

?What is Nahjul Balagha

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The Nahj al-balaghah is a collection of sermons, precepts, prayers, epistles and aphorisms of 'Ali ('a) compiled by al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radi about one thousand years ago. However, neither the recorded words of Mawla 'Ali are confined to those collected by al-Sayyid al-Radi, nor was he the only man to compile the sayings of Amir al-Muminin. Al-Masudi, who lived a hundred years before al-Sayyid al-Radi, in the second volume of his work Muruj al-dhahab , writes: "At present there are over 480 sermons of 'Ali in the hands of the people," whereas the total number of sermons included by al-Sayyid al-Radi in his collection is 239 only.

The alienation from the Nahj al-balaghah was not confined to me or others like me, but pervaded through the Islamic society. Those who understood this book, their knowledge did not go beyond the translation of its words and explanatory notes on its sentences. The spirit and the content of the book were hidden from the eyes of all. Only lately, it may be said, the Islamic world has begun to explore the Nahj al-balaghah , or in other words, the Nahj al-balaghah has started its conquest of the Muslim world.

What is surprising is that a part of the contents of the Nahj al-balaghah , both in Shi'ite Iran and Arab countries, was first discovered either by atheists or non-Muslim theists, who revealed the greatness of the book to the Muslims. Of course, the purpose of most or all of them was to utilize the Nahj al-balaghah of 'Ali ('a) for justifying and confirming their own social views; but the outcome was exactly opposite of what they desired. Because, for the first time the Muslims realized that the views expressed grandiloquently by others had nothing new to offer and that they cannot surpass what is said in the Nahj al-balaghah of 'Ali ('a), or translated into action through the character (sirah) of 'Ali and his disciples like Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, and 'Ammar. The result of it was that instead of supporting the pretentious views of those who wished to exploit the Nahj al-balaghah , 'Ali and his book defeated their purpose. Nevertheless, it must be accepted that before this occurred, most of us had little knowledge of the Nahj al-balaghah and it hardly went beyond appreciation of few sermons about virtues of piety and abstinence. Nobody had yet recognized the significance of the valuable epistle of Mawla 'Ali to Malik al-'Ashtar al-Nakh'i; nobody had paid attention to it.

Addressee's of Nahjul Balagha

Imam Ali(a.s) in his sermons addressed several categories and groups of people both in positive and negative sense, we have summarized the groups over here:

His Ahlulbayt (a.s) - Preachings , Guidance and Will

His sincere followers (a.s) - Guidance Advices (like Hamam, Meesam, Malik-e-Ashtar)

First Group of Opponents, the Mushrikeen (infidels, Jews)

Second Group of Opponents, those companion of Prophet(s.w) who opposed him.

Third Group of Opponents , those companion of Prophet(s.w) who did not oppose directly but remained silent when injustice was done to him and Islam.

Fourth Group, the opponents of Battle of Jamal

Fifth Group, the opponents of Siffeen (the companions of Muwiyah)

Sixth Group, the opponents of Naharwan (the Khwarij who deviated from him)

Seventh Group, his own followers who lacked the sense of responsibility and were condemned by him on several occasions in very harsh language (the Kufis)

The Contents of Nahjul Balagha

Nahj al-balaghah comprises various issues that cover major problems of metaphysics, theology, fiqh, tafsir, hadith, prophetology, imamate, ethics, social philosophy, history, politics, administration, civics, science, rhetoric, poetry, literature, etc. Most of the discussions about various theological issues and philosophical notions in Islam have their origin in this very book. Similarly, all the controversies regarding socio-political problems in the Muslim society and state left their echo in Nahj al-balaghah, or rather those were inspired from the utterances of al-Imam 'Ali (as).

