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A Study of the English Translation of Women-Related Statements in *Nahj al-balaghah*: With an Emphasis on Reproach

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In *Nahj al-balaghah*, we sometimes encounter expressions that are considered reproachful or may appear reproachful on the surface, but based on existing commentaries and interpretations, other implications may be embedded within them, or they may serve a function different from what might initially come to mind. This research, conducted using a qualitative-descriptive method from the perspective of translation studies, seeks to examine the strategies adopted by two English translators for reproachful expressions. **Method:** The theoretical framework is that of Warren, concerning the translation of "euphemistic" language. To this end, the reproachful figurative expressions concerning women in *Nahj al-balaghah* were extracted and their two English translations were analyzed. **Results:** The results show that, overall, these two translations employed three methods: direct translation, modification, and explanatory translation. Consequently, the literal translation strategy was the most frequent. This was followed by particularization, extension of meaning, and reversal, which are among euphemistic techniques, as the next most frequent strategies. The remaining strategies did not have a noteworthy frequency. **Conclusion:** The results indicate that in some cases, direct translation may lead to misunderstanding of the intended concepts, but with regard to the modification and explanatory strategies—which rank next in frequency—due to the use of euphemistic techniques such as particularization, the intended meaning was likely conveyed more effectively.

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1- Introduction

Euphemism, in terminology, is the use of mild, polite, and non-colloquial words in place of offensive, explicit, and impolite ones. Such words are used especially for unpleasant, frightening, or distasteful issues instead of the original terms (Dad, 2001: 115).

In many societies, certain verbal and non-verbal linguistic behaviors are regarded as "taboo," and their use is considered forbidden and inappropriate. These are known as "dysphemisms," and language users prefer to employ alternative words or linguistic techniques to establish normative verbal interactions. The aim of these strategies is to convey the intended concept without explicitly using unpleasant words. The sum of these efforts, which constitute a form of linguistic refinement, can be described by the term "euphemism" (Haddadi et al., 2021).

The translation of reproachful expressions is not a simple linguistic process; rather, it can be seen as influenced by the cultural and ideological values of the target society. Thus, the use of euphemism is a key tool in this process, indicating the translator's tendency either to challenge the audience or to adapt the original text to contemporary readers and linguistic norms.

Allan and Burridge (1991) state that if a text contains expressions with an unfavorable semantic load, it is better to use expressions with a pleasant semantic layer—i.e., euphemisms—to avoid threatening the social face of the speaker, the listener, or other participants in the discourse.

Alghizzi (2023) argues that linguistic and cultural differences between languages challenge the translation of concepts such as metaphors, culture-bound items, and religious expressions. One of the major problems translators face is the translation of sacred texts, because such texts are simultaneously constrained by linguistic and cultural limitations. Many languages share a common feature that allows them to refer indirectly and politely to sensitive topics or taboos. This feature is particularly important in cultural contexts. This linguistic phenomenon can pose a serious challenge for translators across different languages, and when these translators deal with religious texts such as the Qur'an and prophetic traditions (hadith), these challenges increase significantly. In fact, translators are not only required to convey the meaning of the text accurately, but must also take cultural and religious sensitivities into account in order to minimize loss of meaning and equivalent effect.

In Arabic, there are certain words and structures that are considered unpleasant in our culture. The translator must find an appropriate strategy both to reduce the negative semantic load of these words and to remain faithful to the original text. Euphemism seems to be a suitable solution for translating words carrying an unpleasant semantic load (Arab Yusefabadi & Afzali, 2018). The term "euphemism" refers to the process of replacing inappropriate or seemingly inappropriate words with polite ones.

Ahmadi and Rezaeian (2022) note that language is a medium for the interaction of cultures, and translators play a primary role in transmitting these cultures. Throughout history, societies have faced cultural confrontations; some of these cultures have been positive and constructive, while others have been inappropriate and destructive, making their spread in society problematic. In such circumstances, the translator acts as a cultural mediator and must beware of possible negative influences. The translator is obliged, taking into account the cultural and ideological systems of their own society, to translate the original text in a way that is compatible with the target society and does not harm its customs and beliefs.

It should be noted that language, as a complex system, functions beyond a mere tool for transmitting information; it carries deep cultural, emotional, and social dimensions. In many texts, we encounter words and expressions that on the surface have an unpleasant or negative semantic load. The use of such words may be intentional and serve specific purposes within the context of the original text. Moreover, contrary to their appearance, these words and expressions may not be used in an absolutely unpleasant and negative sense, such as insult; their correct understanding requires a specific background knowledge and cultural and historical awareness that is only accessible to the native audience. In such situations, applying a literal translation for these words can lead to undesirable consequences, such as misunderstanding, cultural challenges, and reduced communicative effectiveness between the author and the audience. Such an approach merely transfers the surface semantic load of the word to the target language, rather than conveying the original function of the word, which is often intangible and challenging for the target reader. Therefore, when dealing with such texts, choosing an appropriate translation strategy becomes critically important. This strategy should be able to reduce the negative semantic load of the word while preserving the original author's intention, and align with the cultural and value norms of the target society.

In the present research, *Nahj al-balaghah is studied* which contains the sermons, letters, and sayings of Imam Ali. In this text, there are apparently reproachful expressions concerning women. By analyzing two English translations, this research seeks to explain the importance of selecting effective strategies to moderate the negative semantic load and to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the translation. The main research question is: What strategies have the translators used in translating the reproachful expressions concerning women in *Nahj al-balaghah*?

