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تاریخ‌گذاری روایت «إنّ أحسَنَ الحَسَنِ الخُلُقُ الحَسَن» در جوامع روایی شیعه و اهل‌سنت با روش تحلیل هم‌زمان سند و متن

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چکیده

هدف: این پژوهش با هدف تاریخ‌گذاری روایت «إنّ أحسَنَ الحَسَنِ الخُلُقُ الحَسَن» (همانا بهترین نیکی، اخلاق نیکوست) در منابع روایی شیعه و اهل‌سنت با استفاده از روش «تحلیل هم‌زمان سند و متن(Isnād-cum-Matn Analysis) «، بازشناسی حلقه/حلقه‌های مشترک، و تحلیل مسیرهای انتقال آن در هر دو مذهب انجام شده است.

روش پژوهش: در این مطالعه از روش تحلیل هم‌زمان سند و متن همراه با رویکرد توصیفی-تحلیلی جهت بازسازی شبکه راویان، سیر تاریخی نقل حدیث و واکاوی دلایل تقابل ارزیابی‌های رجالی (تأیید در منابع شیعی در برابر مجعول‌انگاری نزد علمای متاخر اهل‌سنت) بهره گرفته شده است.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که این روایت از طریق ابن‌رازی وارد جوامع روایی شیعی شده و سپس از طریق المستغفری به متون اهل‌سنت راه یافته است. امام حسن مجتبی (ع) به عنوان حلقه مشترک اصلی و حسن بصری به عنوان حلقه مشترک فرعی در اسناد شناسایی شدند. با وجود یکسانی متن در هر دو سنت روایی، علمای متأخر اهل‌سنت (از جمله آلبانی) به دلیل ضعف برخی راویان مانند محمد بن زکریا الغلابی، آن را ساختگی (موضوع) دانسته‌اند.

نتیجه‌گیری: کاربرد روش تحلیل هم‌زمان سند و متن نشان می‌دهد که اختلاف‌نظر شیعه و اهل‌سنت در اعتبارسنجی این حدیث، برخاسته از تفاوت در معیارهای نقد رجالی راویان است و نه تحریف یا اختلاف در اصل متن روایت.

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Dating the Narration "*Inna Aḥsana al-Ḥasani al-Khuluqu al-Ḥasan* (Indeed, the Best of Goodness Is Good Character)" in Shiʿi and Sunni Traditions Using Isnād-cum-Matn Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to date the narration "Indeed, the best of goodness is good character" (*Inna aḥsana al-ḥasani al-khuluqu al-ḥasan*) across Shiʿi and Sunni hadith corpora using the *isnād-cum-matn* methodology, identifying its common links, transmission trajectories, and the reasons for its divergent evaluations in both traditions.

Methodology: The research applies the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis method combined with a descriptive-analytical approach to trace the chronological emergence, transmitter networks, and bio-bibliographical (*rijālī*) assessments across Shiʿi and Sunni sources.

Findings: The findings indicate that the tradition entered Shiʿi compilations via Ibn al-Rāzī and subsequently passed into Sunni texts through al-Mustaghfirī. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (a.s.) serves as the primary common link, with al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī acting as a secondary common link. While the core text (*matn*) remains identical in both traditions, Sunni scholarship (e.g., al-Albānī) classified it as fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) due to perceived deficiencies in specific transmitters such as Muḥammad b. Zakarīyā al-Ghalābī.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates how *isnād-cum-matn* analysis clarifieshadith chronology and cross-sectarian transmission paths, revealing that sectarian divergence in hadith authentication stems from differing *rijālī* criteria rather than textual variation.

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1. Introduction

This research employs the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis method to examine the transmission chain and the text of the narration, "Indeed, the best of good is good character," within both Shiʿi and Sunni corpora. The primary objective is to determine the chronological origin of the narration, identify the common link(s) in its chain of transmission, and analyze the divergent reception of this tradition by the two sects. The rationale for focusing on this specific narration lies in the conflict surrounding its authentication: it was first recorded in Shiʿi sources by Shaykh Ṣadūq in *al-Khiṣāl* as a verified and authentic narration attributed to Imam Ḥasan (AS), whereas it has been rejected in later Sunni sources as a fabricated and weak (*ḍaʿīf*) hadith.

