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تحلیل و نقد حدیث «لا خیر فی جماعة النساء» بر پایه تحلیل سند و متن

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چکیده

هدف: این پژوهش با هدف نقد و ارزیابی انتقادی روایت «لا خیر فی جماعة النساء» (خیری در اجتماع زنان نیست) از طریق واکاوی دقیق اسناد و متن آن انجام شده است تا تناقض ظاهری این روایت با مقام والای زن در قرآن کریم و سنت اصیل نبوی بررسی گردد.

روش پژوهش: این مطالعه با استفاده از روش تحلیلی-انتقادی به بررسی طریق‌های نقل، نقل‌های مختلف متن، ظرایف معناشناختی و بسترهای هرمنوتیکی روایت یادشده می‌پردازد.

یافته‌ها: یافته‌های تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که طرق متنی و اسنادی این روایت فاقد اعتبار معرفتی و حجیت روایی لازم است .این نقل‌ها عمدتاً در بستر تاریخی خاصی تحت تاثیر هنجارهای مردسالارانه با محوریت خانه‌نشینی زنان شکل گرفته‌اند و بیش از آنکه منعکس‌کننده سیره اصیل نبوی یا اصول قرآنی باشند، بازتاب‌دهنده شرایط اجتماعی-فرهنگی زمان صدور و نقل خود هستند.

نتیجه‌گیری: این حدیث در ترازو و معیار نقد سند و متن مردود بوده و با اصول بنیادین اسلامی پیرامون کرامت انسانی و مشارکت مشروع اجتماعی زنان ناسازگار است؛ از این رو نمی‌تواند مبنایی معتبر برای محدودسازی حضور اجتماعی و جمعی زنان قرار گیرد.

هدف: این پژوهش با هدف نقد و ارزیابی انتقادی روایت «لا خیر فی جماعة النساء» (خیری در اجتماع زنان نیست) از طریق واکاوی دقیق اسناد و متن آن انجام شده است تا تناقض ظاهری این روایت با مقام والای زن در قرآن کریم و سنت اصیل نبوی بررسی گردد.

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A Critical Analysis of the Narration "*There is No Good in the Gathering of Women*" (*Lā Khayra fī Jamāʿat al-Nisāʾ*) Based on *Isnād* and *Matn* Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to critically evaluate the narration "There is no good in the gathering of women" (*Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ*) through a rigorous analysis of its chain of transmission (*isnād*) and textual content (*matn*), addressing its apparent contradiction with the exalted status of women in the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah.

Methodology: The research employs an analytical-critical methodology to examine the transmission paths, textual variants, historical contexts, and hermeneutical implications of the narration.

Findings: The study reveals that the extant transmission chains lack probative epistemic weight (*iʿtibār*) and reliability. The narration emerged within a specific historical milieu heavily influenced by patriarchal norms aimed at domestic confinement (*khānah-nishīnī-ye zanān*), reflecting sociocultural biases of its era rather than authentic Prophetic praxis (*sīrah*).

Conclusion: The narration fails both chain-of-transmission and textual criticism, proving inconsistent with foundational Islamic principles regarding human dignity and women's legitimate social participation. Consequently, it cannot serve as a valid basis for limiting women's communal engagement.

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Introduction

The primary foundational sources of Islamic epistemology and normativity are the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Infallibles (*al-Maʿṣūmīn*). To ground valid legal and theological conclusions in these two sources, both their authentic provenance and their semantic clarity must be methodologically established. Scholars across the Islamic legal and theological traditions have systematically formulated rigorous epistemic criteria to govern text reception and interpretation. Within this framework, the Qur'an is universally affirmed as definitively authentic in its transmission, having been preserved through uninterrupted, mass-attested transmission (*tawātur*) across successive generations; consequently, the Divine Text is immune to historical skepticism regarding its textual integrity. By contrast, hadith literature and historical reports remain in vital need of rigorous critical inquiry. This imperative stems from the substantial temporal distance separating later scholars from the originative milieu of the text, compounded by well-documented historical motives for fabrication (and inadvertent narrator lapses or transmission errors. The hermeneutical acceptance of any tradition therefore necessitates meticulous textual analysis, contextual correlation, and compliance with the established canons of *isnād* and *matn* verification.