2- Literature Review

In *Nahj al-balaghah*, we sometimes encounter expressions that superficially carry a tone of blame; nevertheless, according to reliable commentaries and interpretations, such expressions can convey other meanings and serve a function different from their initial sense. Salimi (2001),

citing sentences from *Nahj al-balaghah*, claims that traditional understandings of the words of Imam Ali are incorrect. He believes that this understanding largely reflects the mistaken interpretations of commentators in specific historical periods rather than expressing the truth of the Imam's words.

Another viewpoint is that most of these narrations, having been separated from their historical context, are compared with modern viewpoints on women's rights, whereas the content of these reproachful statements is consistent with the literature from the fourth century onward. This indicates that critical views toward women are understandable given the cultural conditions of the era when *Nahj al-balaghah* was compiled, and they reflect modes of thought also observed in the literary and historical texts of that time and subsequent periods (Zilabi & Mohasses, 2018).

Regarding expressions with negative and reproachful semantic load in various religious, literary, and non-literary texts, much research has been conducted in different languages. Also, concerning Imam Ali's view of women in *Nahj al-balaghah* and his reproachful expressions, no research has yet been conducted on the specific topic of woman-centered statements in English translations of *Nahj al-balaghah*. Some of the related studies conducted in this area are as follows:

Afroz et al. (2025), in a study titled "A Sociological Approach to the Manifestation of Translator Gender in Persian Translations of the Novel *Al-Aswad Yaliq bik*", categorized their findings based on Lakoff's (1975) features of women's language and analyzed the results from the perspective of social constructionism (Coates, 2013). The results showed that the way male and female translators dealt with the categories of politeness and taboo-breaking was contrary to what Lakoff and previous studies had proposed; the manifestation of polite speech and feminine expressions was more prominent in the male translator's language.

Alghizzi et al. (2023), in a study on euphemism in Qur'an translation, comprehensively examined the strategies used by translators in rendering euphemistic expressions in the Holy Qur'an. For example, the verse «وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِهِمْ؛ إِنْ نَحْنُ نَرَا جِشَانِ إِذْ نَسْتَفْتِيهِمْ» "And if We willed, We could obliterate their eyes" (Yā-Sīn, 66). Since the expression "blinding and obliterating the eyes" does not carry a positive semantic load, according to their research the strategies used to moderate the aforementioned expression can be divided into four types:

1. Literal translation: "we could have obliterated their eyes"
2. Substitution: "We verily could have quenched their eyesight"
3. Using plain language: "We could have blinded them"
4. A combination of two strategies: literal translation and substitution: "We would surely have wiped out (blinded their eyes)"

The findings indicate that Qur'anic euphemisms have not been accurately rendered into English, because the most frequently used strategy was plain language, followed in most cases by literal translation.

Salmanian & Ehsani (2023), in their article "Fixed Language Patterns and the Challenges of Finding Equivalents in Translations of *Nahj al-balaghah* (A Case Study of Collective Curses)", examined 14 cases of collective curses in *Nahj al-balaghah*. The study evaluated the performance of five prominent translators in rendering these curses. The results show that some apparent curses are not actually curses and are used in different contexts to express meanings such as praise, surprise, or reprimand. However, the translators did not pay attention to this point and provided literal translations or incorrect equivalents that failed to convey the precise meaning of these expressions. There are many examples showing that expressions such as «هَيْبَتِكَ أُمِّكَ»، «هَيْبَتِكَ الْهَيْبُولِ»، «تَكَلُّمَتِكَ الْتَوَاكِلِ» are originally ironic; the expression «هَيْبَتِ أُمِّهِ» originally means "may his mother mourn him," and هَيْبَلٌ means تَكَلُّمٌ (to experience bereavement). Besides the curse meaning, these expressions can also carry other implications, including surprise mixed with praise or surprise mixed with blame. Therefore, understanding the speaker's intention in using these expressions is only possible by considering the context and the available clues.

Niknam Pirzadeh et al. (2023), in a study titled "An Analysis of the Translation of Euphemisms in *Nahj al-balaghah*", examined the strategies adopted by three translators for rendering curse and blame expressions such as "فَقَبِّحَا لَكُمْ وَتَرَحَّا" (May you be disgraced and may you never be free from grief, Sermon 27). The results showed that none of the euphemisms were rendered using a euphemistic translation method. Foroutan / Mara'ashi (2022) and Askari Ja'fari (1965) mostly used semantic translation, while Seyyed Ali Reza (1987) mostly used literal translation, and some euphemisms were left untranslated.

Alba'noon (2022), in his article "Translation of Euphemistic Intimate Expressions in the Holy Quran", examined the accuracy and strategies used by two translators who are culturally and linguistically distant from each other, namely Yusuf Ali and John Arberry, in rendering euphemistic expressions related to marital relations. The results showed that the euphemistic features of the source text were preserved more in Yusuf Ali's translations than in Arberry's. Example: «او لامستم النساء فلم تجدوا ماء» (Al-Nisā': 43):

"ye have been in contact with women..." (Yusuf Ali)

"you have touched women" (Arberry)

In a study examining the strategies of verbal aesthetics in translating taboo language in an Arabic novel, Hemmati & Afzali (2021), using a descriptive-analytical approach, investigated the linguistic methods used in translating undesirable Arabic words. For example, the sentence

«يعتبر أن جسد المرأة مكسباً وغنيمَةً» was translated as: "He saw women as mere commodities." The aim of the study was to remove words and sentence structures from their taboo status and propose appropriate and acceptable equivalents for them.

Zand Rahimi & Akhondi (2021), in an article, examined the effect of the translator's gender and ideology on the translation of sayings, sermons, and letters related to women in *Nahj al-balaghah*. The results showed that the translator's ideology plays a very influential role in translation, but from the perspective of gender, no direct relationship was observed between the translator's gender and the transfer of positive semantic load on women-related issues; Mohammad Dashti, unlike Nahid Aghamirzaei, made more effort to reduce the negative semantic load concerning women's issues.