Shaykh Ṣadūq, the renowned Imami scholar, made significant efforts to preserve the hadith heritage of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (AS). Ibn Bābawayh (Shaykh Ṣadūq) is remembered for his numerous teachers and extensive travels. During these scholarly journeys, he engaged with Sunni hadith scholars and transmitted traditions from them. A notable outcome of these travels was his acquaintance with both prominent and obscure Sunni teachers, whose narrations are frequently cited in his writings. Ṣadūq's aim in narrating from Sunni teachers was to demonstrate his impartiality and lack of prejudice, thereby influencing Sunni scholars and familiarizing them with Shiʿi teachings. After departing from Qom, Shaykh Ṣadūq traveled to Ray, Astarabad, Gorgan, Nishapur, Ferghana, Balkh, Īlāq, Hamadan, Baghdad, Kufa, Fayd, Mecca, and Medina.

During his residency in various cities, Ṣadūq narrated traditions from many prominent figures of hadith (Ibn Bābawayh Ṣadūq, 1367, 9). In 368 AH, he entered Īlāq—a dependency of Balkh and Samarkand—and resided there. During his stay, he met Sharīf Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, known as Niʿmah, who reviewed most of his works; indeed, the composition of *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* was initiated in this city at Sharīf Niʿmah's suggestion (ibid, p. 11). Ṣadūq referred to Aswārī as one of "Our Opponents," a designation indicating his non-Shiʿi affiliation; notably, Ṣadūq also refrained from offering the customary supplications for God's pleasure or mercy upon him, providing further evidence of this affiliation. In *al-Khiṣāl*, following his narration of the tradition from Aswārī, Ṣadūq provides explanatory commentary, effectively expanding upon the text (ibid, 1362 SH, p 164; vol. 2: 494, 523.). Ṣadūq variously referred to Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Aṣbahānī Aswārī as "Aswārī al-Mudhakkir" and "Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Aḥmadānī Aswārī al-Faqīh" (ibid, vol. 1, p. 164).

This article's analysis is grounded in the methodology of hadith dating and *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the study addresses the following questions: What ambiguities exist regarding the narrators in the transmission chain or the recurrence of similar names that require precise clarification? What is the necessity and utility of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis method in examining this hadith?

In the contemporary era, scholars have utilized modern analytical frameworks, including the dating of narrations, to examine hadith. They seek to reconstruct the original core of a tradition within a specific historical timeframe, focusing on primary and secondary common links within the transmission chains. This methodology serves as a critical tool for analyzing hadith texts to achieve a more rigorous understanding. Accordingly, this research aims to conduct an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis of the hadith: "Indeed, the best of good is good character."

To date, no independent research has been conducted on this narration using a comparative approach and the *isnād-cum-matn* method. While this hadith is transmitted in Sunni sources, it is accompanied by a weak chain of transmission; al-Albānī categorized it as fabricated in his *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍaʿīfa wa al-Mawḍūʿa* (Hadith No. 768), citing the presence of narrators such as Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā al-Ghalābī and Ḥasan ibn Dīnār (Albānī, 1412: 2/187).

In Shiʿi sources, this hadith appears exclusively in Shaykh Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl* (1/29) and subsequently in various *masānīd* or *mustadrakāt* collections; notably, later Shiʿi traditionists have not questioned its authenticity. Furthermore, Ibn Rāzī recorded this hadith in his *al-Masānīd* using a similar path prior to Shaykh Ṣadūq, which points to its earlier origin.

Therefore, a comparative examination of this narration using the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis method constitutes a novel contribution to the field. Regarding methodology, the following studies have also addressed the dating of specific hadiths: "Dating the Hadith 'I Have Been Given the Book and Its Like with It' Based on the Method of Document-Text Analysis" by Fahimeh Gholaminejad and Hossein Sattar (Gholaminejad and Sattar, 1402, pp. 19-38), and *"Examining the Role of Shaykh Ṣadūq in Transmitting the Narration of the Eighteen Virtues of Ali (AS) to Shiʿi Sources Based on the Method of Document-Text Analysis"* by Fahimeh Gholaminejad et al., published in 2023, which details the dating methodology before applying it to the hadith of the *"Eighteen Virtues"* (Gholaminejad et al., 1402, pp. 81-97).

