



Imam Riḍā (A.S.)
The Learned of the Prophet's Household
Biography, Pilgrimage, and Holy Shrine

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Publisher's Note

The twelve Imam Shi'ites are a great number of Muslims in the world who believe that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has appointed successors to himself, who are unique in terms of knowledge, awareness of the Holy Qur'an, conducts of the Prophet, righteousness and practice the obligatory and recommended instructions of religion. In the belief of Shi'ites, these successors, called Imams and the household of the Apostle of God (S.A.W.), are innocent of sin, error, and forgetfulness. Imam Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (A.S.) is called the father of the Imams, and Imam Mahdi (A.S.), the seal of the successors.

Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā is the eighth one and the only one whose shrine locates in Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran. More than 90% of the Iranian people are the twelve Imam Shi'ites and therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, is the base of the household of the

Apostle of God (S.A.W.) and the center of Islamic unity and convergence. Today, Khorasan and its capital; Mashhad, as the state and then a large province in eastern Iran, has always been the source of the uprisings for justice and Islam. Ma'mūn, the seventh and one of the most powerful Abbasid caliphs, in the late 2nd A.H. century, chose Merv as his capital, and by inviting Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) to this city, tried to enjoy the privileged position of the Prophet's household among people to strengthen foundations of his rule.

Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) was martyred in 203 A.H. in Tūs, and since then, the city was named "Mashhad al-Riḍā". The serious attention of Muslims, especially the Shi'ites to this magnificent tomb turned Mashhad to the center of Islamic science and culture. So, more than three million people live in this city and more than fourteen million people visit it for pilgrimage annually.

At present, in addition to 600,000 square meters, the perimeter of the Holy Shrine of Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) is run by a large organization called Āstān Quds Raḍawī, whose custodian is selected by the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Glorious history and numerous major scientific

centers such as seminaries, universities, schools, libraries, scientific research centers and etc. resulted in introducing Raḍawī Mashhad by ISESCO¹ as the "Capital of Islamic Culture" in 2017 AD.

Undoubtedly, this choice is due to the position of the Mashhad metropolis in the sublimation of Islamic culture and the numerous valuable cultural exchanges of pilgrims and neighbors of Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.).

Center for International Affairs of Āstān Quds Raḍawī and the Islamic Research Foundation have deemed as their commitment to enjoy this valuable opportunity with a sacred sense of duty.

This book is provided to present a brief introduction of Imam Riḍā's (A.S.) scholarly character and his Holy Shrine. The Islamic Research Foundation has been proud to publish more than two thousand titles of books with nearly fourteen million copies in various

¹ ISESCO, a scientific, cultural and educational organization, affiliated with the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, which was founded in 1979. It is based in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. 57 Islamic countries including Iran are members of this organization. The ISESCO has signed a partnership agreement with 114 specialized institutions and agencies affiliated with the United Nations, international organizations, NGOs and academic institutes.

fields of Islamic knowledge and teachings in more than three decades research activities, for different age and language groups. About one tenth of these works is dedicated to the books of Raḍawī culture and teachings.

The book, *Imam Riḍā (A.S.), the Learned of the Prophet's Household; Biography, Pilgrimage, and Holy Shrine*, is set in eight chapters. In writing this book, it is considered that, while benefiting from the resources available and produced by the Islamic Research Foundation, the work is going to be useful both for scholars and students and also to raise the level of pilgrims and followers' knowledge of Imam Riḍā (A.S.).

Undoubtedly, the recognition of the scientific, social, spiritual, and the dignity of the household of the Apostle of God (S.A.W.) is the best way of spreading Islam and its rituals, because those noble figures are the center of light and the source of guidance, and the monotheistic and religious knowledge has been strengthened and published in the light of their guidance and interpretations.

Finally, We would like to acknowledge the scholarly and valuable guidance of Hujjat al-Islam Shariati Tabar, managing director of the Islamic Research

Foundation, the efforts of the authors whose works are used in this book and the colleagues of Raḍawī Culture and Conducts Department, especially Dr. Amir Salmani Rahimi, Dr. Mortaza Enferadi and Behzad Nemati, who played a great role in writing this book.

Also, the range and variety of subjects in the field of Raḍawī culture and teachings is another issue and it deserves to be separately reflected upon that is beyond the scope of this book. It is expected that the readers, with a deeper study of the activities of the Islamic Research Foundation in the field, will seek to promote it. Imam Riḍā (A.S.) said, "If people knew the beauties of our words, they would certainly follow us".

It is hoped that Muslims and intellectuals of the world will pay attention more than ever to this bright land that, thanks to the valuable presence of Imam Riḍā (A.S.), is one of the gardens of Paradise according to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.); and Imam Khomeini called it the center of Iran; and also it is officially called the Spiritual Capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the capital of Islamic culture. May God increase the blessings of this holy city.

It is related from 'Abd Allāh b. Ṣālīḥ Hiravī who said:

I heard from Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, who said,

“May God have mercy on any servant who revives our commands”. I said to him, “and how are your commands revived?” He said, “He will learn our knowledge and teach it to people because if people knew the beauties of our words, they would certainly follow us”.

Introduction

The day that the light of the Seal of the Prophets brightened the Hejaz region, no one knew that his heavenly message would spread quickly. Not only the Arabian Peninsula, but the farthest regions and the largest contemporary civilizations became lightened by his monotheism, morality, security and justice.

While the people of Hejaz were proud of having born sons, the Lord granted a daughter to His Prophet so that from this heavenly fountain, stars were that in knowledge, patience, spirituality and dignity, were the most similar to the Prophet and each one of them would expand the Prophet's heavenly and life-giving religion permanently all around the world.

In those days, no one assumed that the Eight Imam of this pure household would be placed in the affectionate bosom of Khorasan people. The household of the Prophet was residing in Hashemites neighborhood close to the Prophet's holy shrine. The

Medinan people had not heard about Sanābād—a low profile village in Tūs town; therefore, they could not imagine in the future, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) would migrate to Khorasan, and Sanābād would be the last house of him and this town would be a torch for the guidance seekers and would be a resort for the homeless and the oppressed.

From a long time ago, Iranians were fond of the Household of the Prophet, and considered their region as the resort for Muhammad's Household. It was their wish to be the host of a progeny from this Household and a personage like Imam Riḍā (A.S.) who would set up Friday Prayer and Congregation Prayer, read sermons, teach, speak about Qur'an and the Prophet's rule, narrate hundreds of Prophetic traditions such as the "Golden Chain", dispute with religious scholars, and tear up the chain of tyrannical governments with his divine governorate.

The people of Sanābād and Nawqān like Nishabur people desired to welcome the arrival of the progeny of Muhammad and to manifest the magnificence of Imamate Leadership; alas, Imam enclosed in the Kingdom of Ma'mūn and was not able to visit his devotees. Of course, this behavior of Ma'mūn was not shocking for those who knew Abbasids and had heard

about the cruel treatment of Hārūn toward Imam Ja‘far Ṣādiq. On the other hand, it was surprising that Ma’mūn had left the manner of his ancestors and instead of killing and plundering the household of Imam Ali (A.S.), pretended to be respecting them.

Although Mashhad is considered today a region far from Hejaz and Medina, the kindness and gentleness of Iranian knowledge-seekers to the Family of the Prophet and their devotion to Imam Riḍā (A.S.), and the ever presence of his pilgrims in his heavenly shrine, has made Mashhad one of the thriving shrines of the heavenly sanctuary of His Holiness. For these reasons, Mashhad has turned to a base for transmitting the pure Islam and Iranian and Islamic culture and art.

Chapter One:

Biography of the Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.)

A brief glance at the personal life of Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) will help us to understand better the high status of the Imam in religious and social value system. Furthermore, knowing the birth date and the birthplace and the like will help us to be acquainted with the personal traits of each individual.

Birth of Imam

Renowned historians and traditionists have dated the birth of Imam on Thursday or Friday 11, Dhu'l-Qa'dah in the year 148 A.H.¹ Therefore, the year of the birth of His Holiness is concurrent with his great ancestor's martyrdom, Imam Ṣādiq (A.S.).

1. *Al'ām Al-Hudā*, 302; *Tadhkirat al-Khawās*, 198; *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 70.3; *Tāj al-Mawālīd*, 48; *Maṭālib Al-Saul*, 88; *Rawḍat Al-Wā'zīn*, 386, *Musnad Al-Imam Al- Riḍā* -, 15.1.

Name, Epithet

Imams' names and epithets represent a special message. His noble name is Ali and his notable epithet is Riḍā and Abū al-Ḥasan.¹

He is also called al-Ḥasan II.²

Moreover, traditionists and historians have introduced these epithets:

“Glorious light-giving lamp, Guiding light, Delight of the eyes of the believers, revoker of the atheists, all-sufficing for the people of God, pleased by God, submissive to the divine will, owner of throne, prudent, learned, patient, loyal, innocent, patron, truthful”.³

The Epithet “Riḍā”

Some of the historians believe that the epithet “Riḍā” has been chosen by Ma'mūn and they claim that after Imam Riḍā (A.S.) accepted heir apparenacy, Ma'mūn picked out this name for Imam Riḍā (A.S.).

However, there are some other reasons than what the historians claim in naming and assigning epithets for the Imam. These reasons include two categories:

1. The reasons that are explainable from the perspective of Shi'ite and believers in the authority of

1 “*Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, 22.1.

2 *Tāj al-Mawālīd*, 124.

3 *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, 183.

the Ahl al-Bayt. According to these reasons, the names and epithets of the family of the Prophet have been determined by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) or maybe by Gabriel. In determining the name of Imam Ḥasan (A.S.), the Prophet said, "In assigning his name, I would not exceed my Lord"¹. In another account the Prophet stated, "God has called him "Riḍā" in his Guarded Tablet"².

2. The reasons that are acceptable by everybody. They are traditions, which were announced by previous Imams and they have emphasized on the epithet "Riḍā". Shaykh Ṣadūq quotes Suleiman bin Hafṣ Marvazi that Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.) called his son "Riḍā" and advised others to call him by that name.³

This naming and instruction from Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.) is related to the time when the issue of regency of Ma'mūn and the imposition of heir apparenancy to Imam Riḍā (A.S.) was not proposed.

Parents

Imam Riḍā's noble father was Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.), the seventh Shi'ite Imam, and his dear mother

1 *Ma'āni al-Akbār*, 57.

2 *The Collection of Nafīṣah*, 223.

