



The Study of al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī's Virtue Writing on Lady Fāṭimah (AS) Based on Critical Discourse Analysis Theory

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Abstract

The book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* by *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* was composed amidst intense religious controversies and opposing discourses surrounding the status of the Ahl al-Bayt. The present study aims to examine how the position of Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* is represented in response to opposing discourses and analyzes the underlying ideological constructs embedded in the linguistic choices

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and narrations within this work. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this research analyzes the text on three levels: Description, interpretation, and explanation. On the descriptive level, it explores the linguistic methods and word choices employed by *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* to emphasize the virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, with meticulous attention to detail. On the interpretive level, this study examines the social and political contexts of the author's time and their impact on shaping the book's discourse. At the explanatory level, it thoroughly analyzes power relations and the author's endeavors to fortify the status of the Ahl al-Bayt while countering opposing discourses. The findings indicated that the selection and use of linguistic elements in this book were specifically designed to highlight the elevated status of Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*. Furthermore, the political, social, and cultural contexts of the Samanid and Buyid periods significantly shaped the composition of this work. This research sheds light on the intricate interplay between religious and political discourses in Islamic history and underscores the pivotal role of the Ahl al-Bayt within this framework.

Keywords: Virtue, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS), Critical Discourse, Fairclough.

Introductiona

Discourse analysis, understood as the social function of language, is a powerful tool for examining religious and historical texts that reflect the social and ideological conditions of their time. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly essential in studies that aim

to uncover hidden power structures and latent ideologies within texts. By analyzing linguistic structures, critical discourse analysis reveals how power, values, and social influences are represented within textual discourse.

The book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* by *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, which highlights the virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* for an audience of prominent Sunni jurists and scholars, exemplifies this type of religious discourse. Likely composed during a gathering in *Nīshābūr* in the late 4th or early 5th century AH, this work reflects the interplay of religious and social themes within the author's discourse, shaped by the sociopolitical context of its time.

Given the social-political environment of the time and its influence on the author's perspective, studying this book through the lens of critical discourse analysis can reveal hidden ideological layers and demonstrate how language serves as a medium to convey specific ideologies. The reciprocal relationship between discourse and society ensures that while social structures shape discourse, discourse also plays a key role in shaping and reproducing those structures. As *Fairclough* (2000 AD/1379 SH: 245) suggests, social groups and institutions carry meanings and values that are systematically expressed through language.

Written discourse has always been a tool for promoting beliefs, preserving and transmitting ideologies, fostering change, and serving as a mechanism for addressing social struggles. In this study, the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) is analyzed as a discourse produced within a specific context. This discourse, through particular linguistic

and structural choices, seeks to communicate messages about the exalted status of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) to an audience, some of whom questioned her preeminence over the other daughters of the Prophet (PBUH).

The central research question is: 'In what ways does *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* seeks to construct a discourse in defense of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) and in response to opposing narratives through language and specific discursive structures in the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS)?' Furthermore, 'To what extent is this discourse shaped by the political and social conditions of the time?'

The scope of this study includes the narrations within the book as well as the discussions presented by *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* in the introduction, where he elaborates on his motivations for composing this work and reflects on the circumstances of his era. By gaining a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical context of that period, the discursive approaches employed by *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* in defending the status of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) can be more comprehensively understood.

1. Literature Review

With the significant expansion of discourse analysis in the study of historical and religious texts, the book "*Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*" by *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* has also become a subject of interest from this perspective. This work, a manuscript copy of which was discovered several years ago, was first published in 2008 by Dar al-Furqan Publishing in Cairo, with scholarly editing and verification by Alireza

ibn Abdullah.

In the introduction, the editor provides an overview of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, detailing the views of various scholars on his life and works. Furthermore, the book's contents are critically analyzed and reviewed, shedding light on its significance within the broader scope of Islamic scholarship.

In a note titled "*Why Did al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī Write the Book Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (AS)?*," published in 2008 on the website of the Specialized Library of the History of Islam and Iran, Rasoul Jafariyan provides a brief introduction to the book and its author, along with a translation of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī's* preface. Additionally, Majid Hadizadeh, in an article titled "*An Ancient Manuscript by al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī on the Virtues and Merits of Fāṭimah, the Mistress of the Women of the Worlds (AS) (Sayyidah Nisā' al-Ālamīn)*," published in the third and fourth issues of the scientific-specialized semi-annual journal *Basatin* in 2015, introduces the book, examines its attribution to *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, and presents an image of the original manuscript.

Given the growing necessity of employing modern linguistic and discourse analysis methods, this work requires further examination to illuminate the political, social, and cultural contexts in which it was composed. This study applies *Norman Fairclough's* three-dimensional model of discourse analysis to investigate the historical, political, and social circumstances of the time, the context of the text's creation, the communicative interactions, and the structure of its language and how these elements influenced the discourse. This approach facilitates a

transition from the surface level of the text to its sub-textual layers, revealing the intricate relationship between language and power in the formation of this work.

2. A Brief Introduction to the Book

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, one of the most prominent preservers of *ḥadīth* in Nishapur and an eminent figure of his era, is recognized as a "*Thiqah*" (trustworthy) scholar with mastery in the sciences of *ḥadīth* and *rijāl*. *Al-Dhahabī* and *Ibn al-Jazarī* describe him as an outstanding tradition researcher with profound expertise in the science of *ḥadīth* (*Dhahabī*, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 17, 163; *Ibn al-Jazarī*, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 2, 185). In his book *al-Mustadrak*, he compiled *ḥadīths* concerning the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) that meet the criteria of authenticity set by *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, yet were not included in these works. Additionally, he authored another significant work titled *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'* (AS), where he gathered numerous narrations.

The scholarly stature of *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* and his expertise in transmitting Hadiths with minimal intermediaries (*Ālī al-isnād*) made him a uniquely influential figure in the 4th century AH. This method of transmission, characterized by brevity in chains, is highly valued for reducing the risk of errors and ensuring authenticity (*cf.* *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, 1976 AD/1396 AH: Nos. 5, 7, 20). The narrations in this work are transmitted through various reliable chains of narration and are cited in the Hadith collections of both Shī'a and Sunni scholars, underscoring their credibility and significance.

