

Sources of Nahjul Balaghah



Dr. Sayyid Wahid Akhtar

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Article

Authors(s):

Dr. Sayyid Wahid Akhtar [3]

The most important work of al-Radi is the compilation of selected sermons, letters and sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (as). He selected 241 sermons, 79 letters, and 489 sayings. Those numbers vary in different editions of Nahjul Balaghah. The number of sermons varies from 238 to 241 and the number of letters varies from 77 to 79, whereas sayings vary from 463 to 489.

Al-Radi, in the introduction to Nahjul Balaghah, gives an account of the circumstances that led him to compile the utterances and writings of 'Ali (as). According to this account, while busy in writing Khasa'is al-A'immah he planned to devote the last part of the book to the sayings and writings of Amir al-Mu'minin (as).

This task was so absorbing and fascinating that his friends and brothers-in-faith desired that he should compile a book covering all the forms of 'Ali's utterances such as letters, lectures, counsels, moral admonitions and aphorisms, for, they would prove to be masterpieces of eloquence, rhetoric, aphorisms and jewels of wisdom, probably the best after the Quran and hadith of the Prophet (as) in Arabic language and literature.

He writes:

... And these were not collected in any other work, nor found together in any other book ... Amir al-Mu'minin (as) was the fountain of eloquence and (his utterances) the source of rhetoric. Through him hidden delicacies of eloquence and rhetoric came to light, and from him were learnt its principles and rules.

Every speaker and orator had to tread on his footprints, and every eloquent preacher availed of his utterances. Even then they could not equal him, for the credit for being the first and foremost remained with him, because his utterances were those that carried the reflection of Divine knowledge and savour of the Prophet's utterances. Accordingly I acceded to their request, as I knew that it meant great reward, handsome reputation and a treasure of recompense.

The object of this compilation is that I should bring forth Amir al-Mu'minin's greatness and superiority in the art of rhetoric which is in addition to his countless qualities and innumerable distinctions, and to show that he has risen to the highest pinnacle of this attainment, is singular among all those predecessors whose utterances are quoted here and there, whereas his own utterances are like an onrushing and irresistible stream, and such a treasure of subtleties in language is unmatched.

Since I proudly trace my descent from him I feel pleasure in quoting a couplet of al-Farazdaq: These are my forefathers O Jarir, when we get together, can you cite any as their equals? In my view Amir al-

Mu'minin's utterances are divisible in three categories: firstly sermons and decrees, secondly letters and communications, and thirdly maxims and counsels. Allah willing I intend to compile first the sermons, then letters, and then maxims and counsels, and propose a separate chapter for each category, leaving blank pages in between each of them so that if anything has been left out and is found afterwards it may be inserted there in ...

Apart from al-Radi's assessment of 'Ali's utterances and their literary as well as philosophical aspect, the important point to be noted is his reference to other sources. This is in itself enough to counter the allegations of the later writers like Ibn Khallikan and Ibn Hajar that a major portion of Nahjul Balaghah was falsely ascribed to 'Ali (as). Before coming to those allegations I would like to quote another passage from al-Radi's introduction to Nahjul Balaghah which far more explicitly refers to the earlier sources from which al-Radi selected the contents of his compendium:

In this compilation in some places there is repetition of words or subject matter. The excuse for this is that Amir al-Mu'minin's utterances have been related in numerous forms. Sometimes it happened that a particular utterance was found in a particular form in a tradition and was taken down in that very form.

Thereafter the same utterance was found in some other tradition either with acceptable addition or in a better style of expression. In such a case with a view to further the object of compilation and to present a beautiful utterance from being lost it was decided to repeat it. It has also happened that a particular utterance had appeared earlier but due to remoteness it has been entered again.

This is through omission, not by intent. In spite of all this I do not claim that I have collected Amir al-Mu'minin's utterances from everywhere and that no single sentence of any type or construction has been left out. In fact I do not rule out the possibility that whatever has been left out might be more than what has been collected, and what has been in my knowledge and use is far less than what has remained beyond my reach. My task was to strive to the best of my capacity and it was Allah's part to make the way easy and guide me to the goal; Allah may will so.