The book not only reflects the spirit of early Islam and the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet (saw) in the proper perspective, but also serves as a guide to traverse the future in the light of these teachings. It is a matter of regret that Nahj al-balaghah was not properly utilized by the Muslims as a source book of Islamic philosophy, kalam, fiqh, and ethics due to misconceptions about its attribution to al-Imam 'Ali (as). In the presence of strong and sufficient evidence in support of the contents of the book being authentic, it was sheer prejudice and lack of the spirit of inquiry that was responsible for neglecting such a reliable source of Islamic ideas. In recent times, the Orientalists have spread the unfounded doubts of Ibn Khallikan and al-Dhahabi among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in the name of objectivity in research, thus giving a respectable appearance to their ignorance, which was, of course, combined and prompted by their motive to alienate the Muslims from their intellectual heritage. I know many a scholar in India and Pakistan questioning the authenticity of Nahj al-balaghah's ascription to Amir al-Mu'minin using lofty words of research-objectivity with a hefty-pose of a dispassionate seeker of truth. None of them, I am sure, ever studied any book about early sources of the sermons and letters of al-Imam 'Ali (as), nor did any one of them

ever try to gain really objective information about the book. Unfortunately none of them bothered to go through even the valuable research done by Imtiyaz 'Ali Khan 'Arshi, a widely read and respected writer in the literary circles of Urdu in the Subcontinent. It was because of my first-hand knowledge of this pitiable situation that I have intentionally devoted the major part of the present article to the issue of the authenticity of the attribution of the contents of

Nahj al-Balaghah, in the light of earlier sources, to 'Ali (as).

Those who insist upon denying the veracity of Nahj al-balaghah are either suffering from a malady of deep-rooted prejudice spread through the propaganda of the supporters of Banu Umayyah, or their minds and spirits have been blinded by the propagation of falsehood by the Orientalists under the garb of high-sounding academic jargon. If our minds are cured of this jaundiced perception of our own past, Nahj al-balagha can be paid the attention it deserves and its contents will be studied and its meanings will be fully explored and exploited for a better understanding of Islamic ideas and realities. A look at the subjects discussed in Nahj al-balagha will be helpful in ascertaining the wide scope of this invaluable treasure of wisdom. So far a few attempts to classify the subject matter of the book have been made none of which has been comprehensive.

A subject-wise index of the contents of Nahj al-balaghah has been prepared by 'Ali Ansariyan and published in Arabic under the title al-Dallil 'ala mawdu'at Nahj al-balaghah in 1395/1975. It was translated and published three years ago in Persian with the sub-title Nahj al-balaghah mawdu'i. The compiler has divided the contents into eight categories, each dealing with a specific subject further divided into various issues pertaining to the main theme.

The main divisions are as follows:

1. Ma'rifat Allah,
2. Ma'rifat al-kawn,
3. Ma'rifat al-hujjah,
4. Ma'rifat nizam al-huqumah wa al-mujtama',
5. Ma'rifat al-'ahkam,
6. Ma'rifat al-'akhlaq,
7. Ma'rifat al-ta'rikh, and
8. Ma'rifat al-ma'dd

Misconceptions about Nahjul Balagha

No scholar of Sunni or Shi'a profession has questioned the genuineness and authenticity of Nahj al-balagha for more than two centuries. The first person to raise doubts about its attribution to Amir al-Mu'minin was Ibn Khallikan (d. 681/1282), who, without referring to any

author or source,made the following remarks about the authorship of Nahj al-balaghah: People have different opinions about the compiler of Nahj al- balaghah, a collection of the utterances of al-'Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) There is difference as to whether it was compiled by al-Sharif al-Murtada or his brother al-Radi. It is also said that it is not at all the composition of 'Ali (as) and that the one who compiled it and attributed it to him made it himself; but Allah knows the truth. These remarks were made in Wafayat al-aya'n in connection with the account of the life and work of al-Sharif al-Murtada, al-Radi's elder brother.

Ibn al-'Athir al Jazari (555-630/1160-1232) in Mukhtasar al-Wafayat, Salah al-Din al-Safadi (d. 764/1362) in al-Wafi bi al-wafayat, al-'Allamah al-Yafi'i(d. 768/1366) in Mir'at al Jinan, and Ibn al-'Imad in Shadharat al-dhahab were content just to repeat Ibn Khallikan's conjecture without bothering to substantiate it. Al-'Allamah al-Dhahabi (d. 748/1347) in Mizan ul-'itidal was the first person to pick up the audacity to raise the unfounded doubt to a degree of certainty a century after Ibn Khallikan. He wrote in his account of al-Murtada: Al Sharif al-Murtada, who is accused of fabricating Nahj al- balaghah, was a scholar of considerable knowledge. Whosoever sees his book Nahj al-balaghah would come to believe that it was falsely attributed to Amir al-Mu'minin (as), because it contains open abuse rather than downgrading of the two caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Contradictions and mean matters have also crept into it, which do not conform with the spirit of the Companions of the Quraysh and our knowledge of the later Companions.