The book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah* (AS) by *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* consists of ten sections, detailed as follows:

Section One: Praise and glorification of God, followed by blessings and salutations upon the Prophet (PBUH) and his Ahl al-Bayt.

Section Two: A description of the author's time, when leaders in power sought to strengthen their positions by displaying hostility toward the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS). The section also includes an explanation of the motivation behind writing this book, which originated from a scholarly gathering where the Quranic memorization of 'Alī (AS) was denied by an attendee. *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* responds by addressing this claim.

Section Three: "A discussion on the daughters of the Prophet (PBUH), emphasizing the renowned status of *Fāṭimah* (AS) and her virtues."

Section Four: "A recounting of the statement made by a participant in the scholarly gathering, who expressed enmity toward *Fāṭimah* (AS) in an attempt to gain favor with others." This individual cited a narration attributed to 'Urwah, claiming the Prophet (PBUH) said, "*Zaynab is the best of my daughters.*" *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* investigates this narration, finding it to fall outside the criteria of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. He explains that the phrase "*Afḍal Banātī*" (*the best of my daughters*) should be understood as "*Min afḍal banātī*" (*one of the best of my daughters*), as numerous authentic narrations highlight *Fāṭimah* (AS) as the foremost among the women of Heaven and the Ummah (cf. Bukhārī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 4, 203; Muslim, 1955: 4, 1904).

Section Five: "Presentation of narrations that demonstrate the superiority of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS), including evidence of her knowledge and understanding surpassing that of 'Āyishah."

Section Six: "A collection of narrations on the virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS), divided into 65 chapters containing 232 hadiths."

These chapters are classified into two categories:

١) Chapters Titled with the Virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) such as:

- "Narrations proving that *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* was part of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and that what hurt her hurt him and what caused her hardship caused him hardship."

- "Mention of another virtue of *Fāṭimah*, the daughter of Muhammad (PBUH), explaining that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would always begin by visiting her before anyone else whenever he traveled or returned from a journey."

٢) Narrations about Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) Transmitted by Various Figures: "These include narrations from *Amir al-Mu'minīn 'Alī* (AS), *Imam Ḥusayn* (AS), and *'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās*."

3. Description of the Book (Virtues of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*) at the Textual Level

At the first level of discourse analysis, attention is focused on textual features such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and the overall composition of the text (*Fairclough*, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 172). In this descriptive stage, several questions arise, including: 'What experiential values do the words convey?' 'Is the process of

nominalization applied?' 'Are the sentences framed positively or negatively?'

The use of evaluative vocabulary and descriptions of individuals within a text stems from the author's underlying ideology; as such choices often reflect value-laden meanings. These meanings shape the selection and narration of words, which are employed to assess and emphasize specific characters and identities.

A quantitative analysis of the evaluative vocabulary and attributes used in *Virtues of Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* reveals a frequent and deliberate use of positive terms to describe Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS). The investigation highlights a strongly positive connotation throughout the text. Terms such as: "The beloved daughter of the Prophet (PBUH)," "*al-Batl*" (the chaste), "The secret keeper of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH)," "Lady of the Women of the Worlds and the People of Paradise," "The most beloved person to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH)," "*al-Siddīqah*" (the truthful), and "*Fāṭimah*" are employed alongside the acknowledgment of the revelation of the verse of purification (al-Aḥzāb/33) regarding her (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 47, 56, 58, 62). These terms collectively emphasize the exalted status of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) and reflect the author's ideological perspective.

Contrary to the opinion of some who did not consider *Zaynab*, *Ruqayyah*, and *Umm Kulthūm* as daughters of Lady *Khadījah* (AS) from the Prophet (PBUH), *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* regards them as daughters of Lady *Khadījah* and the Prophet. He notes, however, that *Fāṭimah* (AS) is more frequently mentioned in the reports, and her

virtues are emphasized more prominently in narrations (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 31).

In the structure of the introduction, Imam Ali (AS) is implicitly referenced and is consistently referred to as "*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*" (Commander of the Faithful) (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 30, 79, 82, 83, 86, 87, etc.). Additionally, he is described as the most beloved individual to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) among men (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 47), a description that carries a strongly positive connotation.

Moreover, *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* employs specific descriptions such as "*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*" and makes implicit comparisons to underscore the esteemed status of Imam Ali (AS). At times, this approach contrasts with the attitudes of figures and movements opposed to the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). For example, one of the senior jurists present in the same gathering refers to Imam Ali simply as "Ali," omitting any titles (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 30).

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this approach can be interpreted as a means of constructing or reinforcing social contrasts and dichotomies. Such strategies ultimately serve to reinforce the identity of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and emphasize their virtues. Consequently, it appears that *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, aiming to highlight the exalted status of the Ahl al-Bayt and foster a sense of polarization between their supporters and opponents, intentionally employs contrast as a central element of his discourse.

Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, in a comparative analysis of Lady Fāṭimah (AS) and 'Āyishah, considers Lady Fāṭimah to be more

knowledgeable and learned. Commenting on the narration of *‘Āyishah*, in which she inquired about the private conversations between the Prophet (PBUH) and Lady *Fāṭimah* at the time of his passing, *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* writes:

"As for the interpretation of *Fāṭimah's* (AS) words, when she said, "If I reveal the secret of the Prophet (PBUH), I will be considered wasteful," the correct interpretation in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* is that if I reveal the secret of the Prophet (PBUH), I would undoubtedly be wasteful or imprudent. This narration clearly demonstrates that *Fāṭimah* (AS) was more knowledgeable and learned than *‘Āyishah*, because she did not disclose the Prophet's secret during his lifetime, but after his passing, she revealed it. This reflects a mastery of the jurisprudence of hadith (Fiqh al-ḥadīth) that was not fully comprehended by *‘Āyishah*." (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 81)

In this narration, Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) underscores the importance of trustworthiness and safeguarding the Prophet's (PBUH) secrets. She emphasizes that revealing these secrets during the Prophet's lifetime would have constituted a violation of this trust and an act of ingratitude. By preserving the secret until after the Prophet's passing, Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) demonstrated her deep respect for the principle of trustworthiness. This decision highlights her profound comprehension of religious jurisprudence and its core principles.

Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, by creating a semantic contrast between Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) and *‘Āyishah*, uses this as evidence of *Fāṭimah's* superior knowledge and understanding. Through this contrast, he illustrates the elevated status of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) in terms of her

intellectual and spiritual insight.

However, when describing *‘Āyishah* in the context of narrations about *Fāṭimah* (AS), *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* uses terms such as "*al-Ṣiddīqah*, daughter of *al-Ṣiddīq*," "the Beloved of the Beloved of God," and "Mother of the Believers," all of which carry a positive connotation (*Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 117).

In this book, a combination of nominal and verbal sentences is employed.

A) Nominal sentences, such as:

- Indeed, the mention of *Fāṭimah* (AS) in the reports is more famous, and her virtues are more abundant in the narrations;
- This hadith clearly states that *Fāṭimah* (AS) was more knowledgeable and more learned than *‘Āyishah* articulate fixed and undeniable truths. These sentences implicitly convey the permanence and stability of *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) spiritual rank as a timeless theological truth (*Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 31 and 36).

B) Past tense sentences such as:

- He used to rise to her;
- Whenever she entered, he would welcome her;
- He would stand up for her; describe the actions of the Prophet (PBUH) in honoring the status of *Fāṭimah* (AS). These sentences provide historical grounding for the narrations, validating the Prophet's consistent reverence for *Fāṭimah* (AS) (*Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 35).

C) Present tense sentences, such as:

- How can any woman of this Ummah be preferred over *Fāṭimah* (AS)?
- This sentence emphasizes the ongoing and timeless significance of *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) position, extending its relevance to both the present and the future (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 35).

D) The repetition of phrases such as:

- Is *Fāṭimah* (AS) being diminished?
- Indeed, she is the Lady of the Women of Paradise, highlights the semantic importance of these expressions. This repetition reinforces *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) exalted position and amplifies her stature (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 34 and 35).

The last sentence of the introduction, that anyone sincere in their faith may recognize her status in Islam, and no woman from the Ummah should be compared to her (Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 37), begins with the verb "*Liya 'lam*" (To know) in the jussive mood. This verb carries an imperative tone, implicitly demanding or obligating the recognition of *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) exalted position in Islam. This imperative tone serves to underscore the importance of acknowledging her unparalleled rank.

The word "*al-Shahīh*" (*the miser*) has a strongly negative connotation, referring to those who are negligent in their religious duties or lack spiritual generosity. By employing this term, Hākim al-Nīshābūrī calls on such individuals to properly recognize *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) lofty status. Simultaneously, he emphasizes that no woman from the Muslim Ummah can ever be compared to her. Through this contrast between proper religious understanding and negligence,

Hākim al-Nīshābūrī reinforces his ideological discourse, highlighting the unique and incomparable position of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), whose recognition is deemed essential for all believers.

In explaining the reason for mentioning some of the virtues of *Fāṭimah* (AS), *Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* implicitly affirms the authenticity of all subsequent narrations. He suggests that anyone who uses their religion for material gain would lack the spiritual insight to truly understand her unparalleled status in Islam and her superiority over all women of the Ummah. This affirmation underscores that the credibility of the narrations being transmitted is not only fundamental but indispensable for comprehending *Fāṭimah*'s (AS) position in Islamic theology and thought.

4. Interpretation of the Book "*Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS)" at the Level of Discursive Action

At the interpretive layer, the elements discussed at the descriptive level are analyzed from the perspectives of situational context and intertextuality. This is because key concepts in discourse analysis and meaning extraction are often grounded in contextual knowledge and cognitive frameworks, or schemas (Yarmohammadi, 2014 AD / 1393 SH: 96). The understanding of the origin and purpose of the discourse is often reciprocal, emerging within the text while being conveyed to the reader. Through this process, the reader derives their interpretive framework from a shared perspective that extends beyond the words themselves.

From the interpreter's viewpoint, the formal features of the text, as **197**

explored at the descriptive level, serve as indicators that activate the interpreter's social and cognitive resources. These interpretations are the product of dialectic between these textual signs and the interpreter's social context. *Fairclough* views interpretation as a fusion of elements within the text and the internal resources of the interpreter (Fairclough, 2000: 215).

4-1. Context of the Writing of the Book

The situational context of the book's writing is what structures the text within the minds of both the author and the reader. The meaning and purpose of the book, as perceived by the reader, cannot be fully understood apart from its historical context.

The exact time of the book's composition is uncertain; however, evidence in the introduction—such as references to the gathering and compilation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* four times, the mention of the book *al-Aklīl*, and discussions about the conditions of *al-Bukhārī* and Muslim (al-Ḥākim al-Nīyshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 31, 32, 34)—suggests that this work was written after *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Since *al-Ḥākim* began composing *al-Mustadrak* in 373 AH (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 39), it can be concluded that *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* was written subsequently, during the late Samanid period and the early Ghaznavid era.

Furthermore, a comparison of the number of narrations concerning the virtues of *Fāṭimah* (AS) in *al-Mustadrak* (38 narrations) and in this book (232 narrations) demonstrates that this book was composed after *al-Mustadrak*. The tone of the author also indicates that this work

was written as a bold and direct response to those who denied the virtues of *Fāṭimah* (AS), reflecting a fearless and unapologetic stance.

The lifetime of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* (321–405 AH) coincided with the zenith of the Samanid dynasty's power and its eventual decline under the Ghaznavids. This transition was welcomed by the Abbasid Caliphate, as they hoped the Ghaznavids would serve as a counterforce to the Shia Buyid dynasty's influence. Among the rulers of the eastern Islamic world, the Ghaznavids—particularly Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni—adopted the harshest stance against the Shiites (Ibn Jawzī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 15, 125).

During this period, Khorasan, and particularly Nishpur, the birthplace of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, was a region fraught with political upheaval and revolutions. The area changed hands frequently among competing claimants to power (Girdīzī, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 319–380).