Sources of Nahjul Balaghah

Though al-Radi has not furnished a bibliography of the sources from which he collected the writings and sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) he has referred occasionally to certain books and their compilers in his explanatory notes on various sermons, letters and sayings. Several scholars have sought to trace back the sources of different utterances and letters collected in Nahjul Balaghah to the works compiled centuries before the birth of al-Radi. The most painstaking research in this context was done by an Indian Sunni scholar Imtiyaz 'Ali 'Arshi, who died a few years ago.

He succeeded in tracing back the early sources of 106 sermons, 37 letters and 79 stray sayings of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) in his book *Istinad-e Nahjul Balaghah*, originally written in Urdu, subsequently translated into Arabic in 1957, then into English and Persian. The translator of the Persian text adds very

useful notes, which usually provide further knowledge about the sources of Nahjul Balaghah and occasionally point out 'Arshi's errors in some matters.

However, this work still stands as the most valuable research in this field. Besides this work, some others deserve special mention such as 'Abd al-Zahra' al-Husayni al-Khatib's Masadir Nahjul Balaghah, Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani's Ma huwa Nahjul Balaghah, Sayyid 'Ali al-Naqawi al-Nasirabadi's introduction to the Urdu translation of Nahjul Balaghah by Mufti Ja'far Husayn, and al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li alfaz Nahjul Balaghah, a joint work of al-Sayyid Kazim al-Muhammadi and al-Shaykh Muhammad Dashti. Sayyid Muhammad 'Askari Ja'fari and Sayyid 'Ali Rida also dealt with the issue of basic sources of Nahjul Balaghah in their prefaces to their separate translations of the book into English. Here follows with some minor corrections and additions of 'Arshi's list of the early sources containing the utterances and writings of Ali (as)

1. Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin 'ala al-manabir fi aljuma' wa al-'ayad wa ghayriha; by Zayd ibn Wahab al Jahni (d. 96/714–15). This book was available till the fifth century H, for Abu Ja'far al-Tusi (d. 460/1067) has quoted from it in his writings.
2. Kitab khutab Amir al-Mu'minin, by Abu Ya'qub Isma'il ibn Mahran ibn Muhammad al-Sakuni al-Kufi (d. circa 148/765).
3. Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya al-'Azdi (d. circa 157/773–74) has quoted Amir al-Mu'minin's utterances in the following works of his own: Kitab al Jamal, Kitab ahl al-Nahrawan wa al-Khawarij, Kitab al-gharat, Kitab maqtal 'Ali, Kitab maqtal Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr wa al-'Ashtar wa Muhammad ibn Hudhaybah, and Kitab al-shurd wa maqtal 'Uthman. (Here may be added another work: al-Khutbat al-Zahra'li Amir al-Mu'minin.)
4. Kitab khutab Amir al-Mu'minin by Abu Muhammad Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah al-'Abdi al-Kufi (d. 183/799). He was a pupil of al-Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), and Ibn Shadhan has narrated traditions on his authority.
5. Kitab khutab 'Ali by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn al-Hakam ibn Zahir al-Fazari al-Kufi (d. 177/793) Abu al-'Abbas al-Najashi (d. 450/1058) has narrated on his authority.
6. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Sulayman Hashami (Nahami) al-Khazzaz al-Kufi (third century H.) besides compiling al-Khutab li Amir al-Mu'minin, compiled other books such as Kitab al-dua, Kitab khalq al-samawat, and Kitab maqtal Amir al-Mu'minin. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi has quoted from his works.
7. Kitab khutab 'Ali Karram Allah wajhah by Abu Mundhir Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'ib al-Kalbi (d. 206/821). He also wrote Maqtal 'Uthman, Kitab al Jamal, Kitab Siffin, Kitab al-Nahrawan, al-Gharat and Maqtal Amir al-Mu'minin. His book containing al-Imam 'Ali's khutab was studied by al-Najashi.
8. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi (d. 207/823) quoted al-Imam 'Ali's writings and

sermons in many of his books such as Kitab al-Jamal, Kitab Siffin and Kitab al-sunnah waal-jama'ah wa dhamm al-hawa wa tark al-Khawdrij fi al-fitan. Al-Radi has referred to some of his works. He also compiled Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin (as).