3 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, 13.1.

was a dignified lady with these different names: Tuktam, Najma, Sammān, Khayzurān, Sakan, Najjiyya and Ṭāhira but the most renowned one is Tuktam. She was named Ṭāhira after Imam Riḍā's birth. Ṭāhira was a virtuous and wise woman and was considered a distinguished non-Arab person.¹

Wife

Imam Riḍā's wife was a chaste lady called Sabīka. Historians have also mentined Umm Ḥabība, Ma'mūn's daughter. In the process of the heir apparency of Imam Riḍā (A.S.), Ma'mūn married her off to Imam Riḍā (A.S.) for political reasons.²

Child

The only child of His Holiness was Imam Jawād-al-A'imma (A.S.) from a mother named Sabīka.³

Imamate

Guidance and leadership of society by chosen successors of the prophets is an important subject that is mentioned in the Qur'an and the pure speech and rule of Muhammad (S.A.W.) testifies it. The Almighty

1 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, 17.1; *Yanābir al-Mawadda*, 384; *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 249.3.

2 *Tadhkirat al-khawāṣ*, 316; *I'lām al-Warā*, 328; *Dalā'il al-imāma*, 177.

3 *I'lām al-Warā*, 86.2 and 91.

God states, ﴿And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) commands and he fulfilled them, He said, Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. (Abraham) said, and of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said, my covenant includeth not wrong-doers.﴾¹ In addition, prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) points out, “People’s problems would be solved while the Twelve [Imams] lead them.”² Based on this account, we get to know that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has mentioned the number of his successors that include Imam Riḍā (A.S.).

The life and personality of Shi’ite Imams consist of two valuable and distinguished but related aspects:

1. Imams’ political, social, moral, scientific characters were manifest for everyone during their lifetime. Understanding these traits does not need special religious backgrounds because every wise person can perceive those values and privileges.

2. Imams’ spiritual and moral characters are rooted in the divine providence. ‘Allāma Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī has quoted 48 traditions that Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.) has introduced his son, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) as his successor.³

1 Q. 2:124.

2 *Sahih Muslim* 3.6.

3 C *Bihār al-Anwār*, 11.49.

Chapter Two:

Spiritual Character and Social Behavior

Studying Imam Riḍā's Spiritual Character and Social Behavior is very significant, because it would pave the way for a better understanding of His Holiness and learning life lessons from him.

Saying Prayer

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) considered prayer a gift from Allah, which is the most valuable thing in the spiritual life of every individual after recognition God¹

He was very serious in performing obligatory and recommended prayers like supererogatory prayers, vigils, Ja'far Ṭayyār prayer, and always performed his prayers at its due time.

1 *Mustardak al-Wasā'il* 175.

Attentiveness to Fasting

In addition to obligatory fasting, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) emphasized on recommended fasting; therefore, never ever missed fasting on the beginning, middle and the last of each month. In showing the importance of this fasting, he remarked, “The fasting of these three days is equal to the fasting of the whole year”.¹

Familiarity with the Qur'an

Like the other Imams, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) in his speech and practice has reminded the magnificence of the Qur'an to its disciples; thus he always recited the Qur'an in the morning and at night.²

In underscoring the significance of reciting the Qur'an to his disciples, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) declared, “Appoint a share for the Qur'an in your house, because whenever the Qur'an is recited at home, the troubles would be resolved and welfare and blessing would descend to the members of the household. On the opposite, if the Qur'an is not recited in a house, the members would get into trouble and God's favor would

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 91.49.

2 *Bihār al-Anwār* 94.49.

not reach that household”.¹

Prayer and Worship

Prayer is an exquisite religious practice and requesting from Almighty God and it increases the status and dignity of every believer. God states, ﴿Say (O Muhammad, unto the disbelievers): My Lord would not concern Himself with you but for your prayer.﴾²

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) expresses his idea about the importance and value of prayer, “Prayer is the weapon of a believer, the pillar of religion, and the light of the heavens and the earth.”³

His Holiness, who was greatly aware of the role of the prayer in shaping humanity, was constantly reciting God.⁴ At the time of drought, he went to the desert and offered a rain prayer to God.

In his praying and supplications to God, salutation to Muhammad and his descendants, prayer for Imam Mahdi (A.S.), requesting ampleness of livelihood, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) has quoted deep and elegant phrases and words. In addition to reflecting his divine and high thought, these words manifest his superb eloquence

1 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 850.4.

2 Q. 25: 77.

3 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 37.2 and 95.

4 *Bihār al-Anwār* 92.49 and 98.

and oratory.

In the following lines, some samples of these high words will be offered to the knowledgeable:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful (1)

O God! The large amount of my sins has disgraced me at your presence and prevented me from receiving your mercy and forgiveness. (2)

If it was not for my dependency on your blessings, and my need for praying, and your promise to the wasteful and the sinners like me and your promise to the desperate to have mercy on them, I would not have found courage. You have commanded your hopeless servants by these words, ﴿O my servants, who have treated yourself cruelly, do not be desperate of God's mercy. God forgives all your sins, he is the only merciful forgiving﴾, you have admonished the desperate not to become hopeless from your mercy and told, ﴿And who is hopeless of the mercy of his God but the misguided.﴾ (3)

Therefore, you called us by your clemency to pray and commanded, ﴿Call me to answer you, those who disobey me, will enter hell in utter humility.﴾ (4)

O God! Hopelessness and despair had overcome me, O God! You have promised reward to those who think

good of you, and have threatened punishment to those who mistrust you. (5)

O God! My favorable opinion that you redeem me from the hell, condone my slips and forgive my sins has kept me upright. (6)

O God! You have stated in your Book that there is not violation and change in your right words, ﴿The day that we call each group with their Imam's name﴾ and that day is the Day of Resurrection. That is the time of blowing into the trumpet, and whoever that is in the graves would rise. (7)

O God! I will fulfill my promise, testify, confess and do not deny, do not consider it a lie, in appearance and at heart, that there is no other God than You, You are One and have no partner. Muhammad (S.A.W.) is Your servant and Messenger, and Ali (A.S.), commander of the faithful, is the master of administrators and the heir of the knowledge of prophets, the flag of the religion, destroyer of polytheists, identifier of hypocrites, and a jihadist against the rebels. He is my Imam, proof, support, path, guide, and destination. The one whom I believe that however my acts are pure and righteous, would not be reliable and would not save me, unless to believe in his *Wilāya*, accepting his Imamate, confessing his

virtue, and receiving this message from its messengers and transferring it to the ones who will recount it. (8)

And I consider his successors who are his children as Imams, proofs, signs and [guiding] lamps and flags of [hope] and the abode of the masters and benefactors. Secretly and overtly, I believe in them whether absent or present, deceased or alive. There is no certainty, doubt and change about that. (9)

O Lord! On the Day of Resurrection, call me with his name (Ali) and with his intermediacy save me from the hell. Even if You do not grant me the breeze of heaven but save me from the hell, I will be among the delivered. (10)

O God! Today I do not trust myself, and have no refuge and haven except for the ones I have appealed. I will resort to Your Prophet, Muhammad (S.A.W.), then Ali (A.S.), Zahrā-the superior of all women, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Ali, Muhammad, Ja'far, Mūsā, Ali, Muhammad, Ali, Ḥasan and those who will pave the way for understanding Your *ḥujja* (authorized guide). He (the *Ḥujja*) who is hidden and he is the hope of people after him (Imam 'Askarī (A.S.)). (11)

O God! Put Imams my refuge from pain and my support form fears and in honor of them save me from every rebellious enemy, aggressor and corrupted and

from the evil of everything I know and I do not know, and whatever is hidden and whatever I see, today and the following days. O God! Secure me from every creature whose forelock is in Your hands, because You are eternal. (12)

O God! In honor of my recourse to the Imams in Your presence, my appeal to their kindness and taking refuge to their Imamate, open the doors of provision and grant Your mercy on me. Make me loved among Your creatures and keep me away from their enmity and spite because You are the most powerful. (13)

O Lord! Every person, who appeals, deserves reward and every intercessor has a right. Thus in honor of the person whom I have made my means at Your presence and prior to my requests, I want You to give me knowledge in this day, this month and this year. (14)

O God! They are my refuge and support in hardship, comfort, health, disaster, sleep, migration, residing, difficulty, ease, overtly and obviously, morning, night, moving and staying, my inside and out. (15)

O Lord! In honor of them, do not deprive me of Your favor. Do not cut off my hope in Your mercy and Your breeze of grace. Do not afflict me with the closing of the doors of provisions, closing of the provision ways

and the hardening of its ways. Assign an easy relief for me. Set a way out of any difficulty, and a way to relief, You are the most compassionate. O God, bless Muhammad and his descendants. Amen, [O] Lord of the Worlds. (16)¹

Piety and Virtuousness

In reply to Ma'mūn who had said, "I knew you with [your] erudition, self-restraint and piety", Imam Riḍā (A.S.) stated, "I am proud of serving God, and with self-restraint, I hope in the salvage from the evilness of the world".²

Generosity and Munificence

Yasa' b. Ḥamza narrates, "We were at the presence of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) and asking questions about halal and haram and other subjects from His Holiness. At this time a man entered, greeted and told Imam Riḍā (A.S.), "O son of the Prophet, I am a Khorasani, I have come back from the pilgrimage to Mecca and coming back to Khorasan, but I have lost my money, I have nothing left, help me with some money. When I arrive to my homeland, I will give in in charity on your

1 Sayyid b. Tāwūs, *Al-Muhajj al-Da'wāt wa Manhaju al-I'bādāt* 254

2 *Bihār al-Anwār* 128.49.

behalf.” Imam (A.S.) beckoned him to wait a minute and continued to answer our questions until the others left and only two others and me were left.

His Holiness stood up and went inside and after some moments came to the back of the door, stretched his hand in and stated, “O Khorasani, come and take this money and spend it on your travel and it is not necessary to donate it on my behalf. After the man left, the Imam (A.S) returned to us. I asked His Holiness, “You did a favor to that man but why did you stretch your hand from behind the door and you yourself did not come out of the room?” His Holiness expressed, “I did not like to see the abasement and humility on his face.”¹

The Rites of Eating

1. The Imam (A.S.) always washed his hands before eating and did not dry, and always washed his hands after eating and dried.²

2. His Holiness started his meal with salt.³

3. Imam (A.S.) avoided eating hot food.⁴

4. After eating a small amount of food, he slept on

1 *Al-Kāfi* 24.4.

2 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 476/16.

3 *Bihār al-Anwār* 394-400.66.

4 *Ibid*, 400-403.66.

his back and put his right leg on his left leg.¹

5. His Holiness always abstained from gluttony.²

6. Never did he throw away the remainder of the food.³

7. The Imam (A.S.) gathered crumbs of food off the tablecloth and ate them. In reward of doing this, he mentioned the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), "Whatever of bread and food spilled on the tablecloth [eat because] they are the marriage portion of houris of Paradise."⁴

8. He would never overeat.

One day, Imam's servants ate a fruit and threw the remaining part away. His Holiness became upset and commanded, "Glory be to God! If you do not need the fruit, there are people who are poor, give it to them."⁵

The Rules of Manner for Dressing

About Imam Riḍā's habits of dressing, there are some facts:

1. In public, His Holiness used to wear neat and appropriate clothes.⁶

1 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 500.16.