Nishābūr, as a military garrison of the Samanids, was strategically located near the borders of the Buyid dynasty. *Amir Abū al-Ḥasan Samījūrī* and his son, serving as military commanders of Khorasan, were based in *Nishābūr*. They recognized the significant role of religious scholars and maintained a close relationship with *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, showing him great respect (Foruzani, 2006 AD/1385 AH: 125). *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* was dispatched as an intermediary to the Buyid court, facilitating the delivery of Samanid correspondence to the Buyids (Ibn 'Asākir, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 229; Ibn Khallikān, 1971 AD/ 1391 AH: 4, 281). It is plausible that *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, due to his perceived Shia inclinations, served

multiple times as an envoy between the Samanids and the Buyids (Brockelmann, 1959: 3, 215; Sezgin, 1991: 1, 454).

Shafīʿi Kadkani notes that *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s inclination toward Shi'ism, for which Sunni writers criticized him, was primarily politically motivated. He sought to mediate between the Shia Buyid government and the pro-Shia Iranian movements of the time. This inclination led to accusations of narrating hadiths such as "*Man Kuntu Mawlāh*" (For whomever I am the master, Ali is his master) and the "*Ṭayr*" hadith (*The bird hadith*), which were frequently used to support Shia theological positions (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 36).

The era of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* is recognized as the golden age of Islamic-Iranian civilization. During this period, the Samanids supported education and religious freedom, fostering an environment conducive to the advancement of scholars and the creation of scientific works (Bahrami, History of Iran from the Rise of Islam to the Fall of Baghdad, p. 358). Scientific centers were established in Bukhara and *Nishābūr*, with schools such as the *Qaṭṭān* School, the *Ḥaddād* School, and the *Dār al-Sunnah*. These institutions, later managed by *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, became important gathering places for scholars and centers of intellectual activity (Samʿānī, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 8, 276-278).

Simultaneously, the Buyids, with their tolerant approach, promoted religious and scientific freedom within their territories, facilitating interactions among various ethnic and religious groups (Miskawayh, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 6, 341). Despite conflicts between the Samanids and

the Buyids, there were instances of positive relations between the two dynasties. For example, Amir Nooh Samani invited *Ṣāḥib ibn 'Ubbād*, the renowned minister of the Buyid dynasty, to accept the role of his minister. *Ṣāḥib* declined the offer, citing practical difficulties, including the immense logistical challenge of transporting his wealth and his celebrated library, which reportedly required more than four hundred camels for transport (Tha'ālibī, 1862 AD/1282 AH: 2, 145).

Attention to science and literature flourished under both dynasties, with major libraries such as those of Ibn *Khuzaymah* and *Mikālī* in *Nishābūr*, *Nūḥ ibn Maṣṣūr* in Bukhara, and *Ṣāḥib ibn 'Ubbād* in Ray playing a pivotal role in the production and dissemination of knowledge. *Ṣāḥib ibn 'Ubbād*'s library in the 10th century CE was said to rival the combined holdings of all libraries across Europe (Pope, 1918 AD/1338 AH: 156).

In *Nishābūr*, extensive scholarly travels further invigorated the city's intellectual vibrancy. Both Shī'ī and Sunni hadīth scholars traveled to *Nishābūr* for the study of hadīth. Notably, *Shaykh Ṣadūq* (d. 381 AH) visited the city in 352 and 368 AH, underscoring the academic freedom and positive relations between scholars and the ruling authorities (Shaykh Ṣadūq, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 7-8).

Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī's travels to Shī'ī-majority cities such as Rey, Kūfa, and Baghdad, and his engagement with both Shī'ī and Sunni scholars, had a profound influence on shaping his intellectual orientation. During this period, the scholarly connection between *Nishābūr* and Ray was exceptionally strong. *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* referred to families with intellectual ties to both cities (al-Ḥākim al-

Nīshābūrī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 132, 92). Between 341 and 343 AH, he also studied under *Ibn Ja' bī*, a prominent *Shī'ī hadīth* scholar (Fārsī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 1, 6).

In this vibrant academic environment, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* authored *al-Mustadrak* in 372 AH and began compiling narrations about the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), culminating in the composition of *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (AS)*.

4-2. Intertextual Interpretation of the Book

One of the intertextual contexts of this book involves analyzing how historical hostility toward the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is revisited and addressed, particularly through the denial of Imam Ali's (AS) virtues. This phenomenon highlights how texts, shaped by differing discourses, carry their unique historical contexts and backgrounds. Intertextual interpretation helps identify the historical framework to which a text belongs.

The denial of Imam Ali's (AS) virtues dates back to the time of *Mu'āwīyah*. According to a report by *Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd* from *Abū Ja'far al-Iskāfī*, *Mu'āwīyah* issued a uniform directive to his officials, stating:

"The government has no obligation toward anyone who transmits any of the virtues of *Abū Turāb* and his family. Therefore, preachers in every village and on every pulpit would curse Ali (AS), disassociate themselves from him, and speak ill of him and his family." (*Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd*, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 11, 44)

Mu'āwīyah also appointed several Companions and *Tābi'ūn* to fabricate disparaging narrations against Imam Ali (AS) and his family, offering them financial rewards for their efforts. Among those

involved were *Abū Hurayrah*, *ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ*, and *al-Mughayrah ibn Shuʿbah* from the Companions, and *ʿUrwah ibn Zubayr* from the *Tābiʿūn*. These fabricated narrations significantly shaped the perception of Imam Ali's (AS) virtues in later historical and religious narratives (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4, 63).

Another intertextual aspect of this book involves the emphasis placed on the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) regarding individuals. The Prophet's (PBUH) words serve as a key criterion for assessing the virtue and superiority of individuals, forming the core of this text's discourse. The centrality of the *Sunnah* and the value of the Prophet's sayings have deep roots in the history of the Prophetic tradition. *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* seeks to establish the elevated position of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) within Sunni discourse by extensively referencing authentic hadiths. This effort is particularly directed against views that rely on weak or unreliable narrations, which fail to meet the strict conditions of authenticity outlined in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, to claim the superiority of figures such as *Zaynab*, the daughter of the Prophet (PBUH).

In his book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* highlights the virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) through numerous Prophetic narrations. For instance, he references hadiths numbered 15, 18, 20, and 21 (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 43–46). These narrations not only underscore the individual and spiritual virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) but also revive the Prophetic discourse that revolves around love and the exalted status of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

By rejuvenating this Prophetic discourse, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* ²⁰³

counters interpretations that distort or omit narrations to favor specific groups. His work on documenting the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt represents a deliberate effort to recreate and solidify the Prophetic tradition within the framework of Sunni thought.