9. Abu al-Fadl Nasr ibn Muzahim al-Manqari (d. 212/827) compiled a number of books, all of which contain utterances of 'Ali (as). Al-Najashi has mentioned these works: Kitab Siffin, Kitab al-Jamal, Kitab al-Nahrawan and al-Gharat. He also compiled Khutab 'Ali (as), Kitab al-manaqib, and Kitab akhbar al-Mukhtar.

10. Abu al-Khayr Salih ibn Abi Hammad al-Razi (214/829) compiled a book Khutab 'Ali (as). He was among the companions of al-Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari (as), and his book is mentioned in al-Najashi's al-Fihrist.

11. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mada'ini (d. 224/839) compiled Khutab 'Ali (as) wa kutubuh ila 'ummalihi and some other books including Ta'rikh al-khulafa.

12. Abu al-Qasim al-Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ali al-Hasani (d. 250/864), popularly known as Shah 'Abd al-'Azim, whose tomb at Shahr Ray is a place of pilgrimage. He also compiled Kitab Khutab 'Ali (as).

13. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Thaqafi al-Kafi (d. 283/896) compiled different collections of al-Imam 'Ali's utterances and letters, which are: Rasa'il 'Ali, Kalam 'Ali fial-shura, al-Khutab almu'arrabat, Kitab al-Saqifah, Maqatal 'Uthman, Kitab bay'at Amir al-Mu'minin, Kitab al-hakamayn, Kitab al-Nahrawan, and Kitab maqatal Amir al-Mu'minin. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi says that he came to know of all these books through Ahmad ibn 'Abdun.

14. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam al-Tabari, one of the contemporaries of the famous historian Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (226-310/840-41-922), collected the sermons and letters of Amir al-Mu'minin in two of his books: al-Ruwat 'an Ahl al-Bayt and Kitab al-mustarshid.

15. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (d. 328/939) quoted a number of al-Imam 'Ali's sermons and utterances in Usul al-Kafi, Rawa'at al-Kafi and Rasa'il al-'Aimmah.

16. Abu Ahmad 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Yahya ibn Ahmad ibn 'Isa al-Jalludi (d. 320/932), besides Kitab al-Jamal, Kitab Siffin, Kitab al-hakamayn, Kitab al-gharat, Kitab al-Khawdrij and Kitab hurub 'Ali, compiled ten volumes containing al-Imam 'Ali's writings and utterances: Khutab 'Ali, Kitab shi'r 'Ali, Rasa'il 'Ali Mawd'iz 'Ali, Dhikr kalaam 'Ali fi al-malahim, Qawl 'Ali fi al-shura, Kitab ma kana bayna 'Ali wa 'Uthman min ai-kalam, Kitab qadd' 'Ali, Kitab al-du'a 'an 'Ali, Kitab al-'adab 'an 'Ali. Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani has mentioned the following other books: Kitab dhikr 'Ali li Khadijah wa fada'il Ahl al-Bayt 'Alayhim al salam.

17. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Mas'udi (d. 346/957), the author of the famous book Muruj al-dhahab, has collected numerous sermons and sayings of al-Imam 'Ali (as) in Hada'iq al-

'adhhan fi akhbar Al Muhammad and Mazahir al-'akhbar wa zara'if al-'athar.

18. Abu Talib 'Ubayd Allah ibn Abi Zayd Ahmad ibn Ya'qub ibn Nasr al-'Anbari (d. 356/967), author of one hundred and forty books, compiled a collection of supplications of the Imams (as) Ad'iyat al-'A'immah, in which supplications of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) are also included.

19. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Rafi' al-Kufi al-Baghdidi, a teacher of al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) has collected the utterances of al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in his books al-Kash fi mayata'allaq bi al-Saqifah and al-Diya' (al-Safa') of tarikh al-'Aimmah. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi says he was introduced to his works through al-Mufid, al-Husayn ibn 'Ubayd Allah, Ahmad ibn 'Abdun and others.

20. Abu al-Abbas Ya'qub ibn Ahmad al-Saymari, probably son of Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Rafi', mentioned above, compiled a collection of al-'Imam 'Ali's utterances and sermons.

21. Abu Sa'id Mansur ibn al-Husayn Wazir al-Abi (d. 422/1031) collected aphorisms by al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in Nuzhat al-'adab fi al-muhadarat, and subsequently brought out and abridged this book under the title Nathr al-durar.

Existence of sources prior to al Radi

A number of other works were also compiled before al-Radi that contained al-'Imam 'Ali's writings and utterances. A selected list of those may be added to the above-mentioned books:

1. Abu 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr al Jahiz (d. 255/869) compiled in a book, Mi'at mukhtarah min kalam Amir al-Mu'minin, one hundred aphorisms selected from the utterances of 'Ali (as). His major work al-Bayan wa al-tabyin also contains the words of Amir al-Mu'minin (as).

2. Ibrahim ibn Hilal al-Thaqafi (d. 283/896) edited a book entitled Rasa'il Amir al-Mu'minin wa akhburuh wa hurubuh.

3. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi (d. 270/883 or 280/893), in his famous work al-Mahasin, considered to be the fifth Shi'i compendium of hadith after the Four Major Compendia (al-Kutub al-'arba'ah), has quoted al'Imam 'Ali's writings and sermons. He was a companion of al' Imam Muhammad al-Taqi al Jawad (as) and al' Imam 'Ali al-Naqi al-Hadi (as). Al-Shaykh al Saduq benefited from his works to a great extent.

4. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Shuibah al-Harrani al-Halabi (d. 320/932 or 380/990) collected some sayings and speeches of the Imam (as) in Tuhaf al-'uqul. He writes: If we desire to quote all his ('Ali's) sermons and utterances only in regard to the Unity of God, leaving all other themes, it would equal this very book.

5. Al-Qadi Nu'man al-Misri (d. 363/973) compiled a book Khutab Amir al-Mu'minin.

6. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Kufi al-Maruzi al-Dinawari known as Ibn Qutaybah (213-276/828-889) in 'Uyun al-'akhbar and Ghara'ib al-hadith quoted utterances of al-Imam 'Ali (as).
7. Ahmad ibn Wadih al-Ya'qubi (d. 276/889) quoted al-Imam Ali's utterances in his well-known history Ta'rikh al-Ya'qubi.
8. Abu al-'Abbas al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) in his al-Fadil and al-Kamil.
9. Tarikh al-rusul wa al-muluk by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/922).
10. Al-Hasan ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'id al-'Askari (d. 382/992) narrated from al-Imam 'Ali (as) some of his sermons in al-Mawa'id wa al-zawajir.
11. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Durayd al-'Azdi (d. 321/933) quoted some utterances of al-Imam 'Ali (as) for furnishing examples of Arabic idioms, proverbs, and aphorisms in his major lexicon al-Jamharah fi al-lughah.
12. Al-'Iqd al-farid by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (246-328/860-940).
13. Kitab al-'aghani and Maqatil al-Talibiyyin by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (284-356/897-967).
14. Kitab al-nawadir by Abu 'Ali al-Qari' (d. 356/967).
15. Ibn Babawayh al Shaykh al Saduq (d. 381/991) quoted extensively from al-Imam 'Ali's utterances in Man la yahduruhu al-faqih, 'l'al al-sharayi', 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida, al-'Amali, Ma'ani al-'akhbar, al-Tawhid, al-Khisal, al-'Itiqad, Thawab al-'amal and other books.
16. Al Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022) quoted al-Imam 'Ali's writings and sayings in many of his books, particularly devoting a lengthy section of al-'Irshad to Amir al-Mu'minin's sermons, judicial judgements, decrees, letters, and sayings. Among the extant works of that period al-'Irshad is the most systematic and comprehensive record of al-Imam 'Ali's words after Nahjul Balaghah.

