

30905 - To whom is the book Nahj al-Balaaghah attributed?

the question

I would like to ask how authentic the book Nahj al-Balaagha is and what your opinion of it is?

Detailed answer

The book Nahj al-Balaaghah is one of the books that are attributed to Ameer al-Mu'mineen 'Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allah be pleased with him), but it contains many things concerning which those who claim to be Muslims have disputed. Following the great scientific principle which was followed by the imams of Islam in obedience to the shar'i command to verify reports, we have no choice but to refer to the scholars and specialists to check on the veracity of the things that are attributed to 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), because what is narrated from the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them) has an effect on sharee'ah, especially in the case of someone like Ameer al-Mu'mineen 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), concerning whom some people have exaggerated or fallen short, but Allaah guided the Ahl al-Sunnah to follow a middle course.

By referring to the words of the scholars concerning this book and comparing its contents with what has been proven with saheeh isnaads from 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), it becomes clear that there is material in this book that contradicts what was proven from him (may Allaah be pleased with him). So we should look at what some of these great scholars have said:

Imaam al-Dhahabi (may Allaah be pleased with him) said in his biography of al-Murtada 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn Moosa al-Moosawi (d. 436 AH): I said, he was the compiler of the book Nahj al-Balaaghah which is attributed

to Imam 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), but the reports contained therein have are no isnaads. Some of it is false and some of it is true, but it contains some fabricated reports of things that the Imam would never have said. But who is the fair-minded man who would look at it in an objective manner?! It was said that it was compiled by his brother Shareef al-Radiy. It includes slander against the companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him); we seek refuge with Allaah from knowledge that is of no benefit.

Siyar A'laam al-Nubala', 17/589

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Most of the khutab (sermons) that the author of Nahj al-Balaaghah includes in his book are lies against 'Ali. 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) is too noble and too worthy to have uttered such words. But these people fabricated lies and thought that they were praise, but they are neither truth nor praise. Whoever says that the words of 'Ali or any other human being are above the words of any other created being is mistaken, for the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) are above his words, and both of them are created beings. Moreover the correct meanings that are to be found in the words of 'Ali are to be found in the words of others, but the author of Nahj al-Balaaghah and his ilk took many of the things that people say and made them the words of 'Ali. There are some words narrated from 'Ali that he did say, and some of them are true words that would have been befitting for him to say, but in fact they are the words of others. Hence in Kalaam al-Bayaan wa'l-Tabyeen by al-Haafiz and in other books there are words narrated from people other than 'Ali and the author of Nahj al-Balaaghah attributed them to 'Ali. If these sermons which were transmitted in Nahj al-Balaaghah were really spoken by 'Ali, they would have been found in other books that existed before this book was written, and they would have been narrated from

'Ali with isnaads and otherwise. It is known from those who are well versed in the study of narrations that many of them (these sermons) – indeed most of them – were unknown before this, therefore it may be concluded that they are fabrications. So the narrator should state in which book they are mentioned, who narrated it from 'Ali, and what its isnaad is. Otherwise, anybody could say something and claim that it was said by 'Ali. Those who are well-versed in the knowledge of the hadeeth scholars and of reports and isnaads and are able to tell what is sound and what is not sound would know that these people who transmitted reports from 'Ali are the least likely people to know about reports and be able to distinguish the sound from the unsound.

Manhaaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah,
8/55.

Other scholars who pointed out the lies in this book was al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi, in al-Jaami' li Akhlaaq al-Raawi wa Adaab al-Saami', 2.161; al-Qaadi Ibn Khalkaan; al-Safadi, and others. The things that have been said against it may be summarized in the following points:

1. There are seven generations of narrators between 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) and the author of this book, and he did not mention any name whatsoever. Hence we cannot accept his words without an isnaad.

2. If these narrators are mentioned, it is essential to research about them and find out whether they are trustworthy.

3. The fact that most of these sermons did not exist before this book was written indicates that they were

fabricated.

4. Al-Murtada – the author of the book – was not one of the scholars of reports, rather he was one of those whose religious commitment and competence were debatable.

5. The slander that it contains against the leading Sahaabah is sufficient to count it as false.

6. The insults and slander that it contains are not the characteristics of the believers, let alone their leaders such as ‘Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him).

7. It contains contradictions and clumsy expressions from which it may be known for certain that it was not produced by one who was prominent in eloquence and fluency.

8. The fact that the Raafidah accept it and are certain that it is as true as the Qur’aan, despite all these objections, indicates that they do not pay attention to verifying sources and ensuring that they are sound with regard to the matters of their religion.

Based on the above, it is clear that this book cannot be attributed to ‘Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), therefore nothing in it can be used as evidence in matters of sharee’ah, no matter what the issue is. But whoever reads it in order to find out what it contains of eloquence, the ruling is the same as that on all other books on Arabic language, without attributing its contents to Ameer al-Mu’mineen ‘Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him).

See Kutub hadhdhara minha al-‘Ulama’, 2/250