The concept of Qur'anic intertextuality serves as a central axis in this discourse, functioning as a strategic tool to address competing narratives. Islam and the Qur'an serve as shared sources and foundational assumptions for both discourses, creating a common intellectual framework. However, within this shared space, differing interpretations of the Qur'an emerge, reflecting the theological tensions between these discourses.

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī employs Qur'anic intertextuality as a strategic mechanism to strengthen his argument for the elevated status of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS). By referencing Qur'anic verses, he reinforces his claims and directly challenges opposing discourses. For instance, in narrations 36 and 37 of his book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, he cites the verse: (*Give the relative their right*; Isrā'/26). Based on this verse, *al-Hākim* argues that the Prophet (PBUH) granted *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* the land of *Fadak*.

This Qur'anic reference serves as a direct response to the opposing discourse, which cites the narration: *We do not leave inheritance; what we leave is charity* (al-Bukhārī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 8, 149) to deny *Fāṭimah*'s right to inheritance. The differing interpretations of these texts underline the theological divide between the two discourses. *Fadak*, a piece of land gifted to *Fāṭimah* by the Prophet (PBUH), became a symbol of her rightful claim, and its denial reflects broader debates over Prophetic legacy and

succession in Islamic history.

In narrations 54 and 55 of the book, reference is made to the verse of *Mubāhala* (Āli 'Imrān/61). In this verse, the Prophet (PBUH) calls upon his "Sons," "Women," and "Self" to engage in the *Mubāhala* with the opponents. *Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, through narrating an account in which the Prophet (PBUH) places 'Alī, *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, *al-Hasan*, and *al-Husayn* beside him and introduces them to God as "My Family and Household," endeavors to construct a Qur'anic discourse that emphasizes the elevated position of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS). This serves as a rebuttal against opposing narratives that deny *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* such a status.

Additionally, narration 57 refers to the verse 33 (al-Aḥzāb): "Allāh intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O! People of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification." This verse explicitly affirms the inclusion of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) in divine purification. *Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, by invoking this verse, reinforces the status of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), especially *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, and challenges the opposing discourse.

As a result, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* not only uses Qur'ānic intertextuality as a shared source but also constructs a strong discourse. Through this, he draws on the collective understanding of the Qur'ān as the ultimate reference to affirm the superiority of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS), particularly *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), thereby effectively marginalizing the opposing discourse.

Another aspect of intertextuality is *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s perceived inclination towards Shiism, which some have argued. However, most of

his works are devoted to narrating and examining the ḥadīths and narrators of Ahl al-Sunnah. His interest in ḥadīths such as the ḥadīth of the "Bird" (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 3, 142) and his authentication of the ḥadīth "Whoever I am his master, 'Ali is his master" according to the conditions of *Ṣaḥīḥayn* (ibid: 3, 419) reflect this. Moreover, his refusal to narrate the virtues of *Mu'āwiyah* (al-Dhahabī, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 17, 175) led some to consider him a "Moderate Shī'ī" (Sam'ānī, 1962: 21, 402) and others to label him as a "Rāfiḍī." (al-Dhahabī, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 17, 174-175)

These views subjected him to pressure from Sunni hardliners, particularly during the Ghaznavid era and the rise of the *Karrāmīyah*, forcing him to live in secrecy for a time (Ibn Kathīr, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 11, 409). The *Karrāmīyah* confined him to his house, broke his pulpit, and prevented him from leaving. *Sullamī* suggested that he could gain his freedom by narrating a virtue of *Mu'āwiyah*, but *al-Ḥākim* refused. This conflict revolved around his narration of the virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) and his refusal to narrate the virtues of *Mu'āwiyah*.

However, *Subkī* contends that *al-Ḥākim* was merely excessive in his devotion to Imam 'Alī (AS) and no negative view of him regarding *Mu'āwiyah* has been reported (Subkī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 4, 163). Similarly, his teacher *al-Dāruqutnī* was also accused of Shi'a tendencies for preserving the collected poetry of Sayyid *Himyarī* (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 12, 35).

On the other hand, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* has narrated ḥadīths in his book that are inconsistent with Shi'a perspectives. For instance, he

records the first virtue of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) as narrated by 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr, who had a strained relationship with Imam 'Alī (AS). According to this report, Imam 'Alī (AS) mentioned the daughter of *Abū Jahl*, which upset *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS). In response, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Fāṭimah* is a part of my body; whoever hurts her, hurts me." (al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 37) This narration is at odds with Shi'a ḥadīths, as Imam *al-Ṣādiq* (AS) in other narrations has declared it to be a fabrication and a myth (Shaykh Ṣadūq, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 165).

Similarly, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* recounts a ḥadīth in which *Abū Bakr* led the funeral prayer for *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) with Imam 'Alī (AS) praying behind him (al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, 2008 AD/1429 AH: 76). He also narrates a ḥadīth about *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* crying during her marriage due to Imam 'Alī's (AS) poverty (ibid: 108). Additionally, certain chapters in his book refer to *Abū Bakr*, 'Umar, and 'Āyishah with specific honorific titles (ibid: 68 and 117). These examples underscore that the author's perspective aligns with Sunni views and is deeply rooted in the discourse of Ahl al-Sunnah.

5. Interpretation of the Book "Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā (AS)" at the Level of Social Action

At this level, the focus is on ideologies and their foundations, illustrating how social determinants, such as power relations at both situational and societal levels, shape discourse. The analysis of social action reveals how language use within discourse serves specific social and political purposes. Among all forms of discourse, political

discourse carries the most significant ideological weight, warranting particular attention in this context.

In critical discourse analysis, texts are not neutral; ideology plays a pivotal role in shaping how the text is interpreted. The goals of discourse become evident through the explanation of social action, showing how discourse can produce reproductive effects on social structures—affects that either maintain or transform those structures (Fairclough, 2000: 245).