Harley (2020), in her study titled "The use of euphemism in English translation of Holy Quran by Saheeh International ", examined the euphemistic strategies employed in the English translation of Surah Yusuf. The results showed that three strategies were used: semantic change; borrowing; and amplification. The dominant strategy among these three was semantic change. For example, the Arabic word الفحشا was translated as "immortality," which was considered an instance of semantic change.

Qadouri Abed & Ghanim Mohammed (2020), in a study, analyzed the strategies used by translation students when rendering euphemistic expressions from English to Arabic and vice versa. The results showed that students employed four main strategies: substitution, literal translation, combining multiple methods, and using non-euphemistic expressions. Among these methods, literal translation had the highest frequency at 36.6%, followed by substitution at 25.7%. For example, «سكرات الموت» was translated in the following ways:

Death throes (literal translation)

Moment of death (substitution)

Alahj & Omar (2017), in a study on the problems of translating Qur'anic euphemisms, found that the process of translating them into English is generally problematic due to reasons such as linguistic and cultural diversity. Consequently, translators need to be aware of euphemistic expressions in the translation process and translate them accurately, just as they convey meaning in the source text.

In a 2018 study aimed at examining translation strategies for taboo expressions from Arabic into Persian, Arab Yusefabadi & Afzali selected the novel «الهُوى» (meaning "Passion") by the famous Syrian novelist Haifa Bitar. This novel explores the issues and secrets of the female world. The research sought to discover and examine appropriate ways to use the "euphemism" technique for translating such expressions by analyzing this work. The results showed that "semantic implication" and then "semantic expansion" were the most frequent

euphemistic strategies in translating the novel's taboos. Example: «تسلم جسدها بساطه لاي رجل» was translated as "she responds readily to any man" (instead of "prostitution"), which is a kind of semantic implication. The translation of «المراه التي يعرف الجميع ان لديها عشيقا» as "a woman whose emotional relationships everyone knows about" (instead of "having an intimate relationship between a man and a woman") is an example of semantic expansion.

In a study on rendering cultural taboos, Mirzaei et al. (2015) found that omission, substitution, and reduction were among the most important strategies used by translators to simplify the novels of Najib Mahfouz.

Al-Hamad & Salman (2013) examined the English translations of euphemistic expressions in the Holy Qur'an by several different translators. They selected 23 euphemisms from various surahs of the Qur'an, and these expressions were classified thematically based on lexical euphemism strategies. The study found that in translating culturally sensitive topics such as sex, divorce, and death as mentioned in the Qur'an, mitigating the negative load or using milder expressions was often the dominant strategy, or outright omission of these expressions was observed.

Mousavi & Badakhshan (2012), in a study titled "Unpleasant Euphemisms", categorized euphemisms from a pragmatic perspective into two distinct types: the first type, called "common euphemisms," generally express social politeness and an effort to avoid hurting others' feelings regarding sensitive topics such as death, illness, sexual matters, etc. The second type is called "unpleasant euphemisms"; in this type, euphemism is a trick to conceal the truth, cover up political and economic scandals, and manipulate public opinion about certain social events. Hence, the use of euphemism is not intended to make disturbing words pleasant, and therefore it is called "insincere euphemism."

Unseth (2006) proposed four strategies for dealing with euphemisms in translation. The first strategy is literal translation of euphemistic expressions into other languages. The second strategy is substitution, meaning replacing the expression with one understandable to the target readers. The third strategy is using plain language, i.e., rendering the euphemistic expression explicitly and without euphemism. The fourth strategy is a combination of two strategies.

Crespo Fernández (2005), regarding the use of "euphemistic strategies to observe politeness and social face," notes that to avoid social confrontations and misunderstandings in interpersonal relationships, language users should use mitigating strategies in cases where direct expression might be considered disrespectful; thus, the force of imperative sentences is reduced and the tone of speech is moderated. He proposes the following strategies: 1. Mitigating tone using apologetic sentences, e.g., "Excuse me, close the door." 2. Using pseudo-imperative expressions instead of imperative sentences, i.e., using words, adverbs, and phrases that reduce

the force of the command, e.g., "Could you / Would you mind / If it's no trouble, close the door." 3. Using conditional sentences, e.g., "If I were them, I wouldn't leave the door open in this cold weather."

The results of previous studies show that when translating sacred texts, translators generally prefer to translate words that have a less-than-positive semantic load literally and, finally, add explanations to the text to resolve ambiguity. This strategy is chosen because using euphemistic techniques may somewhat change the original meaning in the target text. However, in some cases, alternative strategies have also been employed. But in literary texts or other cases where cultural sensitivity is felt and the text in question contains insulting expressions or carries a reproachful tone, translators usually prefer to use mitigating strategies to reduce the negative load of the expressions and words.

3- Research Methodology

The present study, using a qualitative-descriptive method, has extracted and examined reproachful expressions from among the woman-centered statements in *Nahj al-balaghah*. This research, irrespective of the intellectual foundations and viewpoints of scholars concerning the said statements, has investigated the issue from the perspective of translation studies and has sought to identify the strategies that translators have adopted to render these ostensibly or genuinely reproachful expressions.

First, the Arabic expressions related to the censure of women in *Nahj al-balaghah* were collected. Then, two target English translations – Qutb al-Din's translation (2024) and Fotouat / Mara'ashi's translation (2022) – were compared with the original text; these two are the most current translations of *Nahj al-balaghah* available. Finally, the frequency of the strategies used in the translations was shown using diagrams, based on the classification proposed by Warren (1992). Possible translator strategies were also added to this list.