One is convinced that the major part of this book is forged and unauthentic. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 748/1347) repeated al-Dhahabi's objections without bothering to probe deeper into the matter. The most interesting and at the same time the weakest part of the objections concerns ascription of the authorship of Nahj al-balaghah to al-Murtada. The objectors belonged to the Umayyad West and had deep prejudices against Shii scholars, and perhaps under the impact of Umayyad propaganda their prejudice was so deep-rooted that even their scholarship could not rise above it. Among the four contemporaries of al-Radi and al-Murtada, three, that is, al-Tha'alibi, al-Najashi (d. 450/1058), and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 463/1071) have given accounts of both the brothers. Al Shaykh al-Tusi did not give any account of al-Radi in al-Fihrist or al-Rijal, but he did not count Nahj al-balagha among the works of al-Murtada, which dispel any conjecture attributing its authorship to him, because al-Tusi was very close to him as his student.

Al-Tha'alibi and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi did not mention Nahj al-balaghah either in the account of al-Murtada or that of al-Radi. Al-Najashi in unambiguous terms attributed Nahj al-balagha to al-Radi. Al-Tusi's exclusion of Nahj al-balaghah from the works of al-Murtada, and al-

Najashi's mention of it among the works of al-Radi are sufficient to prove that it was without any doubt a work of al-Radi. The objectors, who could not even determine authorship of the book exactly, depended on nothing but their whim to raise doubts about its authenticity. A more convincing proof of al-Radi's authorship of Nahj al-balaghah can be found in his own other works in which he has mentioned it. Those books are the following: 1. Khasa'is al-'A'immah: A manuscript of this work of al-Radi is in Rida Library Rampur (India) which reveals that Fadl Allah ibn 'Ali al-Husayn al-Rawandi (d. 555/1160) accepted Khasa'is as al-Radi's work. In this book, as quoted above, al-Radi has mentioned his intention of compiling Nahj al-

balaghah. 2. Haqa'iq al-tanzil: Only the fifth part of this book is accessible to us. Its authorship is unanimously attributed to al-Radi. On page 167 of this book al-Radi makes this remark: Anybody who needs a proof of our claim should refer to our book Nahj al-balaghah and think upon its contents. We have compiled all forms and genres of the utterances of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) in this book, which comprises sermons, letters, aphorisms, and admonitions, and is divided into three independent parts, each containing a specific genre. 3. Majazat al-'athar al-Nabawiyah: Al-Najashi and others have included this book among al-Radi's works. At two places in this book al-Radi has referred to Nahj al-balaghah as a work of his own compilation. It is important to note that even Ibn Khallikan, al-Dhahabi and Ibn Hajar did not question the authenticity of the attribution of Nahj al-balaghah in its entirety to 'Ali (as). They were mainly skeptical of those parts which were critical of the Caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Umar. But if we find such utterances and writings of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) in both Shi'i and non-Shi'i sources earlier than Nahj al-balaghah, baselessness of al-Dhahabi's and Ibn Hajar's objections can be conclusively proved. Let us again refer to Istina'd-e Nahj al-balaghah by 'Arshi, a contemporary Sunni scholar of India.

With respect to the harshest of the sermons concerning the issue of the caliphate, known as al-Khutbat al-dhiqshiqiyah, 'Arshi refers to the following early sources in which the sermon had occurred: 1. Abu Ja'far Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi (d. 274/887) has quoted it in full in al-Mahasin wa al-'adab. 2. Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Thaqafi al-Kufi (d. 283/896) quoted it in al-Gharat. In his notes on al-Gharat, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Muhaddith, quoting Imtiyaz 'Ali Khan 'Arshi, says that this khutbah is not found in it; even Ibn Abi al-Hadid and al-'Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi (1037-1110 or 1111/1627-1698 or 99) did not refer to al-Gharat as an early source of this sermon. 3. Abu 'Ali Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba'i al-Basri al-Mu'tazili (d. 303/915 -16) narrated it. 4. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Qubbah al-Razi (a teacher of al-Mufid and a pupil of Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, a Mu'tazili in his youth) quoted it in al-Insaf. 5. Abu al-Qasim 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmud al-Ka'bi al-

Balkhi al-Mu'tazili (d. 319/931) in al-'Insaf. 6. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Musa ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, known as al-Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 318/930), has quoted it in two of his books: *Ilal al Sharayi'* and *Ma'ani al-'akhbar*. 7. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man, known as al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/ 1022) in *Kitdb al-'irshad*. 8. Shaykh al-Ta'ifah

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. 460/1068) in al-'Amali.