Other contemporary scholars engaged in the collection among the contemporaries of al-Radi, several other scholars were engaged in collecting and quoting Amir al-Mu'minin's utterances in their works. The following can be named here: Ibn Miskawayh (d 421/1030) in Tajarib al-'umam, Hafiz Abu Na'im al-Isfahani (d. 430; 1038) in Hilyat al-'awliya', Shaykh ai-Ta'ifah al-Tusi (d. 460/1067) in al-Tahdhib, al-'Istibsar, al-'Amali and otherworks. Al-Qadi Abu 'Abd Allah Mukammad ibn Salamah al-Shafi'l (d. 453/1061) in Ma'alim al-hikam.

'Aziz Allah 'Utaridi has prepared a list of sources which includes many a name not found in other lists. Such names are as follows:

1. Harith al-'A'war al-Hamdani: He compiled a collection of Imam 'Ali's khutab before Zayd ibn Wahab. Al-Kulayni through Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i has quoted him as narrating the sayings of the Imam (as).

2. Asbagh ibn Nubatah.
3. 'Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr al Ju'fi: The famous Sunni muhaddith al-Bukhari has mentioned a collection of al-Imam 'Ali's words compiled by him. He was a poet and an admirer of al-Imam 'Ali (as), who never submitted to Mu'awiyah and was involved in anti-State activities. Al-Imam al-Husayn sought his help, but he declined to come to his side. Afterwards he repented his failure to help him. Al-Najashi has referred to him in his al-Rijal.
4. Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Ibrahim al-Ghada'iri (d. 411/1020).
5. Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan, a companion of al-Imam 'Ali (as), who narrated the Imam's instructions to Malik al-Ashtar at the time of his appointment to governorship of Egypt.
6. Faraj ibn Farwah compiled a collection of the Imam's sayings on the authority of Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah, who narrated from al-Imam Ja'far al Sadiq (as). Al Sayyid 'Ali ibn Tawus wrote at the back of a manuscript of this compilation that it was written after 200/815. This manuscript was in possession of Hasan ibn Sulayman al-Hilli, from which he has quoted in his works.
7. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Saffar al-'Ash'ari al-Qummi, author of Basa'ir al-darajat, had compiled al-'Irshad containing the utterances of al-Imam 'Ali (as); not available now.
8. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abu 'Ubayd al-Harawi (d. 401/1010) compiled a book of the uncommon words used in the Quran and hadith, in which he quoted from Amir al-Mu'minin also.
9. Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Salam al-Harawi also wrote a book on the vocabulary of hadith, in which he referred to the utterances of the Imam 'Ali (as). Al-Sayyid al-Radi has referred to this work.
10. Ahmad ibn Yahya Tha'lab (d. 291/903), the grammarian.
11. Abu al-Qasim 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad al-Ka'bi al-Balkhi (d. 319/931) has quoted al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyah in his book al-'Insaf.
12. Abu Ja'far ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Qubbah al-Razi has quoted al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyah on the authority of Abu Ja'far ibn Battah in al-'Insaf.
13. Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Bayhaqi (d. 225/839) has quoted extensively from al-Imam 'Ali (as) in al-Mahdsin wa al-masawi'.
14. Muhammad ibn Tayyib Abu Bakr al-Bahri al-Baqillani (d. 403/1012) has quoted from al-Imam 'Ali (as) in I'jaz al-Qur'an.
15. Muhammad ibn Habib al-Hashimi al-Baghdadi (d. 245/859).
16. Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah Hakim al-Nishaburi.

17. Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-'Abbas al-Shirazi, popularly known as Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, an eminent scholar, quoted from al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in al-Basa'ir.
18. Abu 'Abd Allah al Marzabani al-Khurasani, a scholar of literature and literary sciences, was one of the teachers of al-Mufid. His work al-Muwaffaq contains the utterances of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
19. Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al Jawhari; Ibn Abi al-Hadid quoted from him in Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, particularly from his valuable book al- Saqifah.
20. Abu Ja'far al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892), author of Ansab al-'ashraf and Futah al-bulddn, has quoted the words of al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in his works.
21. Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali was among the first to compile a collection of hadith, in which he quoted numerous traditions from al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
22. Abu Hanifah al-Dinawari (d. 290/903), a very authentic narrator and an authority in literary sciences, quoted a number of sermons and sayings of al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in al-'Akhbar al-tiwal.
23. Abd al-Rahman ibn Ishaq Abu al Qasim al-Zujaji (d. 339/950), the author of al Jamal, in his other work, al-Amali, narrated the utterances of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
24. Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad al-Tha'alibi (350-429/961-1037), author of Yatimat al-dahr in al-Ijaz wa al-'Ijaz, quoted many an utterance of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
25. Abu 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn Ya'qub al-Kindi (d. 350/961) in his book al-Wulat has narrated the words of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
26. Abu Talib 'Ubayd ibn Ahmad ibn Ya'qub al-'Anbari has narrated some supplications of al-'Imam 'Ali (as) in his Kitab al-'ad'iyah.
27. Abu 'Abd Allah Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Rafi' authored two books, one entitled Kashf dar akhbar wa ta'rikh Saqifat Bani Sa'idah and Ta'rikh al-Aimmah, in which he quoted the utterances of al 'Imam 'Ali (as).
28. Abu Muhammad Ahmad ibn A'tham al-Kufi (d. 314/926-27) in Kitab al-futuh narrated the sermons and words of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
29. Abu Muhammad Husayn ibn Sa'id ibn Hammad ibn Mahran al-'Ahwazi collected some of the sermons and sayings of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).
30. Ali ibn al-Wasiti, the author of 'Uyun al-hikam, compiled a book on Fadail Ahl al-Bayt in 457/1065, from which al-'Allamah Baqir al-Majlisi has quoted in the seventeenth volume of Bihar al-anwar. This book contains the utterances of al-'Imam 'Ali (as).

31. Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Washsha', author of a twenty-volume work Zuhrat al-Riyad, in his other work Zarf wa zurafa, has quoted from al-Imam 'Ali (as).

32. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Hashim al-Qummi, one of the earliest Shi'i exegetes of the Quran, has quoted extensively from al-Imam 'Ali (as).

33. Yazid ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn al-Mughirah ibn Nawfal ibn Harth ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (d. 167/783) is one of the authorities among narrators of hadith. He narrated in his works the sermons of al-Imam 'Ali (as). In one of his works entitled Tuhfat al-'ahbab wa ma'rifat imamat sayyid uli al-'albab, he has copied in full a sermon of al-Imam 'Ali (as) that was delivered on the occasion of the assassination of the Third Caliph and al-Imam 'Ali's taking reigns of the caliphate into his hands. This risalah is included in a collection of rasa'il owned by Imam Yahya of Yaman. At the present it is in the British Museum Library, London.

For many centuries, Shi'i, Sunni, Mu'tazili and other scholars continued their pursuit to trace and collect the sayings and writings of al-Imam 'Ali (as). The early sources from which al-Radi selected the contents of Nahjul Balaghah seem to be inexhaustible. Recently some letters of al-Imam 'Ali (as) were edited and translated into Urdu by a Sunni scholar 'Abd al Salam of Rampur. All these letters were addressed to different Companions of the Prophet (as), and were published with replies by their addressees.

However, Nahjul Balaghah remains among all such collections, compiled before and after al-Radi, the most outstanding of all due to its philosophical depth, literary excellence, and the penetrating historical insight reflected in its contents. The book has always been a source of enjoyment and inspiration for scholars and thinkers of successive generations irrespective of their faith and creed.

Addendum: This information was sourced from:

The Early Imamiyah Shi'ite Thinkers

Syed Waheed Akhtar

Professor and Chairman

Department of Philosophy

Aligarh Muslim University

ALIGARH – India

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