4- Theoretical Framework of the Research

This research employs the classifications for "euphemism" introduced by Warren (1992). She provides a detailed classification, but not all categories are applicable to the subject matter of this paper; only those techniques that have a notable frequency will be addressed in the data analysis. Warren's classification is as follows (examples have been added by the authors of this paper):

Particularization: Particularization is a process whereby a word or phrase is detached from its general, broad meaning and, in a specific context, acquires a much narrower and more particular sense. Consequently, this new meaning is a subset of the original meaning of the word.

For example, the Arabic word «اروده»/ «اروده» means "to seek someone" and if it appears as «اروده عن

«راوده على نفسه» it means "to invite someone to commit indecency with oneself" (Bandar Rigi, 1987: 209). The word «مراد» in its general sense is used for companionship and interaction. If this word is restricted to a negative semantic load and only the meaning of "sexual intercourse" is intended for it, then particularization has taken place.

Implication: This process means that two actions or two concepts are often so closely related that one implicitly brings the other to mind. For example, "the patient is dead" could be said as "that patient no longer feels pain". To clarify the concept of implication, Arab Yusefabadi and Afzali (2018) explain that the implication process allows the audience to discover the unpleasant meaning of an expression through its context. In this way, the translator can, without explicitly using unpleasant language, leave its understanding to the audience's own perception of the circumstances. In fact, the unpleasant meaning is comprehensible through implication and beyond the surface meaning of the words.

Metonymy: In metonymy, the name of one object or concept is used to refer to another object or concept with which it has a close relationship. In metonymy, there is a co-occurrence relationship between contextual reference and conventional reference. Part-whole metonymy is one of the most important types of metonymy and is used in the construction of euphemisms. For example, for "house of corruption," the English expression "red lamp" is used: "the place which has a red lamp."

Metaphor: This means that some features of conventional reference are also present in contextual reference; some of the primary characteristics or attributes of a word are transferred to its new meaning in a specific context. For example, for a person who is a glutton, the following expression might be used: رَجُلٌ رَحْبُ الْبَطْنِ مُنْدَحِقُ الْبَطْنِ (Sermon 57 of *Nahj al-balaghah*), meaning "a man with a wide gullet and a swollen belly."

Reversal: Euphemistic *reversal* is a method in which an unpleasant and offensive word is expressed by negating its antonym, which has a positive meaning. For example, for the word "infidel" (*kāfir*), the equivalent "unbeliever" is used in English.

Understatement: Instead of using a direct and strong adjective, we use a weaker adjective or the negative of its opposite in order to achieve greater emphasis. For example, "not very devout" could be used instead of "infidel."

Overstatement: Hyperbole or overstatement uses words whose intensity exceeds the requirements of the situation, so that the sentence has greater impact and force. For example, for the word "dying," the following expression is used: "to go to a better place."

Extension of meaning: With this strategy, while the original meaning of a word remains intact, a range of new meanings is also added to it. In this case, the euphemism becomes more

comprehensive and includes those unpleasant expressions as well. In this method, taboos become abstract. For example, the Qur'anic word «رفث» refers to speaking about sexual matters, but on that account it is sometimes used for sexual intercourse itself (Shari'atmadari, 1995: 183). If this word is rendered as "intimate relations," this strategy has been employed.

Ellipsis: Sometimes words and expressions with unpleasant meaning are completely omitted and not reflected in the target text, and as a result the meaning is also lost. Badakhshan and Mousavi (2014: 6-7) classify ellipsis into two types: complete omission and quasi-omission. Negative words and expressions may be completely omitted and replaced by three dots (...); in some cases, complete omission does not occur and quasi-omission is seen, whereby some letters are omitted from a word, or the initial and final letters of an expression or words with negative load are omitted and punctuation marks such as dots or dashes are placed instead. For example, we say «فلانی عجب آدم... است» و یا اینکه «عجب دزدی ای! -حرا... زاده!» It seems that when unpleasant words are omitted in this way, we need to exert more mental effort to understand them precisely. This greater effort reduces the negative semantic load of those words.

Reduplication: When a text contains inappropriate or insulting expressions, they can be translated in a way that gives them a more pleasant tone. In this process, by adding words for clarity or even repeating them indirectly and implicitly, the original intended meaning is conveyed to the audience. For example, using expressions like «فلان فلان شده» or «گوربه گور شده» instead of swearing.

Borrowing: In this method, instead of using the equivalent expression in the target language, which may be taboo, foreign words are used to reduce the negative load. For example, the word "dogmatic" is written in Persian as "دگماتیک" instead of using the equivalent "متعصب".

Referenced phrases: When translating, the translator can use deictic expressions such as "this" and "that" instead of directly naming taboo subjects in order to reduce the negative semantic load of the words.

5- Research Findings

Fifty-six Arabic reproachful expressions about women were collected from the sermons, letters, and sayings of *Nahj al-Balaghah* and compared with their English translations. Since these expressions are lengthy and accompanied by detailed explanations, only a limited number of them are discussed in this study due to space constraints. The strategies used by the two translators were extracted based on Warren's (1992) classification, which includes: particularization, implication, metaphor, metonymy, understatement, overstatement, extension of meaning, ellipsis, reduplication, and the use of deictic expressions. Strategies with a frequency of zero were not included. It should be noted that two other strategies—namely the use of literal translation (which directly presents the reproachful expressions) and the addition

of explanatory notes beneath each translation—were observed in these two translations but are not addressed in the theoretical framework discussed.