2 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 136.

3 *Bihār al-Anwār* 97.49.

4 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 34.2.

5 *Al-Kāfī* 297.6.

6 *Bihār al-Anwār* 89.49.

2. In private, he used to wear coarse and inexpensive clothes.¹

3. His Holiness first entered his right hand in the sleeve.²

4. Whenever he bought a new dress, first of all, prepared a bowl of water, recited the Sūra, (Al-Ikhlās), (Al-Qadr) and (Al-Kāfirūn) ten times and spilled the water on the dress and then put it on. According to His Holiness, the wise rationale was, “This act causes the purity of life.”³

Personal Hygiene

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) specially paid attention to hygiene. He:

1. Brushed his teeth and by chewing frankincense made his mouth good smelling.⁴

2. After eating, he made his mouth fragrant by drinking water mixed with a plant called *ushnān* (the herb alkali used to wash hands after eating; *ādharbuya*).⁵

1 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 178.2.

2 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 372.3.

3 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 372.3.

4 *Musnad Al-Imam Al-Riḍā* 39.1.

5 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 537.16.

3. He always adorned himself and wore kohl.¹

4. His Holiness loved sweet smell, and constantly made himself fragrant.²

5. He always rinsed his mouth and drew up through his nostrils clean and hygiene water.³

6. In order to stop water from entering his mouth, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) squeezed his lips during performing his ablutions.⁴

Vigor and Mirth

Spiritual and physical vigor is one of the human needs that are ignored due to their cares and concerns.

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) has an important advice about proper time management and optimal use of the moments of life, “Divide your time into four parts, dedicate a portion of your time to supplication and privacy with God, another portion to earning livelihood and providing for life expenses, the third part for spending your time in the company of your pious brothers and the last part to having appropriate entertainments and lawful and permissible pleasures.” Permissible laughing and joking are instances of the

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 97.76.

2 *Ibid*, 97.77.

3 *Imam Riḍā, the Paradigm of the Straight Path* 76.

4 *Ibid*, 76.

last part.

On the importance of vigor and mirth, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) says, “Jesus Christ both cried and laughed, John the Baptist (Yaḥyā) only cried and did not laugh, Christ’s manner was better.”¹

Tidiness

Tidiness and beauty are admirable qualities and are the behavior of the prophets. His Holiness points out, “Tidiness is the morality of prophets.”² Therefore, tidiness and elegance have been emphasized in our Islamic teachings and the *sīra* of our leaders. Imam Riḍā (A.S.) remarks, “Almighty God loves beauty and tidiness and hates poverty and pretending to be poor.”³

Ibn Jahm says, “I went to the presence of Imam Riḍā. I saw His Holiness has dyed his hair with henna. I said, ‘Ma I be your ransom! You have dyed your hair.’” The Imam (A.S.) said, “There is reward in dying hair. Adornment of men is something that increases their waves’ chastity. And the reason women have given up chastity is because their husbands do not

1 *Al-Hikmah* 3228.7.

2 *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl* 422.

3 *Ibid*, 422.

adorn themselves for them.”¹

Social Behavior

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) was very humble and was very affectionate toward people. He socialized with them in a favorable way. Shaykh Ṣadūq quotes Ibrahīm b. ‘Abbās:

-I never saw Imam Riḍā (A.S.) speak harshly to others.

-Never did he interrupt the speaking of others.

-He never rejected the request of others if he was able to fulfill.

-He did not stretch his leg at the presence of others.

- He never leaned at the presence of others.

-I never saw him talking angrily to his servants.

-Never did he spit.

-I never saw him to burst into laughter. He always smiled.²

Respect for Parents

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) has considered benefaction and goodness to parents mandatory. He said, “Benefaction and goodness to parents is mandatory, even if they are

1 *Makārim al-Akhlāq* 89.

2 *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 184.2, *Bihār al-Anwār* 90.49.

polytheists.”¹ His Holiness added, “In this world obey your fathers and pray for them after their death. If someone is good to his father when he is alive but does not pray for him after his death, that man is considered disinherited. You must know that a mother’s right is the most essential thing. Because when she carried you in herself, no one carried you. Those hardships that she tolerated, no other one was interested in doing so. Even if you cannot pay tribute to her, you must be kind and soft to her as much as you can, and be grateful to her.”²

Respecting the Family

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) would say, “A person whose demeanor is better and is kinder to his family is a true believer, and I am the kindest to my family.”³

On the necessity of providing welfare for family, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) says, “It is obligatory to prepare welfare and convenience for your family if you have financial capability.”⁴

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 80.74.

2 *Fiqh al-Riḍā* 334.

3 *Bihār al-Anwār* 287.71.

4 *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl* 466.

Observing the Rights of Relatives

In addition to having great spiritual, mental and social effects, connection with relatives has situational effects. Reconstruction and prosperity of cities, excess of providence and long age are among these impacts. It is quoted from Imam Riḍā (A.S.), “Whoever likes to live a long life and excess of providence should connect with their relatives.”¹

His Holiness quotes the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), “Welcome and entertain your relatives even with a glass of water, and the best kind of connection with relatives is to avoid annoying and harassing them.”²

Hospitality

Ahmad b. Abī Naṣr Bazanṭī says, “The day that Imam Riḍā (A.S.) invited me to his house, he send a steed for me. I rode the horse and went to his presence. Since it was late, the Imam (A.S.) told me to stay there overnight.” His Holiness told me, “Stay with us tonight and go back home tomorrow.” I stayed there. At the time of sleeping, Imam (A.S.) ordered to spread his special bed for me.”³

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 91.71.

2 *Al-Kāfī* 151.2.

3 *Manāgibi Ibn Shahr Āshūb* 341.4.

On the necessity of hospitality, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) said, “One of the rights of the guest is to accompany him to the door.”¹

Helping the Needy

One of the fundamental features of our Imams is accompaniment with the deprived. Although Imam Riḍā (A.S.) had the status of heir apparenancy to the Ma'mūn's throne, he acted like his ancestors. With this behavior, he taught the Muslims the way of life and disapproved the aristocratic life of Ma'mūn. His Holiness said concerning the necessity of behaving humanly to the poor, “Whoever confronts with a destitute person, and does not say greet him with the way he greets a wealthy person, he would make God angry toward himself.”²

His Holiness, on the necessity of assisting the poor, has considered helping them, the best charity. He remarks, “Helping the weak is the best charity.”³

Respecting the Servants and Their Rights

In spite of the fact that Imam Riḍā (A.S.) had a high-ranking status in government, he behaved

1 *Musnad Al-Imam Al-Riḍā* 331.2.

2 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* 422.8.

3 *Hayāt al-Imam al- Riḍā* 82.2.

benevolently with the servants. Yāsir Khādim quotes Imam Riḍā (A.S.), “If I come and you are eating, do not get up.” Accordingly, when Imam (A.S.) called a houseman and it was said to Imam (A.S.) he was eating, Imam expressed, “Let him eat his food.”¹

Yāsir Khādim adds, “The day that Imam was poisoned, after performing the noon prayer, he told us if the members of the household, servants and workers had eaten food?” I told His Holiness, “My Sir! Who can eat food when you are poisoned?” At this moment, Imam (A.S.) got up from the bed, sat, and stated, “Spread the tablecloth.” When the tablecloth was spread, he called all the servants and housemaids. After finishing, the Imam (A.S.) behaved kindly and softly to them.²

Observing the Rights and Emotions of Workers

Suleiman Ja‘farī says, “I went to the presence of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) for a task and with His Holiness we set off until we entered a house. The servants were busy doing their work. Among them was a black-faced man who was not a servant of the Imam (A.S.).”

The Imam (A.S.) asked, “Who is this man?” The

1 *Al-Kāfi* 283.6.

2 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 341.2.

others answered, “He helps us and at the end, we will pay him.” The Imam (A.S.) said, “Have you determined his wage?” They said, “No, but whatever we give him, he is satisfied.” The Imam (A.S.) became agitated and stated, “Did not I warn you not to employ anybody without determining his wage?” Then His Holiness turned to me and said, “If someone employed a person before assigning his wage and then three times of his wage is given to him, he would become distrustful and assumed his right has not been duly given. However, if his wage is determined and is paid that amount, he would thank you. And if you pay higher than the determined amount, he would get happy.”¹

Forgiving the Wrongdoer

Jalūdī was one of the commanders of Hārūn’s court. He was very powerful and cruel and did not have pity on women. He plundered their jewelry by force. Imam Riḍā (A.S.) who was aware of his savagery, ordered all the women of the household of Ali (A.S.) to get together in a house.

Jalūdī who was informed of the gathering of the women, attacked the house but Imam Riḍā (A.S.)

1 *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 288.5.

stopped him. Jalūdī said, "According to the order, I should get all their jewelry." His Holiness expressed, "Let me gather the jewelry, and deliver them to you." Jalūdī accepted.

Jalūdī who had remained in the court from the time of Hārūn, was strongly against the heir apparence of the Imam (A.S.). He always objected Ma'mūn's decision and caused trouble for the Imam (A.S.). As a result, Ma'mūn imprisoned him.

After a while with the intermediacy of Dhul Riāsatayn, Jalūdī was released. In a meeting that Jalūdī was also present, Imam Riḍā (A.S.) caught sight of him. He had become very old. His Holiness told Ma'mūn, "Condone this man because of me."

Jalūdī who was looking at the Imam (A.S.), thought he was backbiting about him and the Imam (A.S.) wanted Ma'mūn to punish him. Therefore, Jalūdī told Ma'mūn, "For the honor of the services I did to your father, do not accept the advice of this man."

Ma'mūn smiled and said to the Imam Riḍā (A.S.), "Jalūdī himself judged about your suggestion and insisted not to accept your suggestion about him." Then Ma'mūn ordered Julodi to be killed.¹

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 167.49.