Within the hadith corpora of both major Islamic traditions (Sunni and Shīʿī), a substantial body of narrations concerns women. While certain traditions extol their exalted ontological and moral status, others adopt a censuring tone or impose restrictive codes upon their conduct. This apparent dissonance presents a substantial interpretive dilemma. Resolving this tension requires mobilizing the analytical tools of hadith hermeneutics (*fiqh al-ḥadīth*) alongside a rigorous examination of the historical occasions of issuance. From this methodological vantage, spatio-temporal determinants and the socio-cultural horizons prevailing in the formative milieu of transmission constitute essential variables in evaluating the substantive import of these traditions (Adeli et al., 2024; Moslehi & Noorian, 2019).

A critical survey of extant hadith compendia and exegetical literature indicates that although scholars have addressed female-related traditions, few studies have systematically deployed the apparatus of *fiqh al-ḥadīth* to undertake an integrated, monographic study of the tradition under consideration. Current research demonstrates that an exhaustive, focused examination of the narration *"There is no good in the gathering of women"* (*Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ*) is conspicuously lacking in the literature. Scholarly contributions have largely been limited to general analytical-critical

inquiries into adjacent motifs—for example, Fattahizadeh (1393 SH) on traditions regarding women in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Rad (1393 SH) on narrations characterizing women as societal trial (*fitnah*), and Gharavi (1399 SH) on traditions depicting women as "the snares of Satan" (*ḥabāʾil al-shayṭān*).

Consequently, when approaching the dictum *Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ*, a fundamental hermeneutical question arises: What accounts for the ostensible negation of benefit and divine favor (*khayr*) in female assembly? Does this formulation not run counter to the overarching Prophetic paradigm emphasizing communal solidarity and cohesion among believers? The Prophet famously declared: "The Hand of God is with the community" (*Yad Allāh maʿa al-jamāʿah*) (Tirmidhī, 1395 AH, Vol. 4, p. 466). Similarly, in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib warns against sectarian fracturing: "Verily, the Hand of God is with the collective, and beware of division, for the lone dissenter among people falls prey to Satan, just as the isolated sheep falls prey to the wolf" (Dashti, 1379 SH, Sermon 127). Furthermore, aphorisms attributed to Imam Ali in *Ghurar al-ḥikam* set forth an explicit qualification: *"The Hand of God is with the community that adheres to the truth"* (Tradition 10630). Thus, the criterion for divine providence is not mere numerical aggregation, but commitment to truth and righteousness.

If a community of women convenes grounded in faith and truth, on what theological or epistemic grounds could such an assembly be pronounced devoid of good? Why is the categorical negative formulation "no good" (*lā khayra*) applied to female association despite the general commendation of solidarity? Does *jamāʿah* in this context denote physical assembly, women as a collective gender category (*ṣinf*), or an ad-hoc socio-historical contingency in early Islam? Accordingly, this inquiry articulates the following core research questions: Was this narration genuinely pronounced by the Prophet as a universal, transhistorical normative maxim, or was it a descriptive, context-bound remark addressing a specific historical circumstance? If its authentic prophetic attribution is not substantiated, what sociocultural, historical, and ideological factors facilitated its emergence and subsequent transmission within the hadith canon?

1. Source-Critical Analysis of the Narration

1.1. Variant 1: "There is No Good in the Gathering of Women, Except in the Mosque or at a Funeral"

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal records the following narration in his Musnad via ʿĀʾishah: "Ḥasan narrated to us, Ibn Lahīʿah narrated to us, al-Walīd ibn Abī al-Walīd narrated to us: He said: I heard al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad reporting

from ʿĀʾishah that the Messenger of God (PBUHH) said: 'There is no good in the gathering of women, except in a mosque or at the funeral of a slain person'" (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH, Vol. 40, p. 437).

- Critical Evaluation: The earliest source containing this report is found in specific manuscripts/editions of the *Musnad Aḥmad*. Ibn Ḥanbal himself observed that this report was not transmitted by anyone other than Ibn Lahīʿah from al-Walīd ibn Abī al-Walīd. Ibn al-Jawzī classified this tradition as fabricated (*mawḍūʿ*) or forged, citing the weakness (*ḍaʿf*) of Ibn Lahīʿah and the obscurity (*jihālah*) of al-Walīd (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1401 AH, Vol. 2, p. 33).