■ و من خطبة له (عليه السلام) بعد فراغه من حرب الجمل في ذم النساء ببيان قصصهن: معاشر الناس، إن النساء تواقض الإيمان، تواقض الحظوظ، تواقض الثغور... (خطبه ٨٠)

This sermon was delivered after the *Battle of the Camel*. The main instigator of that battle was Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, who, incited by Talhah and Zubayr, entered a bloody war whose unfavorable consequences have remained in history (Ibn Abi al-Hadid, n.d., 6: 214).

T1: In general, the first translator added explanations for this sentence, which at first glance appears reproachful, in order to clarify to the reader the intent of Imam Ali's speech—that he is not addressing women in an absolute sense, and that understanding this statement requires the reader's awareness and background knowledge of the event connected to this speech. Thus, he explained that women such as Aisha and those who follow her are characterized by these reproachful traits. For some words, he used moderated equivalents instead of explicit ones, in order to avoid the negative connotation that might arise for the reader without consulting the commentary of the sermon.

Reversal: The translator used *imperfect* for the word *نَوَاقِصٌ* (meaning "deficient/imperfect ones"). In effect, by adding the negative prefix "im-" to the positive word "perfect" in English, the translator replaced the unpleasant meaning implicitly and with a less negative connotation.

Another strategy used by the translator is de-emphasis of the word *نَوَاقِصٌ*: In the sermon, this word is repeated three times, but in the English translation it is used only once, and the other two instances are omitted by context (ellipsis). This method also reduced the negative force of the expressions to some extent.

Particularization: The translator attempted, in some cases, to provide an equivalent based on the commentary and the concepts related to the expression, rather than a literal translation of the word. For example, in translating the word *الْحُظُوظِ* (which generally means "shares" or "portions"), he used the English equivalent "inheritance" rather than equating it with "property" or "wealth". Although the word has a broad meaning, the translator used information from the subsequent part of the text to choose the equivalent. This context acted as a filter, restricting the intended meaning to a specific expression.

T2: From an address by 'Alī following the Battle of the Camel, in censure of women:

People! Women are deficient in faith, deficient in fortune, and deficient in mind.

(Qutbuddin. 2024: 203)

The word used is *deficient*, which precisely conveys the negative meaning of the word *نَوَاقِصٌ*. In English, this word refers to a lack or deficiency in something. The word has been rendered literally and without alteration, regardless of its unpleasant connotation.

Deficient: lacking in some necessary quality or element; not up to a normal standard or complement (Merriam-Webster).

إِنَّ النِّسَاءَ هَمَّهُنَّ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْفُسَادُ فِيهَا؛ (خطبه ١٥٣)

"And women (lustful) – all their thought is for the adornment of this life and for spreading corruption in it" (Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 6: 78).

At the end of this sermon, Imam Ali states: "Beasts – all their concern is for their bellies; predators – all their concern is for attacking and transgressing upon others; and women (lustful) – all their thought is for the adornment of this life and for spreading corruption in it." According to some commentators, these statements are describing the leaders of the Battle of the Camel, including Aisha (Shushtari, 1998, 14: 340; Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 6: 78); therefore, this is not a general description of all women.

T1: ...and women seek the ornaments of the world and mischief. (Foroutan & Marashi. 2022 :252)

T1: Extension of meaning:

The word *الفَسَادُ* (corruption/evil) used in this sermon in reference to women carries a negative connotation for the reader if the commentary and explanations related to the sermon are not taken into account. Thus, in order to moderate its negative force, the translators replaced the word with an equivalent that somewhat removes the apparent unpleasantness of the expression. This equivalent, compared to *الفَسَادُ*, is more general in scope while still encompassing the unpleasant meaning of the original word. Based on dictionary definitions and context, the chosen equivalent means mischief, nuisance, or petty roguery—not something too serious. *الفَسَادُ* itself is considered a kind of wickedness and harm.

Mischief: action that annoys or irritates (Merriam-Webster)

T2:... and women care only about worldly adornments and sowing discord.

(The reference about women is to 'Ā'ishah, who was at the head of the coalition challenging 'Alī's caliphate.) (Qutbuddin. 2024: 347)

T2: Extension of meaning – Explicitation

As mentioned for the first translation, in this translation as well, the translator used another word that has greater semantic breadth than *الفَسَادُ*, thereby partially neutralizing the negative connotation. Moreover, adding explanations alongside the translation serves to specify the meaning and clarify that the Imam's speech is directed at a particular individual or specific individuals among the group of women.

-Discord implies an intrinsic or essential lack of harmony producing quarreling, factiousness, or antagonism (Merriam Webster).

٣. وَ إِيَّاكَ وَ مُشَاوِرَةَ النِّسَاءِ، فَإِنَّ رَأْيَهُنَّ إِلَىٰ أَفْنٍ وَ عَزْمَهُنَّ إِلَىٰ وَهْنٍ؛ وَ أَكْفُفْ عَلَيْنَهُنَّ مِنْ أُبْصَارِهِنَّ بِحِجَابِكَ إِيَّاهُنَّ، فَإِنَّ شِدَّةَ الْحِجَابِ أَبْقَىٰ عَلَيْنَهُنَّ؛ (نامه ٣١)

"Do not seek advice from women (of little intelligence), for their opinion is deficient and their resolve is weak. And keep them behind the veil, shielding their eyes from seeing strange men, because emphasizing *hijab* will keep them healthier and purer" (Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 9: 689).