Imam's Attitude toward Corrupted Relatives

Ḥasan b. Mūsā Washshā' says, "In Khorasan, I was at the presence of the Imam (A.S.) and in that meeting, the Imam's brother, Zayd bin Mūsā, known as Zayd al-Nār was also present. Zayd al-Nār was speaking highly of himself and his family. When His Holiness heard his brother's utterances, told him straight away, "O Zayd! The words of Kufis who say Fāṭma's offspring would not enter hell because of the purity of Her Holiness, have made you proud. If your father obeys God, fast during the day and pray during the night and you disobey God, and both of you who are Zahra's offspring be equal in the Day of Judgment, you must be dearer than your father..."¹

This man, Zayd al-Nār, when arrived at Ma'mūn's presence, Ma'mūn greeted him for the honor of the Imam (A.S.) but when he arrived at the presence of the Imam (A.S.), His Holiness did not answer him. Zayd al-Nār said, "I am your brother and your father's son. Why do you not answer me?" The Imam (A.S.) expressed, "You are my brother as long as you obey God but if you sin against God, there is no brotherhood between us."²

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* 218.79.

2 *Manāqib Ali b. Abi Ṭālib* 361.4.

Imam's Attitude against the Despots

Although Imam Riḍā (A.S.) was the successor to Ma'mūn, without any forbearance and expediency, he always made Ma'mūn aware of his faults and strongly objected to some of Ma'mūn's acts.

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) who was infuriated by the disorganized situation of Medina during the reign of Ma'mūn, one day provoked and addressed Ma'mūn, "...you have marred the affairs of Muslims and have assigned their supervision to the individuals who do not act according to the divine rules. You are living in this territory and have left Medina, which is the center of revelation. The Emigrants and Helpers of Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) are under oppression and your dictators do not observe the kinship of those Muslims. There is hardship on the oppressed. They suffer but cannot afford the expenses of life, and do not find someone to petition for their troubles."¹

Observing the Rights of Minorities

Yāsir Khādim says, "A letter was received by Ma'mūn from Neishabour with the subject that a Zoroastrian has willed to have his properties shared

1 *Musnad Al-Imam Al-Riḍā* 85.1.

among the needy. The Judge of Neishabour has shared his property among the poor Muslims. Ma'mūn wanted Imam's opinion about this. His Holiness stated, "Zoroastrians never will for Muslims. Send a letter to the Judge of Neishabour and order him to take the same amount of his property from the Muslim public treasury and share it among the poor Zoroastrians."¹

In addition, Rayyān b. Shabīb says he asked Imam Riḍā (A.S.), "My sister has willed her money to a group of Christians, and I do not want to give that sum to them but to grant them to Muslims. Am I allowed?" His Holiness (A.S.) said, "Perform the will as it is said. God Almighty has said, ﴿And whoso changeth (the will) after he hath heard it - the sin thereof is only upon those who change it.﴾"²

Getting Benefit from Nature and Environment

Man's responsibility toward nature is in such a way that not only he should consider it a sign from among the signs of God, but should not be wasteful in benefitting from it. One must be serious in making the nature prosperous. The Creator has assigned the duty of prosperity of the Earth to human beings. ﴿He

1 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* 15.2.

2 *Q. 2:181.*

brought you forth from the earth and hath made you husband it.)¹

Imam Riḍā (A.S.) was very attentive to nature and the necessity of improving the environment's condition. Therefore, in the journey to Merv, he sometimes dug a well and spring and dredged them, and with his blessed hand, planted almond seedlings.²

At the time when Imam Riḍā (A.S.) reached the place that is now called Ghadamgāh, he saw a nearly dried spring. He commanded to have the spring dredged and have a small pool constructed beside it. Then His Holiness performed the *ghusl* (major ablution) and said prayer.³

1 Q. 11: 61.

2 *Bihār al-Anwār* 121.49.

3 *Ibid*, 123.49.

Chapter Three:

Scholarly Personality

Among the Shi'ite Imams, four have found more opportunity to spread the truths of religion: Imam Ali, Imam Muhammad Bāqir, Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq, and Imam Riḍā. Although all the Imams have made different efforts in this important matter; the conditions for these four Imams were more appropriate in the religious and ideological affairs than others.

The Imam's fields of knowledge are the issues that distinguish his personally from others. Knowledge of Imam in the fields of theology, religions, and Revealed Scriptures, Qur'anic sciences and teachings, Kalām (theology) discussions, medical and healthcare affairs, jurisprudential principles discourses, jurisprudence and so on, all indicate the extent of the knowledge of the Imam. Imams, based on the many narratives that are related by the religious figures, are inheritors of the

knowledge of the Prophet¹.

The Imam, grew up using his divine knowledge and insight of his noble father, Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far, and although he was only twenty years old, he answered the questions of the people in the Prophet's Mosque².

The Learned of the Prophet's Household (S.A.W)

The knowledge of the Eighth Imam was so evident that he was called by his noble father, "The learned of the Prophet's household"³.

In the debate sessions, he answered the doubts raised by the figures of religions or Islamic scholars carefully, and presented novel and rational explanations.

Imam's Knowledge in the Words of Others

Ali b. Muhammad b. Jahm, who himself was one of the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt and was Nāṣibī, admittedly says: "I was in the assembly of Ma'mūn, where Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā was also present. Ma'mūn was asking the Imam about the accounts regarding the non-infallibility of the Prophets, and he answered each one."

1 *Al-Kāfī* p.223.

2 *Kashf al-Ghumma* p.290.

3 *A'alam al-Vari* p.64.

Others, such as Abū ‘Abdullāh Ḥākīm Neyshaburi, the Shāfi‘ī traditionist and jurisprudent; Ibn Athīr, the *rijāl* expert and Shāfi‘ī traditionist and jurisprudent; and Ali' b. Jahm Nāṣībī, in their works admitted the countless virtues of Imam Riḍā (A.S.), and titles such as Sultan of Awliyā (friends of Allah), the proof of the pious, the inheritor of the knowledge of the Prophets, the keeper of the secrets of God, friend of God, God’s chosen one, the beloved of the Prophet of God, aide to the people, wiper of sadness, the king of those brought near to God on the Day of Judgment, al-Imam Abū al-Ḥasan Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, May blessings of God be upon him and the Prophet of Allah ... were used for His Holiness¹.

The Imam’s Knowledge of Different Languages

Amid other traits of Imam Riḍā, was his familiarity with the world's popular languages. Abā Ṣalt Hiravī says: “Imam Riḍā spoke to people in their own languages, and swear to God, he was the most eloquent of people and most knowledgeable of them to any language and accent².”

Abā Ṣalt says: “One day I told him: I wonder how

1 *History of Neyshabur* p.207.

2 *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* p.453; *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.553.

you know all these languages, with all their discrepancies?” The Imam replied: “O’ Abā Ṣalt! I am the authority of God to people, and He does not convey authority to anyone who does not know the language of the people¹.”

Yāsir Khādim has narrated, “Two of the people of Rome and Slav, were at the house of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā as guests. The Imam was very close to them and when these two spoke to each other, he realized that they spoke in Roman and Slavic like this: ‘We were visited every year in our homeland, but here no one comes to see us.’ Imam Riḍā sent someone the next morning to visit them.”

The Emergence and Manifestation of the Imam’s Knowledge in the Debates

In addition to the scholarly discussions with the people of the Scripture and various intellectual trends in Merv, Imam Riḍā promoted the knowledge and the religious insight of that region. The number of Imam Riḍā’s debates with the people of the book and the representatives of Christians, Jews, Manichaeans, Zoroastrians, Sabians, and Islamic sects are very numerous.

1 *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* p.446; *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.553.

The Four-Sided Debates

The four-sided debates, which took place at one of the meetings in the presence of Ma'mūn and Imam Riḍā, is that Ma'mūn ordered his minister, Faḍl b. Sahl, to gather Ṣābī, the great Sabian leader; Great Hirbod, the prominent Zoroastrian priest; and Roman Nastas, the great Christian scholar, and scholars of other religions to put forward an issue with them. Faḍl b. Sahl gathered them all. Ma'mūn told them, "I have a cousin, with whom I want you to debate. All of you come to me tomorrow morning¹."

Ḥasan b. Muhammad Nawfilī narrates, "We were at Imam's presence, when Yāsir, his servant entered and said, 'Your Holiness! Ma'mūn sends regards and says tomorrow the scholars of different religions will have a meeting with us and you might want to come too².'"

Imam said,, "Salute Ma'mūn, and tell him I know his purpose and I will be in his assembly tomorrow morning, God willing." When Yāsir left, the Imam told me, "Are you afraid that they will reject all my reasons and defeat me?"

I said, "Your Holiness! Yes, because they are

1 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.313; see also: *Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā*, p. 79 onward.

2 *Ibid*, p.314.

polemics and deniers and whatever you say they will not accept. If you say that God is one, they say why? If you say that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, they will say prove his prophecy. And finally any reason give, they will face it with sophistry and rejection. Avoid them!"

The Imam said, "Ma'mūn will regret this. I will argue with the Torah scholars by their Torah, with the Biblical scholars with their own Bible, with the scholars of Psalms by Psalms, with the Sabians in the language of Hebrew, with the Great Hirbod in Persian, and with the Roman scholars in the Roman language, There is no power and strength save in God the All-exalted, the Almighty."

The next morning, Imam Riḍā took ablution and left home. When he entered the mosque, he saw the scholars of the religions, some of Banī Hāshim people, the elders and caliphate agents were seated with Ma'mūn, and with the arrival of the Imam, Ma'mūn and all the attendees stood up¹.

The assembly of Ma'mūn settled and he turned toward Catholicos (Jāthlīq)² and stated: "O' Catholicos!" This is my cousin Ali b. Mūsā b. Ja'far. He

1 *Ibid*, p.316.

2 Arabic equivalent of Catholicos.

is one of the children of Fāṭima, our Prophet's daughter and the son of Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. I would like you to talk and discuss with him; however, submit to justice in the debate.”

Catholicos said, “O’ Amīr al-Mu’minīn! How do I discuss and negotiate with him when we do not share any common grounds. He argues from a book that I deny, and believes in a Prophet that I have not believed¹.

Here, Imam began to speak and said, “O’ Christian! If I argue from your Gospel for you, will you confess?”

Catholicos said, “How can I deny the Gospel? Yes, I swear to God, I will admit it, even if it was to my detriment.”

The Imam said, “Ask whatever you want and hear your answer.”

Catholicos, “What do you say about Jesus' prophecy and his Book? Do you deny something of these two?”

The Imam, “I admit the prophecy of Jesus and his Book and to what he gave glad tidings to his people, and the disciples have confessed it, and I disbelieve the prophecy of Jesus, who did not confess to the prophecy of Muhammad and his book and he did not gave glad

1 *Biḥār al-Anwār*. vol.49, p.174.

tidings e to his people!”

Catholicos, “Do you not employ two just witnesses when judging?”

The Imam, “Yes.”

Catholicos, “So, take two witnesses from disbelievers in your religion, from those who Christians do not deny their testimony to testify Muhammad's prophecy, and ask us to bring two witnesses in this sense from disbelievers in our religion.”