- Manuscript Provenance: Prominent hadith scholars and critical editors of the *Musnad*—from Ibn al-Jawzī to Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ—have explicitly posited that this narration entered the *Musnad* through supplementary additions (*mustadrakāt* or *ziyādāt*) rather than forming part of the original canonical compilation arranged by Imam Aḥmad. Ibn al-Jawzī, in *al-ʿIlal al-mutanāhiyah*, specifically isolates such anomalous reports found in later additions, confirming the unreliability of their transmitters (ibid, Vol. 2, p. 416).

- Canonical Status: Although the *Musnad* chronologically predates the Six Canonical Books (*al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-sittah*), this narration was not admitted into any of them. However, it was incorporated into secondary compilations with identical wording and *isnād*, such as al-Haythamī's *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid* (1414 AH, Vol. 2, p. 33) and *Ghāyat al-maqṣad* (1421 AH, Vol. 1, p. 207), as well as *Kanz al-ʿummāl* (Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1401 AH, Vol. 7, p. 678).

Textual Drift and Sociolinguistic Evolution:

In later recensions, the *matn* (text) underwent identifiable lexical shifts:

1. "…except in prayer or a funeral" (illā fī ṣalāt aw janāzah) (Ibn Faraḥ, 1417 AH, Vol. 2, p. 304).

2. "…except during remembrance (dhikr) or a funeral" (illā ʿinda dhikr aw janāzah) (Suyūṭī, n.d., Vol. 16, p. 386).

Tracking these shifts is imperative for understanding the transmission history. The original phrasing in the earliest recensions specifies the "mosque" (*masjid*), whereas later transmissions progressively replace it with "prayer" (*ṣalāt*) and subsequently "remembrance" (*dhikr*). This transformation reflects a shift from a public communal worship space to increasingly privatized spiritual spheres, mirroring the historical inclination to restrict female presence in public spaces.

Isnād Scrutiny:

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal acknowledged the weakness of the *isnād* (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH, Vol. 42, p. 119), a position affirmed by Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ (Ṣuhayb, 2013, Vol. 12, p. 263). Al-Ṭabarānī noted the isolation (*tafarrud*) of al-Ṣalt ibn Masʿūd regarding the report of Khawlah bint al-Yamān (Ṭabarānī, n.d.-b, Vol. 7, p. 151), and likewise observed regarding the ʿĀʾishah chain: "No one narrated this… except Ibn Lahīʿah" (ibid, n.d.-a, Vol. 9, p. 142). Ibn Lahīʿah, an Egyptian judge, suffered from well-documented transmission inaccuracies following the destruction of his library in 170 AH, with biographical critics also noting his inherent leniency (*tasāhul*) (Dhahabī, 1405 AH, Vol. 8, pp. 13–26). Consequently, classical authorities have consistently categorized this report as unreliable or fabricated.

1.2. Variant 2: Absence of Good Attributed to Idle Talk and Excessive Speech

Al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, and Ibn al-Athīr record the following narration transmitted via Khawlah bint al-Yamān: "Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī narrated to us; Jumhūr ibn Manṣūr narrated to us; Ibrāhīm ibn Hāshim al-Baghawī narrated to us; and al-Ṣalt ibn Masʿūd al-Jaḥdarī narrated to us; they said: Ali ibn Thābit al-Jazarī narrated to us, from al-Wāziʿ ibn Nāfiʿ, from Abū Salamah ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from Khawlah bint al-Yamān, who said: I heard the Messenger of God (PBUHH) say: 'There is no good in the gathering of women except in the presence of a deceased person, for when they gather, they engage in idle chatter (qulna wa-qulna, lit. they say and say)'" (Ṭabarānī, n.d.-a, Vol. 24, p. 246; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, 1412 AH, Vol. 4, p. 1834; Ibn al-Athīr, 1409 AH, Vol. 6, p. 99).

- **Singular Transmission (*Tafarrud*):** Al-Ṭabarānī explicitly remarks in *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ* that this narration is uniquely transmitted from Khawlah bint al-Yamān via this single chain (*ṭarīq*), which contains the discredited narrator al-Wāziʿ ibn Nāfiʿ (Ṭabarānī, n.d.-b, Vol. 7, p. 151).

- **Corpus Distribution:** This report is documented in classical biographical compendia of the Companions—such as *al-Āḥād wa-al-mathānī*, *al-Istīʿāb*, *Usd al-ghābah*, *al-Iṣābah*, Abū Nuʿaym's *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, and *al-Wāfī bi-al-wafayāt*—solely as an illustrative entry under Khawlah's biographical profile without substantive theological or legal commentary. It similarly features in hadith-critical and *rijāl* collections cataloging weak reports, including *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, Ibn ʿAdī's *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, *Jāmiʿ al-aḥādīth*, and *Kanz al-ʿummāl*.