2. Rereading and Analysis of the Variants of the Narration "Indeed, the Best of Good Is Good Character"

Ṣadūq introduced the hadith "Indeed, the best of good is good character" (*Inna aḥsana al-ḥasani al-khuluqu al-ḥasan*) into Shiʿi corpora from the sole extant pre-*Khiṣāl* source: the book *al-Musalsalāt* by Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad al-Qummī [Ibn al-Rāzī] (Ibn Rāzī, 1387, p. 281). In *al-Khiṣāl*, under the rubric of noble ethics—of which Imam al-Ḥasan (AS), as his name signifies, was an exemplar of virtues and moral excellences (Mohammadi Mazraʿeh-Shahi & Shah-Vali Anari, 1393, pp. 146–170; Mahdavi Damghani & Baghestani, 1393, vol. 1, p. 6155), Ṣadūq transmits this tradition from "al-Aswārī" in the chapter "*al-Wāḥid*" (The Single Quality), under the title "The Best of Beauties Is One Trait" (hadith no. 102). This tradition, transmitted from al-Aswārī in *al-Khiṣāl*, in which Abū al-Ḥasan narrates from al-Ḥasan, who narrates from al-Ḥasan, who narrates from al-Ḥasan (AS), the second Imam, states: "The most beautiful of beauties is having good character." At the conclusion of this transmission in *al-Khiṣāl*, Ṣadūq provides explanatory glosses regarding the homonymous narrators, thereby identifying and elucidating their identities: *"As for the first Abū al-Ḥasan, he is Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tustarī; the second Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Tammār; the third Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Wāqidī. As for the first al-Ḥasan, he is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿArafa al-ʿAbdī; the second al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; and the third al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS)"* (Ibn Bābawayh Ṣadūq, 1362, vol. 1, p. 29).

This is a *musalsal* tradition (a narration with a continuous chain wherein transmitters share an identical feature or appellation). Because the figures in its *isnād* bear homonymous names, Ṣadūq offered this detailed disambiguation to clarify their identities (Mahdi Mahrizi, 1380, p. 308.).

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Aswārī was among the Sunni teachers (*mashāyikh*) of Shaykh Ṣadūq, who transmitted the hadith "Indeed, the best of good is good character" from him in *al-Khiṣāl* (1/29). He is characterized in *rijāl* works as a "jurist" (*faqīh*), and ʿAbbāsī Zanjānī classified him among the trustworthy (*thiqah*) narrators (ʿAbbāsī Zanjānī, 1436: 7/296). Theologically, al-Aswārī adhered to the Muʿtazila, endorsing the doctrine that negates divine agency over reprehensible acts (al-Khayyāṭ, 2004: 20–21; al-Ashʿarī, 1400: 203). This doctrinal inclination may have influenced his selection and transmission of this ethical narration on good character.

Importantly, this transmission presents a fully sequential *musalsal* chain (*musalsal tamm*). It is designated as complete because across every tier (*ṭabaqah*) of the *isnād*, from the Companion down to the ultimate transmitter, the agnomen (*kunyah*) "Abū al-Ḥasan" or the given name "al-Ḥasan" recurs consistently. This formal uniformity characterizes all variants transmitted through Shaykh Ṣadūq and Ibn al-Rāzī. However, this sequential continuity (*tasalsul*) does not inherently attest to the authenticity of the tradition; rather, the probity (*taʿdīl*) of individual transmitters must be critically appraised. Although structurally classified as a complete *musalsal*, its acceptance or rejection ultimately depends on bio-bibliographical (*rijālī*) and content-based (*matn*) assessments.

Furthermore, this narration occurs extensively across Sunni hadith collections, appearing in diverse textual recensions and transmitted by varied authorities; that is, numerous textual variants were widely circulated. In what follows, I first examine this narration in *al-Khiṣāl*, followed by an investigation of the Sunni sources containing the locution "Indeed, the best of good is good character"—the core segment of this tradition—given that an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis requires comparing textual variants alongside diverse transmission trajectories. Accordingly, through an examination of Sunni compilations, I trace this narration and subsequently analyze the *isnād-cum-matn* of the version recorded by Ṣadūq in juxtaposition with its Sunni counterparts. Chronologically, the sources documenting this tradition may be arranged by author as follows:

A) *al-Musalsalāt* by Ibn al-Rāzī [Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad al-Qummī al-Rāzī al-Īlāqī, d. ca. 340 AH] (Ibn Rāzī, Jāmi' al-Aḥādīth, 281);

B) *al-Khiṣāl* by Shaykh Ṣadūq [d. 381 AH] (Ibn Bābawayh Ṣadūq, al-Khiṣāl, 1: 29.);

C) *Musnad al-Shihāb* by al-Quḍāʿī [d. 454 AH] (Abū ʿAbdullāh Muhammad, 1407, vol. 2, p. 108);

D) *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* by Ibn ʿAsākir [d. 571 AH] (Abul Qāsim, 1415 AH, vol. 13, pp. 116–117);

E) *Jāmiʿ al-Aḥādīth* by al-Suyūṭī [d. 911 AH] (Suyūṭī, 1423 AH, vol. 7, p. 141).

2.1. Isnād Analysis of the Narration "Indeed, the Best of Good Is Good Character"

As previously noted, the variants of this narration can be chronologically classified as outlined above. Although the text of each variant remains conceptually aligned with the others, minor variations appear across certain

recensions. Below, we conduct an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis of these variants, examining the transmitters in each transmission chain and tracing the textual shifts within the hadith. Differences indeed exist across the chains of transmission, the individual narrators, and even the wording of the *matn*—such as lexical substitutions, formal structures, and textual components—all of which will be highlighted in the course of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis.