In the analysis of this level in the writing of the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'* (AS), various factors and motivations are examined that significantly influenced the creation of social actions. The discourse of this book belongs to a socio-political context in which religious and political power dynamics among Muslims were undergoing shifts. This discourse emerged as a reaction to the ongoing conflicts among different Muslim factions, particularly after the caliphate of 'Alī (AS). Its primary aim was to reinforce the identity of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, particularly *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'* (AS), in opposition to rival narratives.

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, as the architect of this discourse, sought to bolster his spiritual authority by emphasizing the virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and elucidating their esteemed status before Allah. Through this, he aimed to fortify his position against opposing movements.

Since societal tensions and conflicts play a central role in shaping ideological perspectives, it becomes crucial to understand how ideology functions in interpreting a text as a component of a broader intellectual and ideological framework. The enduring ideological

duality between the supporters and adversaries of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)—rooted in the succession of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and further accentuated by the division between Imam 'Alī (AS) and *Mu'āwiyah*—extends to the status of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) and the other Imams (AS).

Despite the passage of several centuries, these ideological conflicts remain unresolved. *Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, as the author of this discourse, remains resolute in his convictions, as reflected in the composition of this book.

The ideology of *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* in authoring this book lies in defending the esteemed position of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) against distortions and accusations. This ideology holds particular significance in the aftermath of the caliphate of Imam 'Alī (AS), a period marked by deep ideological divisions within the Islamic community. Through the discourse of virtue-writing, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* implicitly seeks to establish a religious and political hegemony aimed at reinforcing the status of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) in Islamic society.

In Islamic discourse, unlike Western paradigms, social action extends beyond the analysis of power relations, social functions, and personal superiority. The discussion surrounding narrations of virtues is deeply rooted in divine knowledge, reflecting the exalted status of the individual in the sight of God. Its significance is not based on conventional societal constructs but rather regarded as a matter of core belief. Consequently, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*, in compiling the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), seeks to reshape societal perceptions

of her. By gathering narrations of her virtues and clarifying her elevated status in the sight of God Almighty and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), he aims to solidify her position in the collective consciousness of the Muslim community.

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, in composing this book, indirectly strives to consolidate his religious hegemony by reconstructing and emphasizing the virtues of Lady *Fāṭimah* (AS) in response to rival discourses. This discourse has been particularly influential in countering movements opposed to the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and groups that attempted to distort their virtues.

The ideology of *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* is distinctly centered on love and devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). Beyond compiling *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, he authored *Maḥāḥir al-Riḍā*, referencing the presence of Imam *Riḍā* (AS) in Nishābūr (Ja'farīyān, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 230). Through these works, *al-Hākim* sought to foster an intellectual and religious climate conducive to collaboration between Shi'a and Sunnī scholars.

In this endeavor, by promoting positive discourses centered on the Ahl al-Bayt, he aimed to counteract opposing narratives and reinforce the Ahl al-Bayt's pivotal role in the intellectual and religious history of Islam. This ideology reflects a synthesis of religious devotion, political legitimacy, and scholarly collaboration, which, during his era, succeeded in cultivating a distinctive intellectual milieu in *Nishābūr*.

5-1. The Role of Imam Shafi in *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s Virtue Writing

210 One of the primary motivations behind the composition of this book

was the inspiration *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* derived from Imam Shāfi'ī (d. 204 AH), who is widely regarded as a devotee of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). Shāfi'ī was of *Qurayshī* descent through his father (al-Dhahabī, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 10, 6), and according to some sources, his mother was from the *Hashimī* lineage (al-Subkī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 193). This dual genealogical heritage significantly influenced Shāfi'ī's character and fostered his profound love for the Ahl al-Bayt.

Imam Shāfi'ī frequently extolled the virtues of Imam 'Alī (AS), considering him worthy of admiration for his asceticism, profound knowledge, bravery, and nobility (Abū Zahra, 2008: 144). Moreover, in his poetry, Shāfi'ī emphasized that love for the Prophet's family (PBUH) is a religious duty, urging others to uphold their dignity and esteem.

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī, who also authored *Faḍā'il al-Shāfi'ī* (al-Dhahabī, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 89), drew extensively from his Imam's example, demonstrating a special devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) in his works.

A notable incident exemplifies al-Shāfi'ī's commitment to their honor: while attending a gathering where the virtues of Imam 'Alī (AS), Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), and their two sons were discussed, a participant objected, saying, "It is improper to speak of them. Abandon this discussion, for it reflects the speech of the Rafidah." Deeply moved, al-Shāfi'ī responded with the following verses of poetry: "I seek refuge in God from people who regard love for *Fāṭimah* and her children as rejection (*Rafḍ*). When the name of Imam 'Alī (AS) or his sons is mentioned, they respond with fabricated statements to obscure and diminish their memory. May the blessings

and peace of my Lord be upon the family of the Messenger of God (PBUH), and may His curse be upon those entrenched in ignorance."

Inspired by such stances, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* demonstrated similar resolve when facing disrespect toward the Ahl al-Bayt. On one occasion, during a gathering where disparaging remarks were made about Imam 'Alī (AS), he objected strongly. In the same assembly, an individual attempted to diminish the status of Lady *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) by citing a narration that portrayed her sister Zaynab as the most virtuous daughter of the Prophet (PBUH). *Hākim* could not accept this claim and, in defense of her unparalleled status, authored the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, affirming her superiority over all women of the world.

Al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī (d. 405 AH) lived in an era more than a century after the compilation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. During this period, a belief was taking shape among the ḥadīth scholars within the Sunni community that *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* had collected all authentic narrations. As a result, any ḥadīth absent from these two collections was regarded as weak or unreliable. To challenge the misconception that only the narrations in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* are authentic, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* authored the *Mustadrak* (Supplement), becoming the first scholar to write a supplement to these two collections. Before this work, he had written *al-Madkhal ilā Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and *al-Madkhal ilā Ma'rifat Kitāb al-Aklīl*, laying the foundational principles of *Ilm al-Ḥadīth* (the science of ḥadīth criticism) (cf. *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*, 1977 AD/1397 AH: 52, 53, 57, 61). Through his composition of *Ma'rifat*

ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth, he produced the first structured and organized text on ḥadīth sciences, completing and refining the earlier efforts of *Ibn Khallād al-Rāmahurmuzī*.