The Imam, “Now you met the fairness, do you accept the one who was righteous and had a superior status with Jesus, son of Mary?”

Catholicos, “Who is this righteous man, name him?”

The Imam, “What do you say about Saint John of Dailam?”

Catholicos, “Very nice! You mentioned the most beloved person to Christ!”

The Imam, “Does the Bible express this saying that John of Dailam said, ‘Jesus Christ advised me of the religion of Arabian Muhammad, and gave me the glad tidings that after him there will be such a Prophet, I also gave the glad tidings to the disciples, and they believed him?’”

Catholicos said, “Yes!” This is what John has related from Christ, and he gave the glad tidings of his

prophecy as well his household and successor; however, did not say when this will happen, and did not name this group to us, so we do not know them.”

The Imam, “If we bring somebody to read the Gospel, and recite verses from which Muhammad, his household and his nation exist in them, will you believe in him?”

Catholicos, “That would be excellent.”

Imam said to Nastas, “Do you remember the third Book of Bible?”

Nastas said, “Yes, I have it memorized.”

Then, the Imam turned to Exilarch, the leader of Jews, and said, “Do you also read the Gospel?” He said, “Yes, by my life.” He said, “Take the third book, if there was reference to Muhammad and his household, testify for me and if it was not, do not.” Then the Imam recounted from the third book, until he came to the name of the Prophet, then stopped, and turned to the Catholicos and said, “O’ Christian! By the truth of Christ and his mother do you admit that I know the Gospel?”

Catholicos: “Yes.”

Then, the Imam recited him the name of the Prophet, his household and his people and added, “O Christian! What do you say, is this the word of Christ?”

If you deny what the Bible says in this regard you will deny both Moses and Jesus, and you are a disbeliever.”

Catholicos: “I do not deny what has become clear to me from the Gospel and I admit it.”

The Imam, “You all witnessed that he confessed”, then he said, "O Catholicos!" Ask any question you desire.”

Catholicos: “Tell us about the disciples of Jesus, how many were they, and the Bible scholars?”

The Imam: “You asked a knowledgeable person, the disciples were twelve, and the noble and supreme one was Luke. However, the Christian scholars were three: the Great John in the land of Bach, another John in Circesium, and John of Dailam in Rajaz, and the name of the Prophet and his household and people were with him, and he gave glad tidings to the Jesus’s people and the Israelites.”

Then he said, “O’ Christian! By God, we believe in Jesus who had faith in Muhammad; however, the only objection that we have to your Prophet is that he did little fasting and prayer!

Catholicos suddenly was amazed and said, “By God, you turned your knowledge futile and you weakened your argument, and I thought you were the most knowledgeable of Muslims.”

The Imam, “But what happened?”

Catholicos: “Because you said that Jesus was weak, and he was short of prayer and fasting, while Jesus did not even break-fast for a day, and he did not sleep any night, and he was always on fast and awake at nights.”

The Imam, “For whom did he fast and pray?” [That is, Jesus believed in one God and not in the Trinity.]

Catholicos could not answer, and was silent.

The Imam, “O’ Christian! I have another question.”

Catholicos modestly said, “If I know, I will answer.”

The Imam, “Do you deny that Jesus would bring the dead alive by the permission of God Almighty?”

Catholicos was in a dead end and he inevitably said, “I deny, because he who enlivens the dead and heals the congenital blindness and the leprosy, he is the Lord and deserves divinity.”

The Imam, “Prophet Elisha also did the same thing, and he walked on water and he raised the dead, and healed the congenital blindness and the leprosy; however, his people did not assume him divinity and no one worshiped him. The Prophet Ezekiel also did the same as Christ did and made the dead alive.”

He then turned to Exilarch and said, “O’ Exilarch, do you find these in the Torah that Nebuchadnezzar II brought Israelite captives to Babylon when the

government fought against Jerusalem? And God sent Ezekiel to them, and he revived their dead? This fact exists in the Torah; nobody denies it except the deniers of the truth.”

Exilarch, “We have heard this and know it.”

The Imam, “You are right.” Then added, “O’ Jewish, take this book from the Torah.” Then he himself began to read verses from the Torah. The Jewish man was shocked and fell into wonder.”

Then the Imam turned to the Christian and recounted some of the miracles of the Prophet of Islam about the reviving some of the dead by his hands, and healing some of the incurable patients with his blessings and said, “Nevertheless, we will never consider him our Lord. If you consider Jesus as your Lord for such miracles, you should count Elisha and Ezekiel as your deity too, because they also revived the dead, and also Abraham took the birds and beheaded them and placed them on the mountains, then called them and they all became alive. Moses also did such a thing for the seventy people who had come to the mountains with him and died due to a thunderbolt. You can never deny these truths, for the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms and the Qur’an have spoken of them. So you must consider all of these as your god.”

Catholicos failed to respond, surrendered and said, “You spoke the truth and there is only one God.”

Then the Imam asked him and Exilarch about the book of Isaiah and he replied, “I’m well aware of that.”

The Imam said, “Do you remember the sentence that Isaiah said, ‘I saw someone who is riding on a roadster, wearing clothes of light -pointing to Christ- and I saw someone who is riding a camel and his light like the light of the moon (pointing to the Prophet of Islam)’”. They said, “Yes, Isaiah spoke of such.”

The Imam added, “O’ Christian, remember this word of the Messiah in the Bible, who said, ‘I will go to my Lord and your Lord, and ‘Paraclete’ will come and give a just testimony about me, as I testified about him and interprets everything for you?’”

Catholicos, “We admit what you say from the Gospel.”

Then, the Imam asked several other questions about the Gospel and the disappearance of its first copy, and then it’s being written by Mark, Luke, John, and Matthew, who wrote a Gospel each, and clarified the contradictions of the Catholicos’ argument.

Catholicos was completely frustrated, so that he was stuck. Therefore, when the Imam once again told him, “O’ Catholicos, you may ask whatever you want”, he

refrained from asking any question and said, “Now, someone else ask questions, I swear to the God that I did not think there is someone like you among the Muslims.”¹

Then, Imam Riḍā turned to Exilarch and said, “By the ten verses that were revealed to Moses, have you not seen the mention of Muhammad in the Torah?”

Exilarch said, “Yes.”

Imam asked, “Did you see Jesus in the Gospel saying, ‘I will soon go to my Lord, and after me ‘Paraclete’ will come, and will testify to my rightfulness, as I testify to his rightfulness?’”

Catholicos said, “Yes! These words are in the Gospel.”

The Imam said, “Do you want me to tell you where you did find the Gospel you lost?”

He said, “We just lost it for one day and we found it again.”

The Imam said, “Your knowledge of the Gospel is very poor. If you have lost it only one day, why is there all that difference? When the Gospel was lost among you, the Christians gathered together to see what to do.”

1 *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.327-315/1.

“Luke and Mark said, ‘The Gospel is preserved in our chests, we will write it.’ Then they gathered with John and Matthew, and wrote these four Gospels. So the four Gospels have differences.”

Catholicos said, “Today, I understood what was going on, and it added to my understanding and knowledge.”

Then Imam Riḍā spoke of some of the differences between the Gospels, so that the Catholicos said, “Luke and Mark and Matthew had false testimonies about Jesus Christ.”

Then he said, “O’ Muslim scholar! Exempt me, and let others raise questions, as I swear to Christ that amongst the Muslim scholars, there is not a single one like you.”¹

Imam Riḍā, turned to Exilarch and said, “Will you ask or I do?”

He said, “I ask; however, you should speak to me based on the Torah and the Bible, or the Psalms of David, and the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses. How do you prove Prophecy of Muhammad?”

The Imam said, “Moses, Jesus and David testified to his prophecy.”

Exilarch said, “Where?”

1 *Ibid.*

The Imam said, "Was it not Moses that made his testament to the Israelites that soon a Prophet would come from your brothers; attest him?"

He said, "Yes, this is Moses's words."

The Imam said, "From brothers of Israelites, was there a Prophet other than Muhammad?"

He said; "No."

The Imam said, "Is there not in the Torah that the light appeared from Mount Sinai, Mount Sa'ir and Mount Faran?"

He said; "Yes, but what is the interpretation?"

The Imam said, "The appearance of light in Mount Sinai is the revelation of God to Moses and the light in Mount Sa'ir, the same revelation to the Prophet Jesus, and the purpose of the light that came from Mount Faran is the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad, since Faran is the name of one of Mountains around Mecca, where the Messenger of God has come thereof."

Then, Imam Riḍā mentioned examples of the Prophets' glad tidings that came in the Torah and in the words of the Prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk, stated the signs of Prophet Muhammad and from the Psalms of the David, read a section for the Exilarch that only applied to the Prophet Muhammad.

Then he said, "O' Exilarch! I ask you, what are the

reasons to prove the prophecy of Moses?”

Exilarch said, “Splitting the sea, turning the cane into dragon, making water flow from a rock, making light glow from the fingers and other miracles.”

The Imam said, “You are right. If extraordinary feats are the reason for the prophecy of the Prophet Moses, then why do not you admit to the prophecy of Jesus, since he brought the dead to life, healed the incurable patients, made birds from mud and gave them life?”

Exilarch said, “We have not seen these miracles from Jesus.”

The Imam said, “You have not seen the miracles of Moses, only you have heard from his companions.”

Exilarch failed to answer and did not say anything.

Imam Riḍā said, “Prophet Muhammad did not read a book, and did not attend any teacher's class; however, he brought a book that tells about the past and the future until the Day of Judgment. He told about the secrets of the people, and he had countless miracles.”¹

The Imam spoke briefly with the Great Hirbod, who was a Zoroastrian scholar, and he also failed to answer.

Then he said, “Anyone who has a question may ask.” Then, Imran Şābī, who was one of the prominent theologians and scholars, said, “I have discussed many

1 *Ibid.*

people in Kufa and Basra; however, nobody could prove to me that this world has a single God. You prove it to me.”

The Imam spoke to him and talked about the existence of God and his attributes and eventually Imran said, “I testify that Allah is the one you described. And I testify that Muhammad is His servant, who is appointed by Him with the religion of truth and guidance.”

Then he threw himself on the ground, prostrated, and became a Muslim.

Other participants, who saw that Imran despite being very strong in debates became a Muslim, did not dare to say anything and all left the assembly.