2.1.1. Transmission and *Isnād* Analysis of Version A

Prior to conducting the *isnād* analysis of Version A, several preliminary points must be established regarding the sources predating Shaykh Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl*, situated within the chronological development of this tradition. Tracing the timeline of this transmission suggests that this hadith belongs to the category of reverse-transmitted traditions (Hussein Sattar, 1393, p. 208); that is, Shaykh Ṣadūq transmitted this hadith verbatim from Ibn al-Rāzī's *al-Musalsalāt* (Subhani, vol. 1, p. 82; Shahid Thānī, 1408, vol. 1, p. 117; Ali Mukhtari, 1375, 47) with the identical chain of transmission in *al-Khiṣāl*, after which it was disseminated into Sunni compilations through various channels.

Notably, Ibn al-Rāzī was among the teachers (*mashāyikh*) of Shaykh Ṣadūq, and Ṣadūq transmitted traditions from him across several works, consistently describing him as a jurist (*faqīh*) (Ṣadūq, 1403 AH, 3/6; Ṣadūq, 1398 AH, ch. 4, p. 88; ch. 65, p. 417). In fact, prior to Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl*, this hadith does not appear in any Sunni source. Rather, it transitioned into Sunni sources from Shiʿi compilations following its transmission by Shaykh Ṣadūq, one of the foremost authorities of Shiʿism. First, an examination of Sunni hadith compilations composed prior to *al-Khiṣāl* (d. 381 AH)—such as the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasāʾī—demonstrates that this tradition is absent from these early canonical works. Second, the earliest extant source containing this tradition is Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl* in the fourth century AH. Subsequent to this period, the hadith appeared for the first time in the works of Sunni traditionists such as al-Ḥākim al-Nīshāpūrī in *al-Mustadrak*.

According to the transmission preserved in Version A, Jaʿfar ibn Aḥmad al-Qummī al-Rāzī al-Īlāqī, known as Ibn al-Rāzī, recorded this tradition under the "Twentieth Hadith," entitled "And it is the one transmitted successively through narrators named al-Ḥasan" in *al-Musalsalāt*, with the following chain: *"ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Aswārī al-Mudhakkir narrated to us, saying: Abū Yūsuf Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Mudhakkir al-Sijzī narrated to me, saying: Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAli al-Sarakhsī narrated to me, saying: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿImrān al-Baghdādī narrated*

to me, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to me, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to me, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to me, saying: al-Ḥasan narrated to me, saying: al-Ḥasan narrated to me, saying: al-Ḥasan (AS) narrated to me: 'Indeed, the best of good is good character.'"

Following the transmission, he elaborates on the succession of transmitters and the homonymous occurrences of the *kunyah* "Abū al-Ḥasan" and the given name "al-Ḥasan": *"As for the first Abū al-Ḥasan, he is Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tustarī; the second Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Tammār; and the third Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Wāqidī. As for the first al-Ḥasan, he is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿArafa; the second al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; and the third al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS)."* (Suyūṭī, 1423 AH, p. 281).

In this tradition, within the generation of the Companions, Imam al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS) (d. 50 AH), who is the terminal transmitter in the aforementioned chain, functions as the primary common link of the hadith across all lines of transmission. Consequently, the chain reaches an infallible Imam (AS) and is thus classified as *musnad* (Kazem Modir Shanachi, 1386 SH, p. 85). The other transmitter in the generation of the Successors is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 AH), renowned as the *"Imam of the Successors"* and *"Master of the Successors"* (Sam'ānī, vol. 2, p. 220; Dhahabī, 2003, vol. 7, p. 48).

It has been stated that: "al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was a polymath, an eminent scholar, a jurist, trustworthy, reliable, an ascetic, pious, endowed with vast learning, eloquent, and handsome."

"The narrations of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī regarding traditions he transmitted as musnad—by providing complete chains of transmission—from authorities he directly heard from are deemed authoritative. However, the traditions he transmitted as mursal—without providing the chains of transmission—are not deemed authoritative."