The recognition of the shortcomings and inefficiencies in the conventional methods for distinguishing authentic from inauthentic ḥadīths, alongside the issue of fabricated narrations, motivated *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* to classify and systematize ḥadīth sciences through his seminal work, *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*. A study of his ḥadīth-related works, such as *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Mustadrak*, and *Faḍāʾil Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ*, demonstrates that he initiated a fresh approach to reforming the thinking of ḥadīth scholars in his time, aiming to rid them of certain rigid and dogmatic perspectives.

At the beginning of *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Ḥākim* notes that, during his era, an intense zeal among students of ḥadīth, coupled with their limited understanding of the principles of ḥadīth science, had given rise to certain innovations in the principles of the prophetic traditions (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 1977 AD/1397 AH: 1–2). He observed that, within his society, some individuals, relying solely on earlier works such as *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*, dismissed other ḥadīths and narrations as inauthentic. This, he argued, was contrary to the views of the compilers of these collections themselves (al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 1, 41–42).

In response to these prevailing attitudes, *al-Ḥākim* authored *al-Mustadrak* and *Faḍāʾil Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ*, asserting that the widespread acceptance of such restrictive views would lead to the

neglect and loss of numerous authentic narrations.

Based on this perspective, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* compiled numerous narrations that were omitted from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, claiming that they met the criteria of either or both works, in his book *al-Mustadrak*. The composition of *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'* is also considered part of this effort. By adopting such an approach, it was inevitable that a significant portion of the narrations included in these works would be seen by *ḥadīth* scholars as inconsistent with their theological doctrines and beliefs. This led to considerable criticism from the scholars of *ḥadīth* regarding his theological outlook, his mention of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt, and his perceived Shi'ī inclinations.

For instance, some critics, like *Mālīnī*, remarked: "*I studied al-Mustadrak from beginning to end and did not find any narration that met the conditions of the two Shaykhs.*" (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*) Others, like *Dhahabī*, considered *Mālīnī*'s statement an exaggeration, arguing that about half of the narrations in *al-Mustadrak* meet the criteria of the two Shaykhs or one of them. *Dhahabī* further noted that the remaining narrations are a mix of authentic, weak, rejected, or fabricated reports (*Dhahabī*, 2003: 9, 89). Additionally, some scholars accused him of leniency in *ḥadīth* authentication (*Al-Suyūṭī*, 2006 AD/1427 AH: 1, 111). However, *Ibrahim ibn Muḥammad al-Irmawī* offered a more balanced analysis, stating that the opposition to *al-Ḥākim* stemmed from his inclusion of narrations—such as the *ḥadīth al-Ṭayr* and the *ḥadīth of Wilāyah*—that met the conditions of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, but

which were controversial among scholars of *ḥadīth* (Hājī Khalīfah, n.d: 2, 1672).

It could be said that the purification of narrations from fabricated reports, on the one hand, and the adoption of a more conservative approach to narrations, particularly concerning the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt, on the other, had the greatest influence on the composition of works like *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*. Since the science of *Dirāyah* focuses on evaluating the authenticity of narrations, the prominence of this subject in *al-Hākim*'s scholarly efforts enhanced the credibility of his writings on virtues. From this perspective, there is a profound connection between *al-Hākim*'s virtue-writing and his contributions to *Ilm al-Dirāyah*.

In explaining the prominence of *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s composition of the book *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*, it is important to note that narrations about the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt had been present in Sunni hadith collections from the outset, but recording these narrations often challenges due to political and social conditions. Ahmad Amin, an orientalist scholar, cites observations comparing *Musnad Aḥmad* and the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, noting that *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (d. 241 AH), due to his courage and lack of fear of the Abbasids, narrated the virtues of Imam ʿAlī and his followers, whereas *al-Bukhārī* (d. 256 AH) and *Muslim* (d. 261 AH), adopting a more conciliatory stance toward the Abbasids, avoided transmitting these narrations. Amin, however, refutes the orientalist perspective, arguing that Bukhārī and Muslim may have deemed the virtues of the Umayyads unauthentic, while Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, departing from the

stringent criteria of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, exercised greater leniency in his narrations. This, Amin contends, was not due to bravery but rather differences in the standards for accepting narrations (Amin, 1998: 2, 122–123).

It appears that *al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, influenced by political and social conditions as well as their sectarian biases, deliberately avoided including certain authentic hadiths—agreed upon by Muslims and present in other Sunni collections—solely to prevent highlighting the superiority of Imam ‘Alī (AS) over the caliphs. Among these hadiths are the Hadith of *Ghadīr*, the Hadith of the Closed Doors (*Sadd al-Abwāb*), the Hadith of the Verse of Purification (*Āyat al-Tathīr*), and the Hadith "I am the city of knowledge, and ‘Alī is its gate."

In discussing the dynamics of power relations and ideological tensions at the societal and situational levels shaping this discourse, it is crucial to note that during the reigns of *al-Ma'mūn*, *al-Mu'taṣim*, and *al-Wāthiq*, the *Mu'tazilah* rose to prominence, leading to a weakening of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth. The *Mu'tazilah* in Baghdad emphasized and persistently advocated for the superiority (*Afḍalīyyah*) of Imam ‘Alī (AS). During this period, *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, a prominent figure among the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, in opposition to the *Mu'tazilah*, explicitly addressed the issue of *al-Tarbī* (the arrangement of the caliphate in sequence) and acknowledged Imam ‘Alī (AS) as the fourth caliph. *Ibn Ḥanbal* maintained that the sequence of the caliphate was based not on individual virtues (*Faḍā'il*) but on the chronological order of succession.

"The number of virtues that have reached us regarding 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS) has not been reported for any other companion." (al-'Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 7, 74) Following the *Mmiḥnah* (ordeal), *Ibn Ḥanbal* grew closer to the caliphal authority during the reign of *al-Mutawakkil*, and the Ahl al-Ḥadīth regained their dominance over the *Mu'tazilah*. In his book *Uṣūl al-Sunnah*, he regarded *Abū Bakr*, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān as the best of the *Ummah* after the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and then included the members of the *Shūrā*, among whom Imam 'Alī (AS) was listed (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 35–38).