- **Transmitter Profile of the Companion:** Khawlah was the daughter of al-Yamān, sister to the prominent Companion Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, and a client/servant of the Prophet (Ibn al-Athīr, 1409 AH, Vol. 7, p. 99; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, 1412 AH, Vol. 4, p. 1834). Her transmissions are exceedingly scarce, and biographical sources offer no independent critical appraisal (*taʿdīl*) of her narrative output beyond general companionate attribution.

- **Reception in the Shīʿī Corpus:** Traditions bearing the formula *Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ* possess no provenance in early, canonical Shīʿī hadith corpora (such as *al-Kutub al-arbaʿah*). The report appears only in late Shīʿī bio-bibliographical literature—most notably in ʿAllāmah al-Shushtarī's *Qāmūs al-rijāl* (1424 AH, Vol. 12, p. 253)—as an incidental quotation extracted directly from Sunni biographical sources like *al-Istīʿāb*.

- **Critical Evaluation:** In *Mawsūʿat al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfah wa-al-mawḍūʿah*, this narration is cataloged among fabricated and severely compromised traditions (Ḥalabī et al., 1419 AH, Vol. 7, p. 591).

Isnād Scrutiny of Variant 2:

While certain intermediary transmitters in the chain are verified as trustworthy—such as Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī (*thiqah*) (Ibn al-Nadīm, 1417 AH, p. 283; Dhahabī, 1405 AH, Vol. 14, p. 41) and Abū Salamah, a recognized *tābiʿī* jurist and ascetic (Ibn Saʿd, 1968, Vol. 5, p. 157)—the chain is fatally compromised by the inclusion of al-Wāziʿ ibn Nāfiʿ. Classical authorities in *rijāl* criticism have unanimously repudiated his epistemic reliability: Imam al-Bukhārī designated him *munkar al-ḥadīth* (a narrator of rejected/anomalous reports), while al-Nasāʾī classified him as *matrūk* (abandoned in transmission) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 1415 AH, Vol. 6, p. 213). Furthermore, al-Dhahabī declared that he is not trustworthy (Dhahabī, 1387 AH, Vol. 1, p. 423), and al-Suyūṭī unequivocally affirmed his status as a discarded and weak transmitter (Suyūṭī, n.d., Vol. 16, p. 386).

2. Conceptual and Lexicographical Analysis of the Term *Jamāʿah*

The term *jamāʿah* derives from the Arabic triconsonantal root *j-m-ʿ*, which fundamentally denotes the gathering, unification, and consolidation of discrete entities toward a collective whole or unified purpose. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī defines the primary root meaning: "*Al-jamʿ* is the joining of separate parts of a thing by bringing them into mutual proximity; hence one says: 'I gathered it and it became assembled (*jamaʿtuhu fa-ijtamaʿa*)'" (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1404 AH, Vol. 1, p. 96).

In Qur'anic usage, the verbal and nominal derivatives of this root consistently convey spatial, temporal, or teleological integration:

- "And the sun and the moon are joined together" (Qur'an 75:9).
- "Say: If mankind and the jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof" (Qur'an 17:88).
- "Then We shall gather them all together in assembly" (Qur'an 18:99).

Classical lexicographers corroborate this morphological and semantic cohesion. Ibn Durayd observes: "Gathering (*al-jamʿ*) is the conceptual antithesis of dispersion (*al-tafrīq*); when one unites something, one brings together its constituent parts" (Ibn Durayd, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 483). Similarly, Ibn Fāris notes in *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lughah*: "The root designates the convergence, integrity, and solidarity of an affair; one says: 'I gathered the matter entirely'" (Ibn Fāris, 1399 AH, Vol. 1, p. 479). Consequently, an assembly of individuals convened within shared spatial proximity and purpose is termed a *jamāʿah*.