Emotional and sentimental matters dominate women, and this affects their ability to give counsel. Obviously, any general rule has exceptions, and in this case too, there are women who are firm in determination, resolve, and opinion. The second recommendation is the same divine command in the Qur'an: «وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أُبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ؛» "And tell the believing women to lower their gazes and guard their private parts" (Qur'an, an-Nur: 31). Contrary to what many people think, not all temptations arise from men looking at women; rather, many are caused by women looking at men and their enticements. Imam Ali orders that women be kept behind the veil to prevent that. It is clear that this reprehensibility does not apply to all women; rather, it refers to unrestrained women or those of weak faith (ibid.).

T1: Avoid consulting with women [in the affairs of governing] because their decision is not irrevocable nor is their opinion strong enough. Keep within them within the curtains of *hijab* lest to be seen [by the unreliable men] (Foroutan & Marashi. 2022 :463)

T1: Explicitation, Reversal, Loan word, Metaphor

For the first part, which is "avoid seeking advice from women," the translator provided a literal translation and then tried to reduce the negative connotation by adding an explanation after the sentence, clarifying that it means consultation in matters of governance.

For the second part of this section, «رَأْيُهُنَّ إِلَىٰ أَفْنٍ وَ عَزْمَهُنَّ إِلَىٰ وَهْنٍ» (their opinion tends toward feebleness and their resolve toward weakness), the translator employed reversal by adding a negative prefix to the positive word *revocable*. This phrase, if translated literally, would be: "their decision is not irrevocable and certain," rather than directly and explicitly stating "their opinion is deficient." Therefore, this word carries a moderated, less unpleasant connotation.

'Irrevocable' is an adjective that means "incapable of being recalled or revoked; unchangeable; irreversible." (Merriam-Webster)

"Such explanations are also acceptable for the following sentence; the English sentence is translated into Persian as follows: 'Their decision is not very firm' instead of using the explicit phrase 'Their decision is weak'."

"Not strong enough" is a phrase used to indicate that something lacks the necessary power, quality, or ability to perform a task or meet a standard. (Merriam-Webster)

"Using the strategy of reversal for these two sentences has reduced the negative semantic force of the unpleasant words 'deficient' (*nāqiṣ*) and 'weak' (*sust*).

In the last part of the text, the loanword *hijab* has been used in the English text, which carries a more positive and acceptable connotation than the word *veil* in English, because *hijab* has a positive meaning of protection—especially since the translator also used the word *keep* (with its positive connotation) at the beginning of this sentence—whereas such a connotation is not necessarily inferred from the word *veil*.

The parenthetical phrase at the end of the text also helps to specify the meaning and thus moderates the unpleasant connotation; in this way, it becomes clear that the intention is not that women should absolutely never be seen by any man; rather, it means that women should be safe from the gaze of lustful individuals."

T2: Beware of seeking advice from women, for their opinion can be weak and their resolve can waiver. Employ the veil to shade their eyes, for strict veiling preserves modesty; (Qutbuiddin. 2024: 595)

T2: Literal translation, Understatement, Metonymy

At the beginning of the sermon, for the phrase 'وَأِيَّاكَ وَ مُشَاوَرَةَ النِّسَاءِ', the translator used the above English equivalent, which conveys a stronger warning than the original source text.

The use of "beware" suggests a level of risk that may be exaggerated for effect. In most cases of getting bad advice, the result is not so dire that one would need to be "wary" or "afraid." Therefore, unless the person is truly malicious or incompetent, "beware" is likely an overstatement. (Merriam-Webster)

"Based on this definition, the expression used by the translator conveys a serious prohibition and is employed to avoid danger with a high probability and greater caution. Therefore, to prevent creating such a connotation for the English-speaking reader, it might have been better to choose a milder equivalent.

The use of the phrase *seek advice from* does not generally mean consultation or seeking counsel. In this expression, the emphasis is on 'accepting and following the advice or recommendation of others,' which differs from the precise meaning of consulting."

To seek advice from somebody: it focuses in the reception and acceptance of advice.

Adding the word *can* to the sentence has to some extent reduced the negative connotation, because it shows that women's opinion and decision *may* become shaky. It can be said that by using such a structure instead of directly and explicitly stating the sentence, the translator has attempted to create a kind of negation of negativity in the target audience's mind. This auxiliary verb in English has a broad semantic range, and the meaning used in this sentence is "possibility

and probability of occurrence." Thus, it is conveyed to the target audience's mind that women's decisions *may* be weak, or that this could happen for some women under specific circumstances.

The verb "can" is a modal auxiliary verb in English. It's a very common and versatile word that has several different meanings and uses. "Can" can be used to indicate that something is possible, either generally or in a specific situation (Merriam-Webster).

"The use of figurative language (*metaphor*) can be seen in the translation of the following sentence: *Employ the veil to shade their eyes*

In this sentence, instead of using a direct equivalent that might carry an unpleasant connotation, the translator has employed a euphemistic strategy. Otherwise, the translation would have been done with the following sentence: *'being seen by others.'*"

٦- الْمَرْأَةُ عَقْرَبٌ، خَلْوَةُ السَّيْبَةِ (حكمت ٦١)

"In this wise saying, Imam Ali points to one of the contradictory characteristics of women. Certainly, the Imam does not mean all women, because many of them possess such faith, upbringing, and morality that such a statement would never apply to them. Therefore, what is meant is that the nature of a woman who lacks adequate upbringing and whose soul is not nourished by faith and knowledge has a stinging quality. This wise saying contains a message for men: to tolerate the sting of such women due to the benefits of their existence. It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq: 'One of the rights of a woman over a man is that if she commits an ignorant act, he should forgive her and overlook it' (Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 12: 375)."

T1: Women are sweet; Even the scorpion-like sting from the woman is sweet.