Ḥasan b. Muhammad Nawfilī, continues the hadith and says, “That night, the Imam invited Imran to dinner. Then he handed him a dress, a roadster and ten thousand dirhams, and placed him in charge of the Balkh’s alms. Ma’mūn also donated 10,000 dirhams, and Faḍl b. Sahl also gave him a great deal of money. Since then, Imran defended Islam debating with scholars from other religions and defeated them.”¹

1 *Ibid.*

Debate with Ma'mūn on the Infallibility of the Prophets

Ali b. Jaham says: "At a meeting, a dialogue was held between the Imam and Ma'mūn about the infallibility of Prophets. At that meeting, Ma'mūn asked: "O' Son of the Messenger of God! Do you believe in the infallibility of the Prophets?" the Imam said, "Yes." He said, "So what is the meaning of these verses, in which God says: And Adam sinned against his Lord¹, or in the case of Jonah: so he thought that God would not have the power to provide his sustenance.² Or in the case of Joseph says: Zuleikha desired Joseph, and Joseph desired Zuleikha.³ Or in the case of Prophet David says; he knew that he was entangled in the love of the woman. Or about the Messenger of God says: And you conceal in your heart what God reveals."⁴

Imam Riḍā said, "Woe to you! Fear God and do not impute to the Prophet of God abominable accusations, and do not interpret God's Book! God says, 'No one knows the Qur'an except God and the true scholars.' The meaning of Adam's sin is that God did not create

1 Q. 20: 121.

2 Q. 21: 87.

3 Q. 12: 24.

4 Q. 38: 24.

him for Paradise. Adam's sin was in heaven, not on the ground, and this was a disobedience for the Lord's fate to be fulfilled. God wanted to appoint him as his authority and his caliph on earth; however, after Adam landed on earth and became the authority of the God, became free of the guilt and mistake. Therefore, God says, ﴿God chose Adam and Noah and Abraham and Imran's kinsfolk over the people of the world.﴾¹

“However, the verse about the Jonah, that is, he thought that God would not make his sustenance tight, and if the meaning of his words was that he believed God had no power, he would have become a disbeliever.”

In the Holy Qur'an and Arabic language, the word “*qadar*” has different meanings; for instance in the verse ﴿God enlargeth livelihood for whom He will, and straiteneth (it for whom He will)﴾²; or when He says, ﴿and he whose provision is measured.﴾³ But, where he says, ﴿God coineth a similitude﴾⁴ (on the one hand) a (mere) chattel slave, who hath control of nothing, or where he says, ﴿God hath set a measure for all things.﴾⁵ Therefore, the words of Prophet Jonah, who

1 Q. 3: 33.

2 Q. 13: 26.

3 Q. 65: 7.

4 Q. 16: 75.

5 Q. 65: 3.

said: (*lan naqdar*) that is, God does not impose hardship upon him, not that he does not have the power.”

“But the verse concerning the Prophet Joseph, that is, Zuleikha tried to sin and Joseph tried to kill her, as Joseph thought if Zuleikha would force him to commit sin and fornication, then he would kill her.”

“Therefore, God says, ﴿Thus it was, that We might ward off from Joseph evil and lewdness﴾¹. evil here means killing, and lewdness means adultery. Hence, Joseph did not desire Zuleikha, rather he tried to kill her.”

Ali b. Muhammad b. Jahm, however, said about David, “They say David prayed in his altar, Satan appeared in the form of a beautiful bird, he stopped his prayer and followed the bird to catch it. The bird flew until finally David reached the roof, and his eyes fell upon the wife of Uriah, and he was enchanted by her beauty.”

“Thus, he ordered her husband who was on the battlefield to be in the front line ... until finally he was killed and David took her wife.”

Imam Riḍā got very upset hearing these words, and

1 Q. 12: 24.

he beat his forehead, and said, “You have attributed the disdain of prayer and negligence to the Prophet. What ignorance and abominable accusations to the Infallibles!”

Ali b. Jahm said, “What was the fault of David?”

The Imam said, “David thought that there was no one more knowledgeable than him on earth, so God sent two angels, and they went to him from above the altar and quarreled and asked David for judgment.”

David hastened and delivered his judgment without witness and evidence. Have you not heard that the Lord said, ﴿O’ David! Lo! We have set thee as a viceroy in the earth; therefor judge aright between mankind.﴾

Ali b. Jahm said, “So what do you say of Uriah?”

The Imam said, “During the time of Prophet David, when a man demised, his wife never married. David authorized this marriage by God's command, and since this was not common, it was very hard for people to accept.”

Debate on the Position of the Prophet's Household

An assembly was held in the presence of Imam Riḍā, in which Ma’mūn and a number of scholars from Iraq and Khorasan were present.

Ma'mūn asked the scholars, "What is the meaning of this verse, ﴿Then we gave the Scripture as inheritance unto those whom we elected of our bondmen.﴾?"¹

The scholars in the assembly said, "The purpose is all the people."

Ma'mūn asked Imam Riḍā: "What is your opinion?"

Imam Riḍā said, "The purpose is the pure kinsfolk; that is, the science of the book and the Qur'an is with the Prophet's household, because if the purpose was all the *umma*, all of them should go to Paradise, because the Lord immediately after this verse says, ﴿Gardens of Eden! They enter them﴾²; the inheritors of the book enter the Paradise but not all the people. Thus, the purpose is the Prophet's household, those that the Lord said, ﴿The Lord has chosen to eradicate any evil from you, and cleanse you.﴾³ And also the Messenger of God said about them 'I will leave among you two valuable things: the Book of God and my household. The two will not be separated from each other, until they will come to me at the pond of Kawthar. Be

1 Q. 38: 26.

2 Q. 35: 32.

3 Q. 33: 33.

careful how you treat them. Do not teach them anything since they are more knowledgeable than you.”

One of the scholars said, “It is narrated from the Messenger of God that Muhammad’s household is his *umma*.”

The Imam refused the narrative and said, “Tell me, is charity forbidden for Muhammad’s kinsfolk?”

They said, “Yes.”

He said, “Is it forbidden for the rest of the *umma*?”

They said, “No.”

He said, “This is the difference of Muhammad’s kinsfolk with the rest. Woe to you! Where have you deviated? Have you turned away from the Qur’an? God says, ﴿We sent Noah and Abraham and we put prophecy and the book in the Abraham’s kinsfolk, some of them were guided, and many of them became corrupted.﴾¹ According to this verse, the heirs to the Prophets and the scriptures must be pious and guided individuals, not guilty and corrupted. Do you not know the story of the son of Noah, who was a wrongdoer and perished?”

At this time, Ma’mūn asked, “Has God granted the Prophet’s kinsfolk superiority over other people?”

1 Q. 57: 26.

Imam Riḍā said, “Yes, in verse 33 of Sūrat Āl-i Imrān it is said, ﴿Lo! God preferred Adam and Noah and the Family of Abraham and the Family of 'Imran above (all His) creatures﴾. And in verse 54 of Sūrat al-Nisā', he said, ﴿We bestowed upon the house of Abraham (of old) the Scripture and wisdom, and we bestowed on them a mighty kingdom.﴾ And the purpose of the mighty kingdom is the obedience of the God's chosen ones, which God later in verse 59 of this same Sūra said to all believers, ﴿O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority.﴾

The scholars said, “Has the Almighty God explained the *iṣṭafaynā* (we have chosen) in the Qur'an and stated the characteristics of the chosen ones?”

The Imam said, “In some parts of the Qur'an, it is clearly explained: one of them is the verse of purification which proves Prophet's household are sanctified and pure from all evil. The second verse is related to the Event of Mubahala, which was revealed when it became clear that Imam Ali, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn were considered as the Prophet's soul, as the Messenger of God in the battle against Banī-Walī'a said, 'I will send a man to them, who is like my soul.' And then everyone saw he sent Ali.”

“The third is the verse about Moses and Aaron who said, ﴿We revealed to Moses and his brother, Aaron.﴾¹ From this verse, the status and prominence of Aaron is evident.”

“The Prophet also addressed Imam Ali, “O’ Ali, you are to me as is Aaron to Moses. And also the Prophet closed the mosque door to the companions except Ali. ‘Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet said, ‘O’ Messenger of God! You got us out of the mosque and kept Ali!”

“The Prophet said, ‘I did not do anything by myself, all was by the orders of God Almighty.’ And this is an immense virtue. And the Prophet also said, ‘Entry into this mosque is not permissible for anyone except for Muhammad and Muhammad’s kinsfolk.’ And he said, ‘I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is the gate. Anyone who wants to enter the city must enter through the gate.’ That is, the path to reach the teachings hidden in the chest of the Messenger of God, which are the Qur’anic knowledge is Imam Ali.”

“Fourth is the verse that says, ﴿O’ Prophet! Grant the rights of your relatives﴾². Lord favored the Prophet’s kinsfolk with this verse. When this verse was revealed, the Prophet said, ‘O’ Fatima! Fadak has been

1 Q. 10: 87.

2 Q. 17: 26.

obtained without any battles and war and it belongs to me. I give it to you, the Lord has bestowed the Fadak on you and your children.”

“The fifth verse is “Remuneration of Prophecy”, which said, ﴿Say (O Muhammad, unto mankind): I ask of you no fee therefor, save loving kindness among my kinsfolk.﴾¹ While God says in the story of Noah and Hūd and several other Prophets in their words, ‘Our reward cannot be given by anyone but the Lord.’ Therefore, the love of the Prophet’s kinsfolk is made obligatory for the believers by God.”

“The sixth verse is this, ﴿Lo! Lord and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation.﴾²

“Then Muslims asked the Prophet: ‘How can we say the salutation?’ The Prophet said, ‘Say, peace be upon Muhammad and his family.’”

Then Imam Riḍā asked, “What is the interpretation of Yā Sīn?”

The scholars in the assembly said, “Yā sīn is Muhammad and there is no doubt about it.”

Imam Riḍā said, “God has bestowed Muhammad

1 Q. 42: 23.

2 Q. 33: 56.

and his kinsfolk a virtue that has not given anyone, and that is to say he has not saluted anyone else except the Prophets. He says, ‘Peace be upon Abraham¹, upon Noah² or upon Moses and Aaron³; however, concerning the Prophet of Islam, said, ‘Peace be upon Āl-i Yā Sīn⁴; that is, Peace be upon Muhammad’s family, then God has given Muhammad’s family a salutation like other Prophets.”

“The seventh is the verse on *khums*, which states, ﴿And know that whatever ye take as spoils of war, lo! a fifth thereof is for God, and for the messenger and for the kinsman.﴾⁵ In this verse, there is a difference between the Prophet's particular relatives with people, and what God has chosen for himself, has also given to them. However, in the verse of Alms he says, ﴿The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of God, and (for) the wayfarer﴾⁶ In this verse, God has not allocated a share for himself and his messenger and his relatives, for alms is

1 Q. 109: 32.

2 Q. 79: 120.

3 Q. 37: 130.

4 Q. 37: 32.

5 Q. 8: 41.

6 Q. 9: 60.

forbidden to them.”