The morphological cognate *ijtimāʿ* carries a proximate semantic valence, signifying the convening of multiple agents. Lexicographers distinguish its usage: *"The populace convened in an assembly for communal celebration or dispute resolution"* (Ibn Durayd, 1987, Vol. 1, p. 483), or *"An assembly forged through shared cognitive intent—a collective established upon common contemplation and unified objectives"* (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1404 AH, Vol. 1, p. 97). This nuance is exemplified in the verse: *"So resolve upon your plan and gather your associates"* (Qur'an 10:71), where collective assembly (*ajmiʿū*) denotes deliberative consensus and resolute intent. Thus, *jamāʿah* within classical Arabic lexicography denotes an intentional collective of individuals bound by shared norms, values, and coordinated action.

3. Semantic and Hermeneutical Signification (*al-Dalālah al-Maʿnawiyyah*)

A rigorous hermeneutical engagement with the text necessitates resolving foundational questions of scope and semantic reference: Does the phrase *"Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ"* articulate an essentialist ontic critique of womankind as an ontological category (*jins al-nisāʾ*), or does it designate temporal, empirical gatherings of female individuals under specific sociological constraints? Furthermore, should this utterance be interpreted as a universal normative-legal ruling or as a descriptive, context-contingent sociological observation (*ikhbār ʿan wāqiʿ* reflecting contemporary circumstances)?

Classical and post-classical hadith commentators have adopted divergent hermeneutical trajectories:

1. Jurisprudential Regulation of Public Worship: Certain jurists contextualized this tradition within the parameters governing female attendance at public mosques. For instance, al-Muttaqī al-Hindī derived specific behavioral conditions from the exception clause (*illā fī masjid*): women must abstain from perfuming and, given their spatial placement behind male congregants, cast their gaze downward during prostration to maintain ritual propriety (Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1401 AH, Vol. 7, p. 678). In this framework, the report was paradoxically deployed as a formal legal dispensation for female participation in communal worship, with some jurists—including Ibn al-Qayyim—even citing it to corroborate the recommendation (*istiḥbāb*) of independent female congregational prayer (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1411 AH, Vol. 2, p. 271).

2. Hermeneutical Justifications for Domestic Seclusion: Conversely, another faction of commentators invoked these narrations to substantiate the normative preference for female domestic seclusion. While placing the tradition under thematic rubrics such as *"The Congregation of Women"* or *"Dispensation for Women to Attend the Mosque"* (Haythamī, 1421 AH, Vol. 1, p. 207), they subordinated public worship to domestic piety, maintaining that the ultimate spiritual sanctuary for a woman lies within the innermost recesses of her home (*qaʿr baytihā*).

3. Moral-Behavioral Disparagement Rooted in Idle Talk: Relying on the variant of Khawlah bint al-Yamān, commentators such as al-Suyūṭī and al-Muttaqī al-Hindī interpreted the negation of "good" (*lā khayra*) as a cautionary moral censure against the ethical liabilities of unsupervised socializing. They identified the operational cause (*ʿillah*) not in female assembly *per se*, but in the propensity for frivolous speech, backbiting, and idle chatter (*qīla wa-qāl*), analogizing indiscriminate assemblies to volatile environments detrimental to spiritual purity (Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1401 AH, Vol. 16, p. 403; Suyūṭī, n.d., Vol. 16, p. 386).

4. Matn Criticism and Scriptural Counter-Paradigms: A critical tradition within Islamic scholarship—combining *isnād* critique with textual scrutiny (*naqd al-matn*)—repudiated the essentialist, misogynistic implications of this and related traditions. Critiquing generalized pronouncements such as *"A people who entrust their leadership to a woman shall never prosper"*, scholars like Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān al-Qannawjī demonstrated that the Qur'an itself provides an explicit counter-narrative: the governance of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqīs), whose political discernment,

consultative rule, and eventual submission to God led her nation to temporal prosperity and spiritual salvation. This scriptural evidence deconstructs universalist claims concerning the inherent deficiency of female collective agency or leadership (Qannawjī, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 125).

4. Historical and Sociological Contextualization

In the context of this study, "historical contextualization" designates the systematic examination of the occasions and circumstances of issuance (*asbāb al-wurūd*), alongside the transmission trajectories of the narration within the socio-cultural matrix of early Islamic society. This section reconstructs the customary, behavioural, and communal environment wherein the thematic motif of *"Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ"* emerged.

4.1. Empirical Evidence of Female Mourning Assemblies and Customary Gatherings

In *Tārīkh Jurjān* (a tradition also corroborated in variations across the *Musnad* literature), a historical report is documented via Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar, from Layth ibn Abī Sulaym, from ʿAṭāʾ, from ʿĀʾishah: *"I said: 'O Messenger of God, when a person passes away, women gather together.' He replied: 'There is no good in their gathering, for when they gather, they engage in idle and excessive talk (qulna wa-qulna)'"* (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1241 AH, Vol. 4, p. 438; Jurjānī, 1407 AH, p. 365).