(Foroutan & Marashi. 2022. dig vol: 344)

T1: Metaphor, Overstatement

In the first translation, instead of directly saying "woman is a scorpion," the translator expressed the comparison of a woman to a scorpion indirectly, within a metaphorical and non-literal phrase. The literal rendering of this English sentence into Persian would be: "the tongue of a woman, or her stinging, scorpion-like words..." Thus, when the positive aspects of a subject are emphasized in the target language, its negative aspects remain hidden or attract less attention.

- The repetition of the phrase *woman is sweet* can be observed in the English translation, whereas in the source text it appears only once. Therefore, the translator used the strategy of overstatement to strengthen the positive semantic load and create a kind of euphemism.

T2: A woman is a scorpion with a sweet sting (Qutbuddin. 2024: 695)

T2: Literal translation and transfer of the source sentence's semantic load without modification

٧- غَيْرَةُ الْمَرْأَةِ كَثْرٌ، وَغَيْرَةُ الرَّجُلِ إِيمَانٌ (حكمت ١٢٤)

This saying refers to the fact that if a woman feels jealous of another wife of her husband and reacts harshly, she has in fact opposed God's command, because God—considering various interests—has permitted polygamy under certain conditions. However, if a man feels jealous about his wife's relationship with a strange man, becomes upset by her stepping outside the family life, and reacts accordingly, he has in fact obeyed God's command and acted in line with forbidding wrongdoing (Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 13: 37)

T1: *Ghayrah* by women is heresy, while in men is belief.

(Some translators prefer the word “jealousy” instead; either way, *Ghayra* in this sentence means one's dislike that his/her spouse would have other sexual relationships. Since men are allowed to marry more than one wife, *Ghayra* by women, i.e. not allowing them or trying to prevent them from marrying again, is heresy since it is against God's law, whereas vice versa is the sign of belief. That said, polygamy is under strict conditions and obligations in Islam.

(Foroutan & Marashi. 2022: 353)

T1: Loanword, Explicitation

The translator transliterated the Arabic word غَيْرَةٌ into English, essentially using a non-native term in the target language to remove the negative connotation of the word. The word غَيْرَةٌ may superficially carry a negative semantic load; therefore, the translator retained the Arabic word to emphasize that its semantic range is broader than any possible equivalents in the target language, and that it is not necessarily negative—especially since the collocation of this word with *kufr* (disbelief) would evoke an even more negative connotation for the reader. The following definition is found for this term:

Ghayrah (Arabic: غَيْرَةٌ) is a concept in Islam and Arab culture that refers to a person's protective jealousy or sense of honor, particularly in matters of family and religion. It's often used to describe a strong feeling of protectiveness over one's honor, dignity, or family members, such as a man's protective feelings toward his wife or sister (Wikipedia).

"On the other hand, the explanations provided below this translation help to moderate the negative connotation of the word and make it clear to the audience what is meant by *ghayrah* for men and women."

T2: Woman's jealousy is heresy, man's jealousy is faith. (Islamic law allows a man to marry up to four co-wives, while a woman may only marry one man at a time.) (Qutbuddin. 2024: 713)

T2: Extension of meaning, Explicitation

The translator replaced the word غَيْرَةٌ with a more general equivalent in English, which does not seem very appropriate. In English dictionaries, the word *jealousy* is used for this term, but

this word is general, and for an accurate understanding it should be limited to the following equivalents:

Ghayrah: protective jealousy, positive jealousy: active feeling of wanting to protect something or someone from harm, dishonor, or disrespect (Wikipedia).

In fact, the translator has tried to soften the unpleasant feeling associated with this word by adding further explanations (explicitation).

٨- الْمَرْأَةُ شَرُّ كُلِّهَا، وَشَرُّ مَا فِيهَا أَنَّهُ لَا يَدُّ مِنْهَا. (حكمة ٢٣٨)

"The entire existence of a woman (ill-bred women) is evil, and the worst thing about her is that there is no escaping her existence.

It is clear that the Imam does not mean all women, because there have been many outstanding women in Islam whom the Prophet, the Imam, and other Imams greatly respected. Some groups of women are condemned, while others are praised. Since woman's existence has been frequently exploited throughout history to lead men astray, Islamic traditions and *Nahj al-Balaghah* have warned about this issue. It is also worth noting that some of the expressions in *Nahj al-Balaghah* that condemn women appeared after the story of the Battle of the Camel, which was led by one of the wives of the Prophet (Makarem Shirazi, 1996, 13: 809)."

T1: Women (who are not properly raised) are entirely bad and evil. Even worse is that there is nothing that can be done but to live with them. (Foroutan & Marashi. 2022:368)

T1: Explicitation, literal translation

The translator determined that a literal translation, "Women are entirely bad and evil," would be unpleasant and could easily be misinterpreted by a contemporary audience as a general statement against all women. To avoid this, he presented a slightly milder translation by adding supplementary explanations—in fact, explicitation—to make it more acceptable or understandable for the audience.

The final part of the sentence was also translated literally, preserving the semantic load of the original text.

T2: Woman is utterly evil, and the vilest thing about her is that there is no doing without her. (Qutbuddin. 2024: 745)

T2: The structure and meaning of the source text have been conveyed literally in the closest possible form, and the translator has made no attempt to remove the unpleasant connotation of the meaning.