“The eighth verse that says, ﴿Ask the followers of the Reminder if ye know not.﴾¹ And we are the reminder.”

The scholars said, “The purpose here is Jewish and Christian scholars.”

Imam Riḍā said, “The meaning of the reminder is the Prophet of God, which God says, ﴿Now God hath sent down unto you a reminder, a messenger reciting unto you the revelations of the God.﴾² This verse specifies that the reminder is the Prophet. Therefore, the reminder’s kinsfolk are Prophet’s that is us.”

“The ninth is a verse that states, ﴿Forbidden unto you are your mothers, and your daughters...﴾³ Now answer: if the Prophet was alive, could he marry my daughter?” They said, “No.” He said, “Could he marry one of your daughters?”

They said, “Yes.” He said, “Then it turns out we are his family, and you are his *umma*. This is the difference between family and *umma*.”

“Tenth, this verse, ﴿And a believing man of Pharaoh's family, who hid his faith, said...﴾⁴, that man

1 Q. 21: 7.

2 Q. 65: 10&11.

3 Q. 4: 23.

4 Q. 40: 28.

was the cousin of Pharaoh, and God introduces him from Pharaoh's kinfolks. In the same manner God has made us special to Muhammad's family because we were born of the Messenger of God; however, other people have been attributed to his religion."

"Eleventh, this verse, ﴿And enjoin upon thy people worship, and be constant therein.﴾¹ When this verse was revealed, every day the Prophet stood at the time of prayer at the door of Imam Ali and Fatima, and with a loud voice he would say, 'Rush to prayer. God's mercy be upon you.'"

Then Imam Riḍā said, "God did not honor any of the children of the Prophets like us."²

Formation of Seminaries and Educating Disciples

One of the scholarly activities of Imam Riḍā was the formation of seminaries in Merv. The presence of his Shi'ites was so significant that Ma'mūn out of fear ordered his agents to disperse Imam's disciples. During eighteen years of his Imamate in Medina, and two years in Merv, he succeeded in educating many disciples with utmost diligence. Some sources counted the total number of his disciples to be 318.³ For

1 Q. 20: 132.

2 *News and Works of Imam Reza*, 626-636.

3 *Tūs Nobles*, p.36.

instance, we point out the scholarly position of three prominent disciples of the Imam, who were under his deep scientific influence:

1. Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad b. Khālid al-Barqī: A literate, historian and familiar with Arabic language and literature. He had many works, among which eight writings have been mentioned.

2. Ḥasan and Ḥusayn b. Sa‘īd Ahwāzī: The number of works by Ḥusayn bin Sa‘īd is mentioned to be over 30 titles, and most of them are on the interpretation of the Qur’an.

3. ‘Abd al-Salām b. Šālih Abū Šalt Hiravī: He is considered a reliable and a genuine tradition narrator. Abū Šalt has recounted many narratives, especially regarding the meetings of Imam Riḍā with some nobles, including Di‘bil al-Khuzā‘ī.

It is quoted that Imam responded to fifteen thousand questions, many of which have been gathered by the writers.¹ Finally, it can be said that the main component and background of the Imam’s movement, in the direction of the scientific movement of Muslims and religious teachings has been related to the Book and the Sunna.

1 Virtues of Ali b. Abī Tālib, vol.4, P.350.

Books Attributed to Imam Riḍā

Writing up to ten titles is attributed to the Imam, among which two are pointed out:

1- *Saḥīfat al-Riḍā*

This is a treatise that Imam wrote for Ma'mūn Abbasid about the Shari'a. It is quoted that Ma'mūn sent Faḍl b. Sahl to Imam Riḍā, and wrote that I would like you to write for me of the lawful and the unlawful, obligations and traditions that you are the proof of God over people and the treasury of knowledge. The Imam requested ink and paper and wrote, In the name of God the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful... This treatise is quoted in detail in the sources.¹

2. *Al-Risāla al-Dhahabiyya*

Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā is one of the first to write books on medical sciences. On the way to Tūs, in Neyshabur and in the Ma'mūn's assembly, gathered with a congregation of philosophers and physicians, such as Yuḥannā b. Māsawaih, Jabra'īl b. Yakhshū', Ibn Bahla Hindī and others, they came to talk about medicine.

When Ma'mūn asked the Imam in this regard, he said,

1 *Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl* 486-496.

“For me over time, there have been some experiences, or I inherited from my fathers that I will write them.” The Imam wrote a book on medical matters, and sent it to Ma’mūn. He ordered to write it in gold, which became known as *Al-Risāla al-Dhahabiyya*.

Praising this treatise Ma’mūn says, “But later, concerning the treatise of the beloved literate and scientist cousin, the logician and the physician, which is about bodies, remedy against death and observing the limits of food, I looked at it and I found it in utmost maturity. I carefully read and thought about it, and every time I read and reflected upon it, points of wisdom and benefits were manifested to me, and my heart was assured of its brimful fruitfulness. Hence, I memorized it and I contemplated on the material, and since I saw in it the most valuable demands, the greatest treasury, and the most beneficial advantages, and because of its uniqueness and high position and many blessings and values, I commanded it to be written in gold, and I called it *Al-Risāla al-Dhahabiyya*.”

Chapter Four :

Political Life

The age of Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā was 55, from which 35 years was before Imamate and at the same time as rulers such as Maṅṣūr, Maḥdī, Hādī, and half of Hārūn's.

The Imamate of Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā that lasted twenty years coincided with the periods of the rule of Hārūn, Muhammed Amīn, and 'Abd Allāh Ma'mūn.

Ten years from this period coincided with Harun's caliphate. During that ten-year period, Hārūn never encountered the Imam due to the crises that the government faced, and this provided an opportunity for the Imam to educate more students and disseminate the teachings of Islam with greater ease¹.

Ma'mūn is the seventh Abbasid Caliph, and the great issue that always worried Ma'mūn was the

1 See: *Imam Reza's stratagem against Ma'mūn's policy* p. 50.

privileged personality of Imam Riḍā, which he considered a threat to his sovereignty.

A Historic Journey from Medina to Merv

After taking the government, Ma'mūn invited Imam Riḍā to Khorasan through a letter. Imam refused to go; however, Ma'mūn insisted and sent letters of invitation one after another, such that he could show Imam that he would not give up.¹

Furthermore, following repeated invitations, Ma'mūn sent to Madinah two of his people, namely Rajā b. Abī Zakhāk, and Yāsir Khādim. After arriving in Medina, they sought Imam and announced their mission, which was sending Imam to Khorasan,² and said, “Ma'mūn commanded us to take you to Khorasan.”

When the Imam figured out that he had to emigrate to Khorasan, went to the Holy Shrine of the Prophet (S.A.W.) several times, and saying farewell to his grave, revealed his discontent with the journey, so that others would know that the Imam had been forced to travel.

While leaving Medina, the Imam called all his relatives and told them, “Weep for me, because I will

1 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.149.

2 *Musnad al-Imam al-Riḍā* p.52.

not return to Medina again¹.”

Another testimony to Imam's reluctance and displeasure from the journey is the path determined by the caliphate, in such a way that he was taken secretly from some areas and they prevented him from entering Kufa and Qum².

To reach Merv on the route determined by Ma'mūn, Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā passed the cities and regions such as Basra, Ahvaz, Estakhr, Abarkuh, Dehshir, Yazd (Katheh), Farashā (Islāmiyya), Neyshabur and Sarakhs.

In Neyshabur, the Imam narrated the famous Tradition “Golden Chain” from his fathers and the Prophet (S.A.W.). This tradition has been quoted in Sunnī hadith sources³.

Heir Apparency

Infallible leaders are in characteristics such as appointment and recommendation by the Prophet, the infallibility from sin and mistake, enjoyment of divine guidance, courage and so on are similar to each other. From Imam Ali b. Abī Ṭālib to the twelfth Imam, the awaited Ḥujja, while were present among the people

1 *Dalā' al-Imāma* p.176.

2 *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* p.171.

3 *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.407; this holy tradition is included in the chapter seven of this book.

have acted on religious obligations, as it is possible to assume each one a substitute to the other.

However, each of these righteous individuals, as time and conditions demanded, have done a peerless job, or are known with a trait that we call it a characteristic. For instance, amid the characteristics of Imam Ali (A.S.) was Jihad along with the Holy Prophet, the honor to marry his magnanimous daughter, and the issuance of the *manzilat* Tradition expressing his virtues. Imam Ḥusayn b. Ali created the matchless event of ‘Ashūrāa, Imam Ali b. al-Ḥusayn presenting *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya* to the Islamic community was called the ornament of worshipers, and Muhammad b. Ali was known as the splitter of knowledge.

Meanwhile, Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā accepted the Abbasid Caliph heir apparency, and in an historic and unrepeated opportunity in the political scene, conversed with the religious leaders.

This incident, which according to many of the Abbasid family figures, could remove the power out of their hands, and according to a number of devotees, was an affirmation of the reign, is worthy of consideration from various aspects. As far as that learned of the Prophet’s household (S.A.W) decided to

respond by recalling the presence of the truthful Joseph in the Pharaoh's reign, he obliterated the doubt from minds.

The Imam used every occasion to state the truth, expressing his dissatisfaction, and even used the opportunity of his prayers to reveal the truth, and said, (O' Lord, you know that I accepted the heir apparenacy unavoidably and with reluctance, so do not reprimand me as you did not hold your Prophet Joseph accountable for the acceptance of Egypt's reign)¹.

Accordingly, the most important event in the political life of the Imam that took place in Merv, was the acceptance of heir apparenacy and after that Ma'mūn minted a coin in his name and named him in sermons.

Undeniably, heir apparenacy was an opportunity. Some of the benefits include:

Firstly, if the act went right, the caliphate would return to its original position, and people could taste the Prophetic wisdom and Alawi justice after several decades. Secondly, it was not necessary for the Imam's scientific and promotional activities to be hidden and only for a small number. Thirdly, this appointment and

1 *Bihār al-Anwār* v.49 p.130.

introduction was a healing for the deep wound on the body of the Islamic society, a wound caused by obvious oppression against the dearest son of the Prophet, i.e. the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn b. Ali that not only was not healed, but a disgrace based on which everyday some rose up for vengeance, and they demanded the rule of Imam Riḍā from Prophet's household. And fourthly, it was a reason to protect the mighty Islamic foundation against the danger of overthrow, an inevitable collapse that Hārūn had sowed with sharing property between Amīn and Ma'mūn.

Acceptance of the heir apparency was under intense pressure and the Imam accepted it when the threats of Ma'mūn became serious, as reluctance is clear from the text of the heir apparency pledge (which is fortunately available in historical sources). In any case, when the Imam was forced to accept heir apparency, he decided to represent his virtuous image in a counted and cultural manner and these actions and his popularity among the various classes, from the public to the ministers and counselors, eventually scared Ma'mūn and he decided to eliminate the Imam.