Although biographical critics classify Layth ibn Abī Sulaym as weak (*ḍaʿīf al-ḥadīth*), external historical corroboration affirms that female communal mourning remained deeply entrenched within early Arabian society. For example, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal records via ʿĀʾishah that upon the death of a family member, female kin and neighbours would routinely assemble to prepare *talbīnah* (a medicinal barley broth) to alleviate the grief of the bereaved (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH, Vol. 42, p. 124).

Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī documents in *al-Muṣannaf* an episode following the demise of a Companion, wherein the second Caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, entered a domestic space where women were wailing, dispersing the mourners with a whip. In the ensuing commotion, a woman's veil slipped, exposing her hair; when bystanders objected that her veil had fallen, ʿUmar retorted: *"Leave her, for she possesses no inviolability (lā ḥurmata lahā)"* (Ṣanʿānī, 1403 AH, Vol. 3, p. 557). This report demonstrates both the socio-cultural persistence of female mourning assemblies and the rigorous administrative measures enacted by early authorities to curb pre-Islamic wailing rituals (*niyāḥah*).

Crucially, sanctioned mourning practices—such as the Prophet's explicit sanctioning and encouragement of communal grief for the martyrs of Uḥud, specifically Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib—demonstrate that female communal presence was never categorically proscribed in the Prophetic *Sunnah*. Consequently, historical-critical contextualization indicates that Prophetic admonitions were normative critiques targeting disorderly, pre-Islamic mourning customs and unregulated gossip, rather than an ontological prohibition of female collective assembly *per se*.

4.2. Female Collective Participation in the Rites of the Ḥajj Pilgrimage

Beyond customary mourning practices, the mandatory inclusion of women in the communal rites of the Ḥajj pilgrimage—the foundational physical and financial obligation of Islam—constitutes decisive scriptural and practical evidence (*dalīl qatʿī*) validating female collective assembly:

- "God made the Kaʿbah, the Sacred House, an asylum of security and a standard for mankind, as well as the Sacred Month…" (Qur'an 5:97).

- "And pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by mankind, upon everyone who is able to find a way thereto" (Qur'an 3:97).

The universal scope of this obligation (*fard al-ḥajj*), juxtaposed with well-documented historical records of women participating in communal mosque prayers, educational circles, and funeral corteges, renders the notion of an absolute, essentialist negation of good in female collective assemblies doctrinally and historically untenable.

5. Intertextual and Thematic Correlation within the Hadith Corpus

If the expression *jamāʿat al-nisāʾ* were hermeneutically construed as an absolute categorical reference to womankind as an ontological gender collective (*jins al-marʾah*), the logical implication would be that womanhood embodies an absence of goodness except under two isolated conditions: mosque attendance and participation in funerary rites. To rigorously assess the validity of this essentialist premise, it is methodologically imperative to examine the narration within its broader thematic family of traditions (*ʿāʾilat al-ḥadīth* or *fiqh al-ḥadīth* intertextuality).

In canonical Shīʿī collections, an antithetical proposition is documented with sound contextual reception: "From Ibn Faḍḍāl, from Yūnus ibn Yaʿqūb, from someone who heard Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) say: 'Most of the good resides in women'" (Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, Vol. 3, p. 385; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1414 AH, Vol. 20, p. 24).

Were *jamāʿah* to denote the female gender in its entirety, an irreconcilable antinomy (*tanāquḍ*) would arise between the absolute negation of good (*lā khayra*) and the affirmative attribution of predominant good (*akthar al-khayr*) to women. In accordance with the principles of textual harmonization (*al-jamʿ al-ʿurfī*), an interpretation that maintains coherent intra-canonical consistency must be preferred over one that yields an explicit contradiction.

5.1. Textual Interplay with Misogynistic Maxims and Problematic Attributions

The assertion that womankind is inherently devoid of good is functionally synonymous with classifying female nature as intrinsically evil (*sharr bil-dhāt*)—a premise ostensibly corroborated by certain isolated aphorisms preserved in post-classical compilations. Foremost among these is the maxim recorded in *Nahj al-balāghah*: *"Woman is evil in her entirety, and the most detrimental aspect concerning her is that she remains indispensable"* (*al-marʾatu sharrun kulluhā wa-asharru mā fīhā annahū lā budda minhā*) (Dashti, 1379 SH, Maxim 238).