The evaluations and verdicts of biographical (*rijāl*) authorities regarding al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī vary considerably. While Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī praised him profusely in *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, Ibn Ḥajar in *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* criticized him more extensively than he commended him (Ibn Sa'd,1374 SH, vol. 7, p. 162).

al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī serves as a partial common link in the transmission chain of this hadith. In the subsequent tier of the Successors to the Successors (*atbāʿ al-tābiʿīn*), there is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿArafa al-ʿAbdī (d. 256 AH), regarding whom al-Māmaqānī writes in his biographical entry: *"He was among the Sunni scholars, and Saʿd ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ashʿarī heard hadith from him"* (Māmaqānī, 1431 SH, vol. 20, p. 7)

2.1.2. Transmission and Isnād Analysis of Version B

The narration transmitted by Shaykh Ṣadūq in *al-Khiṣāl*, as illustrated in Diagram 1, corresponds fully in its number of transmitters to the narration recorded in Ibn al-Rāzī's *al-Musalsalāt* (Version A); indeed, it is the identical tradition preserved in *al-Musalsalāt* that is reproduced in *al-Khiṣāl*.

The text of the narration via this chain reads as follows: "Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Aswārī narrated to us, saying: Abū Yūsuf Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Sijzī al-Mudhakkir narrated to me, saying: Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAli al-Sarakhsī narrated to me in Marw al-Rūdh, saying: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿImrān al-Baghdādī narrated to me, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan narrated: 'Indeed, the best of good is good character.'

And as for the first Abū al-Ḥasan, he is Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tustarī; the second Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Tammār; and the third Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Wāqidī. As for the first al-Ḥasan, he is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿArafa al-ʿAbdī; the second al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; and the third al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS)" (ibn Bābawayh Ṣadūq, 1362 SH, vol. 1, p. 29)

Regarding internal variants within this transmission, it should be observed that, just as in the transmission of Ibn al-Rāzī, the explanatory gloss appended to the tradition concerning the succession of transmitters and the homonymy of the *kunyah* "Abū al-Ḥasan" and the given name "al-Ḥasan" displays no discrepancy. The sole textual difference in Version B compared to Version A appears in the following clause: *"Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAli al-Sarakhsī narrated to me in Marw al-Rūdh,"* where Version B explicitly identifies the geographical location of transmission (the venue of hadith audition), namely Marw al-Rūdh, specifying that he heard this tradition from Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz in that city. Furthermore, the name of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qays al-Sijzī is recorded in this form in *al-Khiṣāl*. However, it is noted in *al-Jāmiʿ fī al-Rijāl* that while in *al-Khiṣāl* (vol. 1, p. 29, hadith 102—the tradition examined in this study) the nisba appears as "al-Sijzī," in *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿah* it is rendered as "al-Saḥrī." (Abbasi Zanjani, vol. 1, p. 437) al-Ḥākim al-Nīshāpūrī corroborates the reading "al-Saḥrī," writing: "al-Sijzī; originally: al-Saḥrī" (Dhahabī, 1427 AH, vol. 14 p. 296).

It is noteworthy that in subsequent transmissions of this tradition across Shiʿi compilations, the report is predominantly cited verbatim either from *al-Khiṣāl* or

from Ibn al-Rāzī's *al-Musalsalāt*. In effect, transmissions by later Shiʿi scholars exhibit no divergence, either in their chains of transmission or in the hadith text, from Versions A and B (the recensions of Ibn al-Rāzī and Ṣadūq).

Moreover, the remaining transmitters in the chain of Version B identified by the *kunyah* Abū al-Ḥasan are: the first Abū al-Ḥasan, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tustarī, whose biographical details are not treated extensively in biographical and *rijāl* works, with sources merely noting that Ṣadūq transmitted this tradition from him—identified as Abū al-Ḥasan the first—in the initial chapter of *al-Khiṣāl* (Abbasi Zanjani, 9: 407; Shushtarī, 1410 AH, vol. 9, p. 362.) The second Abū al-Ḥasan in this transmission is ʿAli ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Tammār, of whom biographical compendia likewise merely mention that Ṣadūq cited this hadith on his authority in *al-Khiṣāl* (Khoei, 1372, vol. 5, p. 372; Māmaqānī, vol. 20, p. 6.). The third Abū al-Ḥasan is ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Wāqidī, concerning whom nothing is documented in biographical dictionaries beyond the fact that al-Ḥasan ibn ʿArafa transmitted traditions from him (Shahrūdi, 1414 AH, vol. 5, p. 474).

Diagram No. 1: The Chain of Transmission of the Hadith in the Shi'a Path

Shaykh Ṣadūq

↓

Abul Ḥasan Ali ibn ʻAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad Aswārī

↓

Abū Yūsuf Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Qays al-Sijzī al-Mudhakkir

↓

Abū Muhammad ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn Ali al-Sarakhsī

↓

Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʻImrān al-Baghdādī

↓

Muhammad ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Tustarīī

↓

Ali ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Tammār

↓

Ali ibn Muhammad al-Wāqidī

↓

Ḥasan ibn ʻArafa al-ʻAbdī

↓

Ḥasan ibn Abi al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Partial Common Link)

↓

Ḥasan ibn Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS) (Main Common Link)

2.1.3. *Isnād* Analysis of Narration Version C

The narration of this hadith in *Musnad al-Shihāb* exhibits greater divergence from Versions A and B, which represent the two Shiʿi transmissions. Indeed, beginning from Version C onwards (the transmission of this tradition via Sunni pathways), the chain of transmission and its constituent narrators diverge; nonetheless, the primary common link—namely al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli (AS)—and the secondary common link—namely al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī—remain identical in both Shiʿi and Sunni transmissions.

