

**The Four Books
or the
Shia Books of Hadith**

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The Four Books or the Shia Books of Hadith

- The Four Books or Al-Kutub Al-Arbah is the term used by Shia to refer to their four best known hadith collections.
- Shi'a Muslims use this different set of hadith rather than the Six major Hadith collections followed by the Sunni.
- They consider that only the Imams, Muhammad's descendants through Fatima Zahra and Imam Ali bin Abu Talib are trustworthy.

These Four Books are:

	Name of Book	Collector	Size
1	Kitab al-Kafi	Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni	15,176
2	<u>Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih</u>	<u>Muhammad ibn Babuya</u>	9,044
3	<u>Tahdhib al-Ahkam</u>	<u>Shaykh Muhammad Tusi</u>	13,590
4	<u>Al-Istibsar</u>	<u>Shaykh Muhammad Tusi</u>	5,511

Now let us discuss these one by one

Kitab al-Kafi

- Compiled by Muhammad Ya'qūb Kulaynī in 3rd century Hijri, it is divided into three sections:
 1. Usūl al-Kāfī, which is concerned with the principles of religion
 2. Furū al-Kāfī, which is concerned with the details of religious law
 3. Rawdat al-Kāfī, which is concerned with various religious aspects and includes some writings of the Imāms
- In total, al-Kāfī comprises of about 16,000 narrations
- The author states that this book would be sufficient for all the needs of a believer as it includes all branches of religious knowledge
- He further says in his preface that he only collected ahadith he thought were important
- He left the verification of these ahadith up to later scholars.

Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih

- Compiled by Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Qummi commonly known as Al-Shaykh al-Saduq in the 4th century Hijri
- Contains over 9,000 ahadith
- The literal translation of the title Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih is “For him not in the Presence of a Jurisprudent”.
- The book is meant to be a reference book to help ordinary Shia Muslims in the practice of the legal requirements of Islam
- Isnad are absent
- Thus, the book is a summary of the study of legal traditions.
- Shi'ites regard this book as among the most reliable Hadith collections.

Tahdhib al-Ahkam fi Sharh al-Muqni 'a

- Compiled by Shaykh Tusi in the 5th century Hijri
- Contain over 13,000 narrations
- Means "The Refinement of the Laws in Terms of the Explanation of the Sufficiency"
- It is actually a commentary on the ahadith of the great scholar, al-Shaikh al-Mufid, the teacher of al-Tusi.
- Shi'a Muslims regard this book as among the most reliable
- It contains not only traditions but also lengthy discussions about the legal standing and implication of each hadith
- The chapters are well divided and contain the commentaries by some earlier scholars.

Al-Istibsar fima 'khtalaf al-akhbar

- Compiled by Shaykh Tusi in the 5th century Hijri
- Contains over 5,000 narrations.
- Is essentially a summary of *Tahdhib al-ahkam*
- Its methods are similar but briefer; there are not so many traditions used in the work and the explanations are more concise
- It is similar to *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*, but gives full *isnads* for the traditions quoted
- Intended to be used as ready reference works for students and scholars