From an epistemological and methodological standpoint, this statement presents significant critical challenges:

If *"all evil"* (*sharrun kulluhā*) were interpreted to mean that women are an absolute, intrinsic metaphysical evil, such a proposition would be rationally and scripturally indefensible. Exegetes such as Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd and Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī have clarified that "evil" here does not denote essential ontological malevolence; rather, it refers to worldly distractions (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, n.d., Vol. 19, p. 69) and the financial liabilities and emotional burdens of domestic life, while marriage remains an existential necessity for human procreation (Baḥrānī, n.d., Vol. 5, p. 361).

Moreover, the Holy Qur'an affirms: *"The workmanship of Allah, Who perfected all things"* (*Ṣunʿ Allāh alladhī atqana kulla shayʾ*) (Qur'an 27:88), establishing that God created all aspects of the cosmos with consummate wisdom and structural perfection (*itqān*). Consequently, no element of Divine creation—including the existence of women—can be categorized as intrinsically evil. Furthermore, such an absolute generalization would encompass Lady Maryam (a.s), Sarah (a.s), Hajar (a.s), Asiyah (a.s), Lady Khadijah (a.s), Lady Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ (a.s), and the virtuous mothers of all 124,000 prophets. Can one reasonably claim that the mothers who nurtured the prophets of God are "evil"?

Given the absence of an authenticated chain for this statement, alongside the historical reality that misogynistic aphorisms were common in colloquial pre-Islamic proverbs, it is highly probable that this folk saying was retrospectively attributed to religious authorities. Indeed, several prominent Sunni scholars recorded this exact statement as the utterance of the Abbasid Caliph al-Maʾmūn (Qurṭubī, n.d., p. 45; Thaʿālabī, 1405 AH, Vol. 1, p. 82) or as an ancient philosophical aphorism (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 1379 SH, Vol. 9, p. 138). Therefore, such aphorisms cannot serve as theological evidence to validate the *"Lā khayra"* narration.

6. Sociological and Behavioral Pathologies of Unregulated Speech in Communal Assemblies

The preceding textual analysis establishes that the phrase *jamāʿat al-nisāʾ* does not target the ontological essence of womanhood, but rather refers to physical, unstructured social gatherings. Setting aside the evident *isnād* infirmities, the substantive rationale behind early moralistic warnings against such assemblies lies in the sociological and ethical hazards attendant to unregulated gatherings—specifically, the communicative pathology of uncontrolled speech and social gossip (*āfāt al-lisān*).

Within early Islamic ethical literature, verbal discipline is emphasized as a foundational virtue. The Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, observed: *"Speak so that you may be recognized, for a person is concealed beneath their tongue"* (Dashti, 1379 SH, Maxim 392). Unrestrained garrulousness within unregulated spaces is frequently concomitant with major ethical and communal transgressions, including backbiting (*ghībah*), tale-bearing (*namīmah*), and slander (*buhtān*). In a well-attested Prophetic warning, the consequences of verbal laxity are delineated: *"Whoever's speech increases, his errors multiply; and whoever's errors multiply, his sins abound; and whoever's sins abound, the Fire is most fitting for him"* (Māzandarānī, n.d., *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, p. 181). Similarly, Ali noted: *"The tongue is a beast of prey; if let loose, it bites"* (Dashti, 1379 SH, Maxim 60).

These scriptural admonitions concerning conversational prudence intersect with contemporary communicative and sociological observations. Empirical studies in sociolinguistics and cognitive communication suggest that communicative patterns are often structured along gendered relational dynamics, wherein communal gatherings can function as intense venues for interpersonal discourse (cf. Brizendine, 2006, pp. 52–130). Consequently, early religious observations regarding communicative excesses in informal

gatherings functioned as pragmatic, pedagogical warnings against unstructured socialization and the dispersion of communal discord, rather than an essentialist indictment of the female gender.

7. Textual Drift and the Reproduction of Traditions in Service of Domestic Seclusion

Adopting Ibn al-Jawzī's critical appraisal regarding the spurious nature of the absolute prohibition, it becomes apparent that the formulation, transmission, and popularization of these traditions developed alongside the historical rise of a patriarchal legal-ethical discourse advocating strict female domestic seclusion.