The transmission of this narration among Sunni authorities proceeds through Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432 AH) (see: Albānī, 1408 AH, vol. 1, p. 198), who was chronologically the first to record this hadith in his *al-Musalsalāt*. In the fifth century AH, al-Quḍāʿī (d. 454 AH) transmitted this tradition in his *Musnad al-Shihāb* through the same transmission line as al-Mustaghfirī (Ṣan'ānī, vol. 3, p. 565).

The text of the narration via this chain reads as follows: "Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Kashshī, who was of good character, informed us: Abū al-ʿAbbās Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mustaghfirī informed us with an excellent narration: Abū al-ʿAbbās ibn Abī al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: my father Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyyā al-Ghalābī, a man whose hadith is sound, narrated to us: al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan, who said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Indeed, the best of good is good character.'

The first al-Ḥasan is Ibn Sahl; the second is Ibn Dīnār; the third is al-Baṣrī; and the fourth is Ibn ʿAli" (Qaḍāʿī, vol. 2, p. 108)

Following this tradition, al-Quḍāʿī appended explanatory remarks concerning the sequential succession of narrators and the homonymy of the name "al-Ḥasan": the first Ḥasan is Ibn Sahl; the second Ḥasan is Ibn Dīnār; the third Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; and the fourth Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli. While al-Quḍāʿī identified these specific individuals for the recurrent name "al-Ḥasan" in *Musnad al-Shihāb*, al-Mustaghfirī and Ibn ʿAsākir proposed other figures in identifying this homonymous chain, as discussed below in the analysis of Version D.

2.1.4. Transmission and *Isnād* Analysis of Narration Version D

The narration of this hadith in Tārīkh Dimashq is likewise transmitted through Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mustaghfirī: "al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥasan Abū ʿAli al-Khutallī, the jurist, resided in Damascus and transmitted traditions there from Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr al-Mayhanī and Ismāʿīl ibn

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣābūnī, and he accompanied him to Damascus for pilgrimage; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz transmitted from him. Abū Muḥammad ibn al-Akfānī informed us: ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Aḥmad narrated to us, saying: Abū ʿAli al-Ḥasan ibn Abī Ṭāhir al-Khutallī, the jurist, came to us, saying: Abū Saʿīd Faḍl Allāh ibn Aḥmad narrated to us, saying: Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mustaghfirī narrated to us, saying: Abū al-ʿAbbās ibn Abī al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: my father Abū al-Ḥasan narrated to us, saying: Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyyā al-Ghalābī narrated to us: al-Ḥasan from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī from al-Ḥasan that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Indeed, the best of good is good character'" (Ibn 'Asākir, vol. 13, p. 116)

Ibn ʿAsākir writes in clarifying the homonymous names in the chain of transmission: "The Shaykh—meaning al-Mustaghfirī—said: 'As for the first al-Ḥasan, he is al-Ḥasan ibn Ziyād; the second al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān al-Samtī; the third al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; and the fourth al-Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib.' This is what Ibn Ṭāwūs transmitted to us; however, the correct view, as in the former reading, is that the first is al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān and the second is al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār" (ibid, vol. 13, p. 117).

Ibn ʿAsākir notes: "Mustaghfirī identified the first Ḥasan as al-Ḥasan ibn Ziyād, the second Ḥasan as al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān al-Samtī, the third Ḥasan as al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and the fourth Ḥasan as al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib (AS). Ibn Ṭāwūs likewise corroborated al-Mustaghfirī's identification; however, in our [Ibn ʿAsākir's] view, the correct assessment is that the first Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān and the second Ḥasan is al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār."