'Arshi adds that al-Shaykh al-Saduq has narrated this Khutbah on the authority of two different chains of narrators: Narrated to us Muhammad ibn 'Ali Majalawayh from his uncle Muhammad Ibn al-Qasim, he from Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Barqi he from his father, he from Ibn Abi 'Umayr, he from Aban ibn 'Uthman he from 'Aban ibn Taghlib, he from 'Ikrimah, he from 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas. (*'Ilal al-sharayi'* and *Ma'anial-' akhbar*) Narrated to us Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ishaq al-Taliqani, from 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Yahya al Jalludi, from Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad ibn 'Ammar ibn Khalid, from Yahya ibn 'Abd al-Hamid al- Hammani, from 'Isa ibn Rashid, from 'Ali ibn Khuzaymah, from 'Ikrimah, from Ibn al-'Abbas. (*Ma'ani al 'akhbar*) Al-Sayyid al-Radi has not quoted the entire chain of narrators, and was content to remark that the sermon was popularly known as '*al-Shiqshiqiyah* ', while his teacher al-Mufid narrates both the chain of narrators and the story behind its narration.

This is indicative of the fact that this sermon was so famous in those days that al-Radi did not find it necessary to prove its veracity by quoting the chain of its narrators. Surprisingly, the same famous sermon was used by his and 'Ali's opponents to question his veracity and to malign him by accusing him and/or his brother of forging it. The kind of criticism Ibn Khallikan and his followers dabbled in not only discredits them as researchers but also makes their other works suspicious in the eyes of impartial and objective students of history. Those who could not find any of the above-mentioned books to cross-check the veracity of *Nahj al-balaghah* had failed miserably even in determining correctly its authorship.

Al-Shaykh al-Mufid has collected a number of 'Ali's speeches in al-'Irshad concerning the issue of the succession to the Prophet (saw) and 'Ali's criticism of the ways and means adopted by his opponents to deprive him of the caliphate. The famous Khutbah known as *al-Shiq-shiqiyah* begins with the following preface: (A group of traditionists report by a variety of chains of authority (*turuq*) on the authority of Ibn al-'Abbas, who said:) I [i.e. Ibn al-'Abbas, was with the Commander of the Faithful at al-Rahabah I mentioned the [matter of] Caliphate and those who had preceeded him.

He breathed heavily and said: "By God, Ibn Abi Quhatah took on...." This khutbah ends with the following words: Then you would have found that your world is more insignificant in my eyes than a goat's snot. At this point 'Ali's speech was interrupted by a man from Kufah. Ibn al-

'Abbas, after narrating the text of the speech, adds: I have never regretted anything nor felt such distress like the distress I felt at losing the rest of the speech of the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him. When he finished reading the letter, I said: "Commander of the Faithful would you continue your speech from the point which you reached?" He answered: "In no way, in no way.

It was like foam on the camel's mouth (shiqshiqah) as it opens its mouth to bellow and then falls silent." Apart from al-'Irshad this khutbah, as claimed by 'Arshi, is found in other sources also. In no way can it be dubbed as al-Radi's or al-Murtada's fabrication. Sayyid Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani, in *Mahuwa Nahj al-balaghah*, has quoted different versions of al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyyah from: *Nathral-durar wa nuzhat al-'adab* by the vizier Abu Sa'id al-'Abi; al-'Irshad by al-Shaykh al-Mufid; *al-Mahasin wa al-'adab* by al-Barqi; al-Saduq in *Ila'l al-sharayi'*; and a book of al-Jalludi.

