

Reviewing the Concept of Transmitter Weakness in the Shī'a's Five Rijāl Sources

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Introduction

Scholars of rijāl science have used the term “weak” to describe some transmitters. The introduction of a transmitter as weak by rijāl science scholars have caused our thinkers to treat the traditions of these transmitters differently. In the narrative and jurisprudential books of the Shī'a, weak transmitters' traditions have been treated in two ways. Some have taken the weakness of a transmitter as a sufficient reason to abandon his traditions, while many Ḥadīth scholars have included the traditions of weak transmitters in their Ḥadīth collections. These two different ways of treating the weak transmitters' traditions lead to the hypothesis that the concept of weakness was not deemed by our early rijāl scholars as a sufficient reason for abandoning traditions.

Materials and Methods

The current main perception about the weakness of transmitter advocates abandoning such a transmitter's traditions. However, the method adopted by Ḥadīth scholars in the early Ḥadīth sources and collections indicates that the Ḥadīth scholars accept the tradition of a transmitter whose ḥadīths can be trusted. Sometimes the narrator suffers weakness due to some reasons, but his book or tradition is trustable. Thus, their final decision is “trusting the transmitter's tradition.” This does not mean that for the early rijāl scholars the weakness of transmitter has not been important; rather, the concept of weakness should have meant differently from abandonment decree.

In the book *al-Kāfī*, Kulaynī has mentioned numerous traditions from weak transmitters. That is, he has not deemed the weakness of a transmitter as the weakness of tradition. Some jurists, too, have taken the tradition of a weak transmitter as valid and capable of being used as the criterion for action. Riḍā Hamidānī, Muḥaqqiq Sabziwārī, Sheikh Anṣārī, Burūjirdī, and Ḥākīm do not take the weakness of transmitter as a factor to invalidate the tradition. Consequently, it is necessary to review the concept of weakness

systematically and using description and analysis of data. It is essential to answer the question that despite the consideration of some transmitters as weak in the Shī'a rijāl books, why a huge volume of their traditions have found their way into our tradition collections.

Results and Discussion

With regard to the entrance of weak transmitters in tradition collections, two points need to be taken into account: the transmitter's role and the exception phenomenon. The examination of transmitters' conditions shows that a transmitter can have two roles: (1) He can be the author of a work, or (2) he can be the narrator of others' works. Of course, the transmitter can have both roles simultaneously, that is, while he is the owner of a Ḥadīth work, he can be the transmitter of others' Ḥadīth works as well.

The Shī'a rijāl scholars have completely taken these two aspects into account, and have ruled that the word "weak" pertains to a transmitter who owns the intended Ḥadīth work.

Concerning the exception phenomenon, it should be maintained that in the Shī'a rijāl books, the exception phenomenon has been divided into four types: exception of pupils, exception of masters, exception of a specific part of one or some Ḥadīth works of the intended transmitter, or exception of a specific part of the intended concepts. Moreover, there is a consideration for the exception of the transmitter's corruption time as well. One of the accurate viewpoints held by rijāl scholars is that they do not generalize their stance to and treatment of a weak transmitter to all his works. For instance, if the transmitter has experienced opinion changes during his lifetime, the rijāl scholars do not make a general judgment about all his works; they rather separate the traditions he has transmitted during his steadfast and corrupt periods.

In the light of the types of transmitter roles and exception phenomenon in rijāl science, two results are obtained:

- From the viewpoint of rijāl scholars, a weak transmitter can have a ṣaḥīḥ tradition. Ṭūsī states, "If a tradition does not have any indication of ṣiḥat, we do not accept it, but if it has signs of ṣiḥat, we accept it even if its transmitter is weak" (Ṭūsī, 1403 AH, vol. 1: 151).
- A weak transmitter can be authentic in the transmitting of works.

Therefore, since some traditions of weak transmitters enjoyed indications of ṣiḥat and were deemed as obligatory to be put into practice, they found their way into our tradition collections, and other traditions that did not have any indication of ṣiḥat were not included in these books. Thus, it is possible for a transmitter to be weak but whose traditions be deemed as valid. This issue conflicts with the concept of weakness, which means abandoning traditions.

Conclusion

The existence of a weak transmitter in valid sources demonstrates that the transmitter weakness does not mean abandoning and rejecting his traditions in an absolute manner. Thus, in order to attain a true understanding of the concept of weakness in the five rijāl books of the Shī'a, we addressed the reason for the existence of traditions of weak transmitters in Ḥadīth collections. The results indicated that since some traditions of weak transmitters enjoyed ṣiḥat indications that made putting them into practice as obligatory, they have found their way into our tradition collections, and other traditions that were void of ṣiḥat indications were not included in those collections. Therefore, it is possible for a transmitter to be weak but whose traditions be valid. This view is different from taking weakness as meaning a sufficient reason to reject a weak transmitters' traditions. In fact, the weakness of the transmitter is kullī mushakkik and it is strongable and vulnerable.

Keywords: Ḥadīth, Weakness, Transmitter, Rijāl, Shī'a.