2.1.5. Transmission and *Isnād* Analysis of Narration Version E

The transmission of the hadith "Indeed, the best of good is good character" by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) in the tenth century AH is recorded without citing a full chain of transmission; instead, he quotes the tradition accompanied solely by explanatory critical notes on its authorities: *"Indeed, the best of good is good character."*

Following the citation of this tradition, al-Suyūṭī provides the following critical gloss: "[Recorded by] al-Mustaghfirī in al-Musalsalāt, Ibn ʿAsākir, and Ibn al-Najjār, via al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān al-Samtī from al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli. Its chain includes Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyyā al-Ghalābī, concerning whom Ibn Mandah commented, and al-Dāraquṭnī stated that he fabricated hadiths; nevertheless, Ibn Ḥibbān listed him in al-Thiqāt. Ibn ʿAsākir narrated it

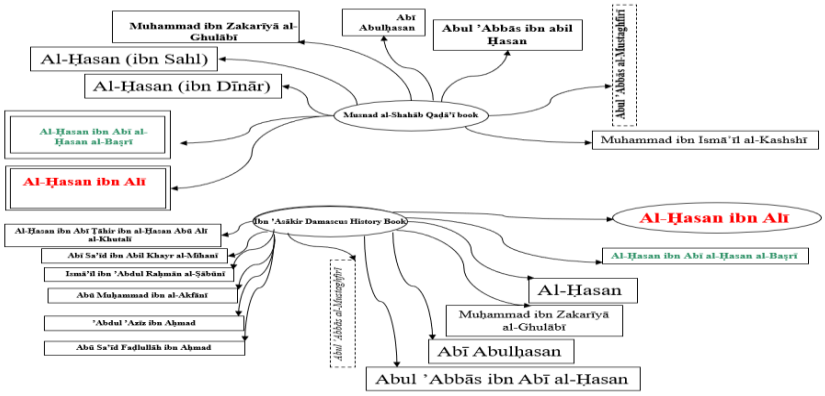
(13:116) (Ibn 'Asākir, vol. 13, p. 116), as did al-Quḍāʿī via the transmission path of al-Mustaghfirī (2:108, no. 986) (Qaḍā'i, vol. 2, p. 108), and Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī in al-ʿUjālah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Musalsalah through the transmission path of al-Mustaghfirī (1:79) ('Alam al-Dīnal-Fādānī, 1985, vol. 1, p. 79). al-Munāwī stated (2:417): 'In its chain is al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār; al-Dhahabī included him among the weak transmitters (al-ḍuʿafāʾ), stating that al-Nasāʾī and others declared him abandoned (matrūk)'" (Manāwī, 1356, Vol. 2, p. 417; Suyūṭī, vol. 7, p. 141)

Thus, al-Mustaghfirī in *al-Musalsalāt*, Ibn ʿAsākir, and Ibn al-Najjār transmitted this tradition via the path of al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥassān al-Samtī from al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār from al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli. In this chain of transmission, one of the central figures is Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyyā al-Ghalābī, on whom Ibn Mandah expressed reservations and whom al-Dāraquṭnī accused of hadith forgery (*waḍʿ*); Ibn Ḥibbān, however, included him among trustworthy transmitters (*al-thiqāt*), effectively declaring him reliable. The report is likewise recorded by Ibn ʿAsākir (vol. 13, p. 116), al-Quḍāʿī via al-Mustaghfirī's transmission path (vol. 2, p. 108), and Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī in *al-ʿUjālah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Musalsalah* via al-Mustaghfirī (vol. 1, p. 79). In *Fayḍ al-Qadīr Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr* (vol. 2, p. 417), al-Munāwī notes that al-Ḥasan ibn Dīnār is present in this chain, whom al-Dhahabī classified among weak narrators, noting that al-Nasāʾī and others deemed him an abandoned transmitter (*matrūk al-ḥadīth*).

In later Sunni scholarship, critics such as al-Albānī (d. 1420 AH) classified this hadith as fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) and weak (*ḍaʿīf*), attributing the forgery to al-Ghalābī, one of the transmitters in its chain. al-Albānī observes in this regard: *"al-Ghalābī fabricated this hadith, as held and stated by al-Dāraquṭnī; alternatively, the forgery may originate from Ibn Dīnār, since al-Dhahabī included him among the weak transmitters."*

Consequently, under al-Albānī's critical evaluation, the report is assessed as *mawqūf* (halted at a Companion/Successor level) and inherently spurious; he therefore cataloged this narration in his compendium *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍaʿīfah wa-al-Mawḍūʿah* (The Series of Weak and Fabricated Hadiths) (Albānī, 1412 AH, vol. 2, pp. 187–188).

Diagram No. 2: Chain of hadith Isnad according to the Sunni tradition



2.2. Textual (Matn) Analysis of the Narration "Indeed, the Best of Good Is Good Character"

The core textual nucleus (*matn*) of this tradition is the aphorism: "Indeed, the best of good is good character" (*inna aḥsana al-ḥusni al-khuluqu al-ḥasan*), which is preserved identically across Versions B, C, D, and E. The sole variant appears in Version A, where Ibn al-Rāzī records the terminal clause as: "Indeed, the best of beauties is good character" (*inna aḥsana al-maḥāsini al-khuluqu al-ḥasan*).