6- Results and Discussion

This section analyzes and statistically examines the strategies employed by the two translators in rendering 56 cases of reproachful sentences and expressions from *Nahj al-Balaghah*. In response to the research question—what strategies have the translators used in

translating reproachful expressions?—the data show that, based on the techniques proposed by Warren (1992) for euphemistic translation, the translators have employed many of the suggested strategies, each reflecting a different approach to the text. Some of Warren's (1992) techniques were used, and in some instances the translators either used "literal translation" or added explanations to the translation to resolve ambiguities and moderate the unpleasant tone of the sentences and expressions—in other words, they made things "explicit". This category is not included in Warren's classification but was observed in the analysis of the translations. These methods can be generally classified as follows:

○ **Direct strategies**

1. **Literal translation:** This strategy, with a frequency of 9 cases in the first translation and 10 cases in the second, was the most frequently used strategy. This indicates a tendency among the translators to preserve the structure and original meaning of the source text.

2. **Loanword:** The use of a loanword appears in 2 cases in the first translation, while its frequency in the second translation is zero.

○ **Explanatory strategies**

1. **Extension of meaning:** The first translator, using this strategy in 2 cases, attempted to remove any potential unpleasant semantic load. In the second translation, the frequency of this strategy was 3 cases.

2. **Explicitation:** The frequency of this strategy in the first and second translations was 5 and 6 cases, respectively. The translator moderated the unpleasant semantic load with the aim of clarifying and making the text more transparent.

3. **Particularization:** This strategy was found with a frequency of 1 in both translations.

○ **Mitigating strategies**

1. **Reversal:** This strategy was unique to the first translation (5 cases). Reversal here refers to the use of opposite or contrasting equivalents to moderate the negative force of the original expression. This choice shows that the first translator sought to reduce the harshness of the somewhat unpleasant tone.

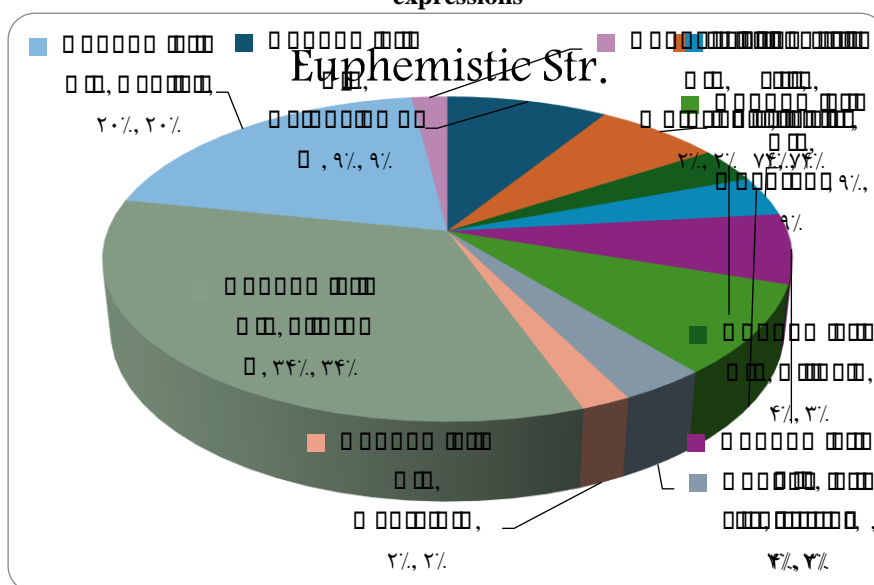
2. **Overstatement:** This strategy appears in 1 case, only in the first translation.

3. **Metaphor:** The first and second translators, each using metaphor in 2 cases, showed that this strategy can be used to convey the rhetorical beauty of the text while also shifting the tone toward a more positive one.

4. **Understatement:** This euphemistic technique was used in the second translation with a frequency of 3 cases, and in the first translation with a frequency of 1 case.

5. **Ellipsis:** Found only in the first translation, in 2 cases.

Figure 2. Percentage frequency of the strategies adopted in both translations for reproachful expressions



In the present study, the use of euphemistic strategies is not very frequent compared to previous research in the field of euphemism. The translators in question have preferred to translate the expressions used in the words of Imam Ali literally. Although at first glance these translations may carry a reproachful connotation for the audience, only in cases where the understanding of the Imam's words about women might lead to misunderstanding by the audience have the translators added explanations alongside the direct translation to resolve ambiguity.

7- Conclusion

Research in this field shows that translating the reproachful expressions of *Nahj al-Balaghah* goes beyond a merely linguistic task and becomes a matter of interpretive decision-making. When dealing with this text, translators do not simply transfer words; rather, by choosing various strategies, they may recreate the tone, emotional charge, and even the implied meaning of the text. These differences not only display different translation styles but also reflect the

translators' distinct understandings and views of one of the deepest and most complex literary and religious texts.

Based on various studies in the field of cultural-religious topics, it can be said that the translator is not a simple transmitter of words, but a person standing at the boundary between two cultures. He decides which cultural elements from the source text (source culture) enter the target society and which undergo changes. As a cultural mediator, he filters the text to ensure that its message is transmitted appropriately, without causing harm or misunderstanding, in the new society. These changes in the translation process include the following:

- **Omitting or moderating** content that may conflict with the moral, cultural, or religious values of the target society.
- **Additional explanations** for concepts that are unknown in the target culture or may require knowledge of a shared intellectual background, thereby preventing misunderstandings and ideological challenges.
- **Replacing** such items with tangible concepts, culturally adapting them, which involves substituting source-text concepts with equivalent and familiar examples in the target culture. The goal of this action is to reduce ambiguity and facilitate comprehension of the content without distorting the original message.

From a broader perspective, this process is not limited to the translator's individual choices. Factors such as the dominant translation norms in the target language and culture, the expectations of the audience for the translated work, and the audience's degree of familiarity with the source text can also influence the adoption of final translation strategies.

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3. The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence was used in writing this article and that the entire work is their own creation.

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