there is one "Its compilation" and the other "Authenticity of its Attribution". Under this it is written: "Much time had not passed after compilation of Nahjul Balaghah when some scholar's historians began to doubt its veracity.

Their pioneer is Ibn Khallakan who attributed this book to its compiler. Thereafter Safadi and others followed him, and then due to Sharif Razi being known through the relationship of his grandfather Murtaza, some people were led astray and they could not distinguish between him and his elder brother Ali bin Tahir known as Sayyid Murtaza (b. 966 A.D. and d. 1044 A.D.).

They attributed the compilation of Nahjul Balaghah to the latter, as Jurji Zaidan has done, while others like the orientalist Clemann went so far as to hold Sayyid Murtaza the real author of the book. When we look into the cause of this doubt they eventually boil down to five points".

Thereafter he has recounted almost the same reasons for the doubts which have been stated just before in the account of Mohiuddin Abdul Hameed the Commentator of Nahjul Balaghah. Then he has refuted those grounds.

(3) The world famous Christian Scholar and Poet of Beirut, Polis Salama writes on pages 71–72 of his book "Awwal Mulhima Arabia Edul Ghadeer" published at Matba al-Nassr, Beirut : – "Nahjul Balaghah is the most famous book from which we get complete acquaintance with Imam Ali (as), and save Quran the eloquence of no other book surpasses it." Thereafter he has written the following couplets in praise of Nahjul Balaghah:

"This is a pivot of learning and knowledge and an open door to secrets and intricacies. This Nahjul Balaghah is but Jewels dispersed in a shining book. It is the garden of decorated flowers which has the gracefulness of the flowers; brilliance of streams and sweetness of the spring of Kausar, here in the banks of its stream are visible but the eye cannot discern its bottom"

From the quotations of the above-mentioned scholars and traditionists the literal and virtual importance of Nahjul Balaghah has also been incidentally proved. It is not necessary to write further about it. Now remains the ranking of this Book from technical point of view as to what degree we can base our contentions on it.

Thus, as a whole in our view the attribution of the contents of this book towards Amirul Momineen (as) is proved to the same degree as the attribution of Saheefa al-Kamila towards Imam Zainul Abedeen (as) or of the four books towards their authors or of the Seven Suspended Poems Moallegat al-Saba'e to their composers.

As regards satisfaction about specific expressions or words that is related to style of speech or manner of expression, depends on conformity of the contents with the source-books that are regarded as well-proved.

Technically, according to the definition adopted by the ancients who, for correctness of a tradition, regard the trustworthiness of the source to be enough, on satisfaction of this condition every part of it acquires the quality of trustworthiness.

And according to the later thinkers who regulate trustworthiness according to the qualities of the narrator the contents of Nahjul Balaghah fall under the category of Mursalat. The importance of Mursalat goes by the personality of the narrator, so much so that about Ibn Abi Ameer and some other high ranking companions it has been laid down that when the veracity of a tradition is proved up to them then there is no need to go farther than that as to who is the narrator, because their acceptance of it is a proof of its trustworthiness.

That is why it has been said that Mursalat of Ibn Abi Ameer fall in the category of Musnad (Authentic). On this basis the eminent position of Sayyid Razi (may Allah heighten his position) places it above the common Mursalat.

Nevertheless without taking into account sermons and historical items which are not as important as belief and action, with regard to belief and action we should scrutinize the contents of Nahjul Balaghah and the contentions adopted therein on the principle of equation and preference, and on some occasions it is possible that the tradition contained in the Nahjul Balaghah may secure preference over "a Musnad" tradition on the same topic.

And in some instances the matter may end in similarity 'Takafu' while in some others the other contentions might hold the field; but this does not in any way affect the overall position of Nahjul Balaghah. Its weight remains intact just as the weight of Kafi remains admitted despite a few of its traditions being disregarded for one reason or other.

In any case the scholastic, literary and religious importance of Nahjul Balaghah and the weight of its truthful contents and moral sermons are undeniable. But evidently only those persons who have mastery over the Arabic language can derive real benefit from Nahjul Balaghah. Those not knowing Arabic are unable to take advantage of this living treasure.

That is why Irani scholars and poets felt the need to publish its Persian translations. Accordingly several translations have been published in Iran and this process continues till now. In Urdu language no satisfactory translations has yet been rendered. A few translations were published but in some of them there were very many mistakes and in others figurative expression did not keep it within the bounds of translation.

Moreover the annotations sometimes purely confrontational style abounded whereas sometimes extreme brevity ignored some essential meaning. Moulana Mufti Jafar Husain whose personality needs no introduction in India and Pakistan and whose scholarly achievements along with sublimity of character and simplicity of living present an exemplary position in India and Pakistan took up the task of full translation of this book and of explanatory annotations and completed this job with assiduity and

diligence.

This attempt of his is worthy of appreciation. It can be said without doubt or misgiving that among the translations of this book and its annotations in our language that have been published; the position of this translation on account of its correctness, fluency and beauty of style is certainly high. In the annotations also nothing has been left out by way of necessary explanations nor has anything superfluous been allowed to stay therein.

Doubtlessly this compilation has satisfied a great need of providing acquaintance with the necessary contents and important points of Nahjul Balaghah on which the aforesaid compiler deserves congratulations. I am sure people of taste in every class would accord to this book the welcome that it deserves. Allah may well reward its compiler in both the worlds.

4th Jamadi-uth-Thaani, 1375 A.H.

Ali Naqi-un-Naqvi

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