Commenting on the scope of "good character" in his exposition of this tradition, Mullā ʿAli al-Qārī observes: "It is comprehensive, because good character encompasses all categories of praiseworthy traits." Good character thus denotes an overarching moral disposition subsuming all forms of virtue (al-Qārī, 1422 AH, vol. 8, p. 169).

Taking into account the lexical divergence between Ibn al-Rāzī's recension and Shaykh Ṣadūq's subsequent transmission in *al-Khiṣāl*, two scholarly hypotheses may be advanced:

1. First Hypothesis: This textual variant permeated Sunni compilations directly from the same archetype or line of transmission preserved in Shaykh Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl*, rather than from Ibn al-Rāzī's *al-Musalsalāt*.

2. Second Hypothesis: The core clause is authentic to the earliest stage of transmission and entered Sunni compilations through independent collateral channels. Under this scenario, although the intermediary links in the transmission chains diverge in Sunni sources, the early tiers of transmission remain consistent between the Shiʿi and Sunni corpora: the

primary Common Link (*CL*) is al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli (AS), while the secondary Common Link / Partial Common Link (*PCL*) in the generation of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*) across both traditions is al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. The concurrence of this secondary Common Link in both Shiʿi and Sunni transmission pathways confirms the absence of scribal corruption or textual drift in the central aphorism.

A comparative evaluation of these textual versions indicates that the primary dictum, "Indeed, the best of good is good character," served to encapsulate the thematic essence of virtuous conduct. Imam al-Ḥasan (AS)—whose very name mirrors this virtue—stands as the thematic exemplar of this quality; the tradition is accordingly transmitted on his authority and ultimately terminates with him as the infallible Imam. Consequently, the substantive core of the narration remained stable in both Shiʿi and Sunni authorities. Transmitted to Sunni compilations in a phrasing identical to that preserved in Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl*, the tradition consistently conveys the same universal moral import to its recipients.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the tradition "Indeed, the best of good is good character" is transmitted on the authority of a single early authority, namely Imam al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli (AS), who functions as the primary Common Link (*CL*) across both Shiʿi and Sunni corpora. Tracing the transmission chains of this tradition across early Sunni compilations—such as al-Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-Īmān*—and Imāmī works—such as Shaykh Ṣadūq's *al-Khiṣāl*—reveals that all *isnād* trajectories converge exclusively upon Imam al-Ḥasan (AS) as the direct transmitter from the Prophet (PBUH). Furthermore, in the tier of the Successors (*Tābiʿūn*), al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī emerges consistently as a secondary Common Link / Partial Common Link (*PCL*) across all extant recensions (Versions A, B, C, D, and E).

From Version B onward—represented by the transmission line of Shaykh Ṣadūq—the primary textual nucleus (*matn*) of this tradition was incorporated into Sunni sources verbatim. This textual stability attests to the absence of scribal corruption or significant redactional alteration across both Shiʿi and Sunni transmission pathways. A comparative reading confirms that the central dictum, "Indeed, the best of good is good character," served specifically to encapsulate the conceptual primacy of moral virtue.

Crucially, in the Shiʿi tradition, this narration is classified as *musnad* (possessing a continuous, unbroken chain of transmission), linking the narrator al-Aswārī directly to Imam al-Ḥasan (AS) and terminating with the infallible Imam. Consequently, Shaykh Ṣadūq raises no suspicion of forgery regarding this report, nor have subsequent Shiʿi traditionists characterized it as weak or fabricated; rather, it remains an accepted, continuously transmitted tradition within the Shiʿi hadith corpus.

Conversely, in Sunni scholarship—particularly among later traditionists such as al-Albānī—this report has been evaluated as fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) and weak (*ḍaʿīf*). al-Albānī ascribed the alleged forgery to al-Ghalābī or, alternatively, to Ibn Dīnār, noting al-Dhahabī's classification of the latter among unreliable transmitters. On these grounds, al-Albānī categorized the report as *mawqūf* (halted at the Companion/Successor level) and spurious, cataloging it within his *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍaʿīfah wa-al-Mawḍūʿah*.

Thus, while the hadith is recognized as conceptually sound and formally *musnad* in Shiʿi sources, it encountered critical skepticism within the Sunni tradition. This divergence in reception may stem from cross-sectarian transmission dynamics: having permeated Sunni channels from Imāmī milieux, the hadith likely met with critical resistance regarding its chain of transmitters. Ultimately, applying *isnād-cum-matn* analysis to this tradition establishes the precise degree of textual and transmissional correlation between the Shiʿi and Sunni hadith corpora, illuminating the historical mechanisms of early hadith dissemination.

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