All the versions have minor differences, which indicate that the source from which al-Radi quoted this sermon was other than these four. After enumerating the earlier works containing this khutbah, Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani points out that Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, one of the compilers of al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyyah, was a follower of the Banu Umayyah and a staunch admirer of the third caliph 'Uthman ibn al-Affan. Much earlier than Ibn Khallikan made his remark questioning the authenticity of the attribution of *Nahj al-balaghah*, certain doubts had come to circulate as indicated by Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili (d. 555/1257), who referred to a discussion concerning the attribution of al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyyah with his teacher Abu al-Khayr Musaddiq ibn Shabib [sic. Shayb] al-Wasiti (d. 605/1208), who said: I read this khutbah in the presence of Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad, known as Ibn al-Khashshab (493-567/1099-1172)... and asked him if he considered this khutbah to be a forged one and not of 'Ali (as). Ibn al-Khashshab said: By God, I am convinced that it is from 'Ali and I am as sure of it as I am convinced of your truthfulness.

Al-Wasiti said to Ibn al-Khashshab: "A group is of the view that this khutbah was fabricated by al-Radi, may God be pleased with him." Ibn al-Khashshab said: Is it not beyond the eloquence of al-Radi or any other? How could he speak from such a high level of spirituality in such a (forceful) style? We are well acquainted with al-Radi's writings, his style and his technique. I have assessed both his poetry and prose, these words as compared to those of al-Radi are so different that there is no question of confusing them with his writings." He further said: By God, I have read this sermon in books written two hundred years before the birth of al-Radi. Yes, of course, I have seen it written in many books. I can identify this khutbah very well and know that which of the 'ulama' and men of letters quoted it (in his work) much before al-Radi's father was

born." (Sharh Nahj al-balaghah, vol. I) On another occasion, in his Sharh Nahj al-balaghah, Ibn Abi al-Hadid A group of blind followers of their own whims and wishes is of the opinion that the best part of Nahj al-balagha is fabricated and forged by a group of Shi'i writers and is something new. Most of them consider a part of it to be the product of al-Radi's pen or of others. But this group consists of prejudiced people, whose heart's vision is blocked by partiality and who have deviated from the right and straight path of truth; they have strayed from truth due to perversion, lack of knowledge, and unfamiliarity with literature and poetry. (vol. 1, p. 543) At another place he writes about the words of Amir al-Mu'minin (as): His eloquence is such that he is the leader of the eloquent and the guide and master of orators. It is said about his utterances that his words are below the Word of the Creator only, but over and above the words of all creatures; and from him the world has learnt the art of speech and rhetoric. There were people in the age of al-Radi himself whose hearts and eyes were sealed in such a manner that they attributed some of 'Ali's utterances to Mu'fiwiyah. Al-Radi's commentary on the following khutbah, is important: His comment, are as follows: People with no ability to understand literature ascribe it to Mu'awiyah whereas these are undoubtedly the words of Amir al- Mu'minin. How can dirt compare with pure gold?... 'Amr ibn Bahr al Jahiz, a critic gifted with insight and a distinct sensibility, has probed the matter minutely. He has included this khutbah in al-Bayan wa al-tabyin, and has mentioned those who attributed it to Mu'awiyah. Subsequently he says: "This speech is very much like the speeches of 'Ali (as) and is in conformity with the great man's classification of people, and it also corresponds with his manner of depicting the people's modes of behaving in anger, under oppression and waywardness, and in the state of dissimulation and fear. Similarly, al-Radi refers to his sources on a number of occasions, and also gives an account of the circumstances that were responsible for the mood and theme of a certain sermon. He has referred to: al Jahiz; al-Waqidi; Abu Ja'far al-'Iskafi; Hisham ibn al-Kalbi; Sa'id ibn Yahya ai-'Umayy, the author of al-Maghazi; Abu 'Ubayd al- Qasim ibn Salam; al-Tabari; Tha'lab; Ibn al-'A'rabi; al-Mubarrad, and many others.

How could an author who allegedly forged the utterances and writings of Amir al- Mu'minin (as) be so honest in acknowledging his indebtedness to his predecessors? Those who raised doubts about the contents of Nahj al-balagha were unaware of the high status and prestige of its compiler, both in the society and in the academic circles. A man of his eminence could not even think of fabricating sermons and letters in the name of al-'Imam 'Ali (as). Had any such attempt been made by anybody, Shi'i scholars themselves would have been the first to reject it, as an anthology of poetry attributed to al-'Imam 'Ali (as) (Diwan-e 'Ali) was never accepted by

the majority of Shi'i scholars as authentic. Some other such works, for example, the commentary on the Quran attributed to al- Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as) or Fiqh al-Rida attributed to al Imam al-Rida (as), are at issue among Shi'i scholars. But no one among al-Radi's contemporaries or from the successive generations of Sunni or Shi'i 'ulama' ever questioned Nahj al-balaghah's authenticity for more than two centuries. Regarding the contents of Nahj al-balaghah the Muslim scholars of all shades of opinion never doubted al-Radi's veracity. They were aware of the presence of earlier sources of al-'Imam 'Ali's utterances.