In all the books of Ahl al-Ḥadīth that discuss the virtues (*Faḍā'il*) of the companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), the virtues of *Abū Bakr* are mentioned first, followed by 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and finally the virtues of Imam 'Alī (AS). After the reign of *al-Mutawakkil*, ḥadīth scholars who adhered to the belief in the superiority based on the caliphate began narrating the ḥadīth in a way that downplayed the virtue of Imam 'Alī (AS) in comparison to *Abū Bakr*, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān. Consequently, many of the virtues of Imam 'Alī (AS) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) were either completely omitted or mentioned incompletely. *Mutawakkil* ordered that *Naṣr ibn 'Alī al-Jahḍamī* be lashed a thousand times for narrating a ḥadīth praising Imam 'Alī (AS), *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), Imam *al-Ḥasan* (AS), and Imam *al-Ḥusayn* (AS) (al-Dhahabī, 2003: 5, 1265). In this environment, ḥadīth scholars such as *al-Bukhārī* (d. 256 AH), *Muslim* (d. 261 AH), *Abū Dāwūd* (d. 275 AH), *Ibn Mājah* (d. 275 AH), and *al-Tirmidhī* (d. 279 AH) either refrained from narrating the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) or mentioned them selectively.

In the book *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥābah*, 369 narrations are reported regarding the virtue of Imam 'Alī (AS). In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, after removing repetitive narrations, two or three narrations concern the virtue of Imam 'Alī (AS), and four narrations are about the virtue of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS). Similarly, in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, three narrations are reported about the virtue of Imam 'Alī (AS) and three about the virtue of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) (Zahrāb, 2012 AD /1391 SH: 231, 246, 247, and 251).

al-Mu'taḍid (d. 289 AH), after *al-Mu'tamad*, assumed power. He showed kindness to the 'Alawīs and the family of 'Alī (AS) and displayed hostility toward the Umayyads. In 284 AH, he issued an order for *Mu'āwīyah* and *Yazīd* to be cursed on the pulpits (Ṭabarī, 1984 AD/1403 AH: 8, 189). From this period onward, we observe a significant transformation in the composition of works on the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

The 4th and 5th centuries AH marked a flourishing era of virtue-writing among Ahl al-Sunnah, with over 70 independent works composed on the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS). Important books from this period include *Khaṣā'is Amīr al-Mu'minīn* by *al-Nasā'ī* (d. 303 AH), *Faḍā'il 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib* (AS) by *al-Ṭabarī* (d. 310 AH), *al-Tabṣirah fī Faḍīlat al-'Itrah al-Muṭahharah* by Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan Hamdanī (d. 371 AH), and *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) by *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* (d. 405 AH).

Al-Hākim, by compiling the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) in *al-Mustadrak*—which is an addition to the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*—and also gathering the virtues of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS) in *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*

(AS), reconciled the discrepancy between the avoidance and strictness of the two Shaykhs (*al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*) and the leniency that *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* showed in narrating the virtues of the *Ṣaḥābah*. He narrated numerous authentic ḥadīths on the merits of *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) according to the conditions of the two Shaykhs or based on his own views, which should be considered a new chapter in virtue-writing.

In *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī* narrated around 258 ḥadīths on the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS) that meet the criteria for inclusion in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, but were not included in these two books. In *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS), he collected 232 ḥadīths and organized them into 65 chapters.

Conclusion

The findings of this research were analyzed across three levels of discourse, summarized as follows:

At the descriptive level, considering the structure and content of the book, it can be concluded that the narrations of the virtues of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* are rooted in profound and significant messages. The language employed in these narrations is predominantly marked by positive, purposeful meanings. The element of repetition is strategically used to reinforce their content and emphasize their core themes.

At the interpretive level, the foundational axis of *al-Hākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s discourse is the affirmation of *Fāṭimah al-Zahrā*'s unparalleled superiority over all women of the world and the women of paradise. He skillfully employs various discursive strategies, including explicit and implicit intertextuality, to articulate the divine

message of her exalted status and the incommensurability of her rank with that of other women. This message is effectively conveyed to his audience within the framework of his discourse.

Based on what occurred during a particular meeting between *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī* and others, the interpretive level reveals that *al-Ḥākim* had no choice but to elucidate the duality within society through an ideological lens rooted in tradition. This was essential for articulating his discourse on the status of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) in opposition to the prevailing narrative of the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*.

The distinctive political and social context of the Samanid and Buyid eras, which emphasized the promotion of knowledge and scholars, alongside their policy of tolerance and leniency towards various sects and intellectuals, marked the golden age of the 4th century AH. Moreover, *al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī*'s unique attributes—including his affection for Imam *al-Riḍā* (AS), his emulation of Imam al-Shāfi'ī, his engagement with Shi'a-leaning scholars as mentors, and his role as a mediator and courier between the Sāmānids and the Buyids—played a significant role in laying the groundwork for the composition of *Faḍā'il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS).

Al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī, through fundamental reforms in his ḥadīth methodology, not only purified fabricated narrations but also introduced a major transformation in the Sunni perspective, particularly regarding the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), by shifting his approach to these narrations.

These reforms can be traced within the interdisciplinary framework of ḥadīth sciences and *ʿIlm al-Dirāyah* (the science of critical

evaluation), where *al-Hākim* strengthened the foundational principles of *‘ilm al-dirāyah* through his works such as *al-Madkhal ilā Ma‘rifat al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *al-Madkhal ilā Ma‘rifat Kitāb al-Aklīl*, and *Ma‘rifah ‘Ulūm al-Hadīth*. This science, which focuses on assessing the authenticity of ḥadīths, directly influenced the credibility and acceptance of al-Hākim's contributions to virtue-writing, especially his books like *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* and *Faḍā’il Fāṭimah al-Zahrā* (AS).

This connection underscores how *‘Ilm al-Dirāyah* underpinned the development of virtue-writing as a scholarly discipline. However, this scientific and discursive evolution triggered backlash from certain rival groups, who accused *al-Hākim* of leniency and sought to marginalize him. The interplay of virtue-writing and discursive critiques in the intellectual milieu of the time reveals the intricate dimensions of shifting Sunni attitudes towards the Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

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