A chronological and comparative analysis of the variants reveals a progressive textual drift (*al-idrāj wa-al-taḥrīf al-maʿnawī*):

1. The Earliest Attested Recension: Explicitly preserved an exception for public religious spaces: *"There is no good in the gathering of women except in the mosque and at a funeral."*

2. Semantic Narrowing: With successive transmissions, the spatial term "mosque" (*al-masjid*) was systematically substituted by the ritual act "prayer" (*al-ṣalāt*), and subsequently diluted to the non-spatial category of "remembrance" (*al-dhikr*).

3. Complete Expunction: In the transmission attributed to Khawlah bint al-Yamān, references to public religious spaces (the mosque and funeral) were excised entirely, while the hyperbolic gloss *"they engage in idle talk"* (*qulna wa-qulna*) was appended. This editorial modification transformed a spatial regulation into a categorical, essentialist dismissal of female assembly.

This textual drift was further reinforced by the annexation of interpretive glosses (*idrājāt*), such as: *"The best mosque for women is the innermost part of their houses"* (*qaʿr buyūtihinna*) (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH, Vol. 44, p. 164; cf. al-Ṭūsī, 1364 SH, Vol. 3, p. 253; Ibn Bābawayh, 1413 AH, Vol. 1, p. 374).

Under the influence of this domestic-centric paradigm, several post-classical jurists systematically extended this logic across public ritual jurisprudence. In the legal debates surrounding spiritual retreat (*iʿtikāf*)—which classical consensus confines to congregational mosques—al-Jaṣṣāṣ argued: *"Because the Messenger of God declared that women's homes are better for them, a woman's mosque is her home, and her iʿtikāf within her home is equivalent to iʿtikāf in the congregational mosque"* (Jaṣṣāṣ, 1415 AH, Vol. 1, p. 295).

While ostensibly framed as an honorific elevation of the domestic sphere, this hermeneutical shift produced significant sociological ramifications: by establishing the private domicile as the sole legitimate locus for female worship and spiritual devotion, public female assemblies—including civic, educational, and charitable gatherings—were rendered legally redundant and socially suspect. Jurists constructed a normative architecture that systematically displaced women from the public sphere.

The fabrication and ideological circulation of such reports often reflected transmitters utilizing Prophetic authority to retroactively validate localized socio-cultural norms. A pertinent example is documented by Muslim and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal via ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn, where the contentious statement *"Verily, the fewest dwellers of Paradise are women"* was invoked by Muṭarrif to justify domestic discord between co-wives (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1421 AH, Vol. 33, p. 72). Consequently, traditions of this genre serve as crucial historical indices for tracking how patriarchal socio-cultural expectations permeated the transmission and juristic interpretation of hadith in medieval Islamic societies.

Conclusion

Through rigorous textual (*matn*) and transmission (*isnād*) analysis of the narration *"Lā khayra fī jamāʿat al-nisāʾ,"* the following scholarly conclusions are established:

1. Textual Provenance and Chain Weakness: The earliest source of this narration is found in non-primary recensions of *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. However, because it was excluded from the Six Canonical Books (*al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah*), it survived solely in secondary hadith compilations. It suffers from severe isnād deficiencies, including solitary transmission (*tafarrud*), obscure narrators (al-Walīd ibn Abī al-Walīd), and severely discredited or abandoned transmitters (Ibn Lahīʿah and al-Wāziʿ ibn Nāfiʿ).

2. Absence in Early Shia Corpora: These narrations have no precedent or acceptance in early, authoritative Shia hadith collections, appearing in later Shia biographical works merely as secondary citations quoted from Sunni biographical sources.

3. Contextual and Semantic Demarcation: Grounded in lexical and historical evidence, the term *"jamāʿah"* refers to specific, ad hoc, unconstructive assemblies rather than establishing a universal ontological ruling against the female gender. The scriptural exception for mosque worship and funeral attendance demonstrates that female collective presence is not inherently devoid of goodness.

4. Historical Pathology vs. Ideological Seclusion: In the most favorable scholarly interpretation, these traditions represent situational warnings targeting specific speech pathologies (idle talk and gossip) within unregulated mourning assemblies in early Islam. From a more critical historical perspective, these texts represent manufactured and altered traditions engineered to legitimize patriarchal attitudes, restrict women's public social participation, and entrench the doctrine of absolute domestic seclusion.

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