There is abundant reliable evidence in support of the existence of such collections in the first and second centuries of Hijrah, from which 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahyfi, Ibn al- Muqaffa', and Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib had quoted al-'Imam 'Ali's sermons and letters. In the third and fourth centuries, too, several collections of 'Ali's khutab and rasa'il were compiled, some of which have been already referred to above. Ibn Abi al-Hadid (d. 655 or 656/1257 or 58); Taqi al-Din Ahmad, known as Ibn Taymiyyah (661-728/1263-1328); and his pupil Salah al-Din al-Safadi (d.764/1362 -63) accepted Nahj al-balaghah as a genuine collection of al Imam 'Ali's words. The former not only wrote one of the most famous commentaries on it, but also repudiated all doubts about its authenticity. Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Safadi were among staunch opponents and critics of the Shi'ah, but both of them verified the authenticity of Nahj al-balagha and the veracity of al-Sharif al-Radi. Al-Safadi, in the account of al-Radi, writes: People are of the view that Nahj al-balaghah is his own writing. But I heard my teacher, al-'Imam al-'Allamah Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah say: "Nahj al-balaghah is not al-Sayyid al-Radi's product. What in this book is the utterance of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) is known, and whatever is from al-Radi that is also known. (al-Wafi bi al-wafayat, vol. 2, p. 375) Instead of going into further details of the controversy about the authenticity of Nahj al-balaghah's ascription and forwarding more evidence against those who created doubts about it, I would recommend the keen reader to consult al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li alfaz Nahj al-balaghah, edited by al-Sayyid Kazim al-Muhammadi and al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Dashti, who have done a commendable job in preparing a very comprehensive bibliography of the sources of the book along with a detailed item- by-item list of the sources of each and every sermon, letter, and saying contained in Nahj al-balaghah. Moreover, since the death of al-Radi scholars of eminence have been always interested in writing commentaries on Nahj al-balagha, which is another very strong proof of its authenticity.

So many Sunni, Mu'tazili, and Shi'i scholars would not have taken pains to comment upon al Radi's own fabrications. 'Ali Naqi Munzawi, in the catalogue of the library of Mishkat, donated

to Tehran University, has enumerated 33 narrators of al-'Imam 'Ali's utterances before al-Radi and fourteen after him till the tenth Hijrah century. Danish Pizhoh, in his preface to Farman-e Malik Ashtar, edited by Husayn 'Alawi Awi, has given a list of its early commentators. Sayyid 'Abd al-Zahra' al-Khatib, in Masadir Nahj al balagha wa asaniduh, has counted thirty-three books written concerning the sources of Nahj al- balaghah. Hundreds of manuscripts of Nahj al-balaghah in various libraries of the world and even a greater number of the manuscripts of other earlier works containing al-'Imam 'Ali's utterances invite all seekers of truth to trace the sources and ascertain the authenticity of Nahj al-balaghah.

There are also numerous documents available which contain certificates and testimonials issued by eminent scholars to their pupils authorizing them to narrate the contents of Nahj al-balaghah along with the permission to narrate ahadith of the Prophet (saw) and the Imams (as). This is enough to show that Nahj al-balaghah has been considered to be of equal value in reliability with the most authentic compendiums of hadith. The narration of Nahj al-balagha's traditions had started during the lifetime of al-Radi. Qutb al-Din al-Rawandi (d. 573/1177) in the preface of his commentary on Nahj al- balaghoh, refers to a daughter of al-Sharif al Murtada, who had studied the book under al-Radi himself and was authorized to narrate its traditions to others, and she used to narrate Nahj al-balaghah on her uncle's authority. Shaykh .('Abd al-Rahim al-Baghdadi has narrated from this learned lady of the family of the Imams (as