In Imam Riḍā's vision, the Imam is not solely responsible for the expression of the religious laws, but Imamate, if it is righteous, also leads the political and

social aspects of the Islamic society:

(Indeed, the Imam is the head of the religion and the cause of the Muslims' integrity, the soundness of the world and the dignity of the believers. The Imam is the growing root of Islam and its prominent branch. The Imam is the fulfiller of prayer, poor tax, fasting, Hajj and jihad; the cause for abundance of alms and spoil and enforcement of boundaries and laws, and the strength of the borders and frontiers).

Chapter Five:

Martyrdom

Amongst the indications of the fact that Imam's martyrdom was carried out by Ma'mūn is that the people gathered on the same day of the martyrdom and everyone believed that the Caliph had poisoned the Imam¹. The importance of the matter is because people present in the Imam's living area, more than others had understood the situation and political conditions of the Imam and Ma'mūn.

Some historians who believed in the poisoning of the Imam include: Ibn Ḥajar², Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī³, Mas'ūdī⁴, Qundūsī Ḥanafī⁵, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā⁶ etc.

1 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.241.

2 *Al-Sawā'iq al-Muḥarriqa* p.24.

3 *Fuṣūl al-Muḥimma* p.262.

4 *Ithbāt al-Wasīyya* p.228; *Murudj al-Dhahab* p.471.

5 *Yanābī' al-Mawida* p.363.

6 *Al-Fakhrī* p.218.

‘Abd Allāh b. Mūsā, in a letter to Ma’mūn that day, asserted Caliph’s deed and considered him as the murderer¹.

Abū Ṣalt Hiravī was asked: How did Ma’mūn consent to the killing of Imam Riḍā, even though he respected him and chose him as his successor?

While confirming the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā by the hand of the Caliph, Abū Ṣalt stated, “If the Caliph respected and praised the Imam was due to the fact that he was aware of the superiority of the Imam, and if he granted him heir apparency in order to pretend that the Imam is materialist and as a result, he would lose the attention of the people, although this did not happen and through the formation of schoraly circles, the image of the Imam and his scientific personality became clear to everyone, and the Caliph’s popularity was reduced day by day to the point where the friend and the enemy considered the Imam to be worthy of the caliphate. Hence, he poisoned and martyred the Imam².

1 *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* pp.587-630.

2 *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* p.239.

The Imam's Martyrdom from the Traditions' Viewpoint

In the context of traditions, which are among the most important historical sources and documents, there are some points about the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā, including:

In a tradition from Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq, it is quoted "A child among my children will be killed in the land of Khorasan"¹.

In a tradition from Imam Riḍā, it is stated, "By God, there is not one of us but martyred." He was told: Who will kill you? The Imam said, "The worst people in my time will kill me with poison"².

The Date of Imam's Martyrdom

The most famous and the strongest comment regarding the date of the martyrdom of the Imam is on Friday, the last day of the month of Safar 203 AH. The Imam's blessed age upon martyrdom was 55 years old³.

The Location of Martyrdom and the Shrine of Imam Riḍā

The Imam was martyred in the city of Tūs and as he

1 *Man lā Yahdirahu al-Faḡīh* p.584.

2 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā p.287.

3 *Murūdj al-Dhahab* p.461.

himself foresaw and recommended, he was buried at a point in the Sanābād, which later was called Mashhad al-Riḍā.

It was supposed that a child from the generation of the Holy Prophet and an Imam from the Twelvers to be martyred in a land far from the Medina al-Raṣūl, so that his illuminated shrine would be the one to be visited by millions of devotees, who drink from the guardianship's clear spring.

﴿Peace on him the day he was born, and the day he dieth and the day he shall be raised alive!﴾¹

1 Q. 19: 15.

Chapter Six:

Wise Sayings from the Garden of Raḍawī Wisdom

Wise Sayings from the Garden of Raḍawī Wisdom

Choosing a number of words of wisdom of that magnanimous Imam is difficult from amidst the thousands of traditions¹; however, it is tried taking advantage of genuine sources as a precious gift from the learned of the Prophet's household (S.A.W) to be dedicated to lovers of virtue and spirituality.

Rayyān b. Ṣalt says, "I said to Imam Riḍā, O' Son of the Messenger of God, what do you say about the Qur'an? He said, "It is the word of Allah, do not go beyond it, and you do not seek guidance other than that or you are misled²."

The Imam is away from the sins and the defects, the

1 See: *Mawsū'a Kalamāt Imam Riḍā*.

2 *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*.

[true] knowledge belongs to him and tolerance is his [clear] sign, he is the pillar of religion and the reason for the dignity and authority of the Muslims, resentment of the hypocrites and the annihilation of the unbelievers.

Whoever knows himself of us, and he does not obey the God would not belong to us, and if you obey the God you are of us, the household of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

* Imam Abū al-al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā in Neyshabur, in response to the demands of the great scholars of the land, including Ishāq b. Rāhway narrated from his fathers, from Amīr al-Mu'minīn, who said:

“I heard that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said, ‘I heard that Almighty God said, ‘(there is no god except Allah) is my fortress, so that everyone in it will be safeguarded from my punishment.’”

And when his horse moved, His Holiness told us:

“But yet on some conditions, and I am one of the conditions.”

“O’ son of Shabīb! If you want to weep for something, weep for Ḥusayn [b. Ali] b. Abī Ṭālib, for as they behead a ram, they beheaded him, and 18 men were killed from his family who were unique on the earth.”

“Whosoever wants to be the most powerful of people, should trust in God. It was asked what trust was? “Do not be afraid of other than God” he said.

Have good belief in God, because whoever does so, God will act with him according to his belief. And whoever is satisfied with little sustenance, God accepts his little deeds, and whoever is satisfied with little lawful livelihood will reduce his suffering and his family shall live comfortably, and God would get him acquainted with the pain of the world and the healing, and shall bring him out of the world [to the Hereafter] safely.

No servant completes the truth of his faith unless he has three characteristics: religiosity, good planning for sustenance, and patience in afflictions and calamities.

The intellect of no Muslim is complete until he has ten qualities; there is hope in his goodness; no harm comes out of him; considers the little good in others much; considers his good as little; whatever he is asked, would not get tired; would not be exhausted seek knowledge all through his life; poverty in the path of God is more pleasant to him than wealth; humiliation on the path of God is more valuable to him than finding dignity through his enemy; seeks anonymity more than fame etc.

No pleasure is sweeter than good temperament, and no wealth is more beneficial than contentment, and no ignorance is more harmful than self-conceit.

Whoever is not grateful to the blessings of the people, [in fact] has not showed gratitude to God, the Exalted and Glorious.

Loving people is half of wisdom¹.

1 Ibid, p.643.

Chapter Seven:

Pilgrimage, a Symbol of Monotheism

﴿(This lamp is found) in houses which Allah hath allowed to be exalted and that His name shall be remembered therein. Therein do offer praise to Him at morn and evening. Men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due; who fear a day when hearts and eyeballs will be overturned﴾¹;

The faithful pilgrim is in the presence of his Imam's Grave, and by settling his own self in a divine and graceful state with Imam², establishes a spiritual connection.

1 Q. 24: 36-37

2 In this text, where the "Imam" is generally referred to, the purpose primarily is the Prophet (S.A.W.), then the infallible twelve Imams, because in addition to prophecy and apostolate he had also the Imamate and the leadership positions.

Visiting sacred places is commonplace to all nations, and in Islam as an important worship it is taught and recommended by special rules, since it has many personal, social, financial and spiritual benefits.

The Term Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage literally means facing the other way, and a pilgrim is called as pilgrim because by turning to you, he has turned away from others¹.

This term is used in Islamic culture meaning to be in the presence of a person or to go somewhere with the purpose of familiarity with him and venerate him².

By making a pilgrimage to them, he accepts the position of those noble figures as the Imams and the successors to the Prophet of God, and believes that they are chosen by the God and his Apostle. Pilgrimage is a covenant between pilgrim and the Imam. Imam Riḍā says:

(Each Imam has a covenant with his lovers and devotees, and amongst signs of adherence to the covenant is the presence at their graves)³.

Kissing the walls and doors of the shrine is a sign of

1 *Mu'jam Maqā'is al-Lughā* p.36.

2 *Majma' al-Bahrayn* p.320.

3 *Kāfi* p.567.

love. A pilgrim who loves the Imam, and his sapience has illuminated his heart, does not see the shrine by the ordinary eye, but sees it with the eyes of insight. So whatever he sees is heaven and everyone is of heavenly people, and except this nothing else is in his sight.

The pilgrim kisses the burial chamber of affection, pillars of kindness and the doors of mercy. He bears the sufferings of the path to taste the sweetness of union. He is faithful to his covenant with the Imam and, like true lovers; his behavior and actions suit the beloved.

Pilgrimage will be achieved with the presence of pilgrim in the shrine; however, the truth of pilgrimage, which is a spiritual bond and a passionate visit is realized when there is transcended feelings and secret prayers and this will not be found until knowing the Imam and the importance of visiting him, and having knowledge of the divine positions and spiritual perfections of those chosen by the Lord.

Pilgrimage in History

The history of pilgrimage in Islam dates back to history itself, and the Prophet was the one to establish visiting the Muslim graves, and it is described in the books of conduct (*sīra*) and tradition. A few examples

include:

1. The visitation of the Prophet, which was done based on the innate motivation and heartfelt attraction to the grave of his mother (Āmina bint Wahab¹). Muhammad b. Sa'd in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* quotes: "In the event of Hudaibiya [year sixth AH] the Prophet went to Āmina's grave and wept on it, and repaired and restored it".² Also, after the Last Hajj, he went to visit his mother's grave, and recalling the childhood and orphan memories wept therein³.

2. It was narrated by Abū Hurayra that the Prophet visited his mother's grave, then he wept and made others do so... He said, "For visiting her grave, I received permission from my Lord, which was granted to me. So you also visit the graves, since it recalls the death⁴.

3. It was related from 'Abbād b. Abī Ṣāliḥ, "At the beginning of each year, the Messenger of God came to

1 The mausoleum of Āmina, the mother of the Prophet is located in a village called Abwa, in the middle of Mecca. and Medina road, and 27 miles of Jawfa. The Great Islamic Encyclopedia: Abwa/5.

2 *Bihār al-Anwār* vol.1,p.441.

3 *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*; ibid.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim al-Nawawī*.46.

visit the martyrs' graves in Uḥud¹, and by this phrase paid homage to them, "Peace be unto you because ye persevered. Ah, passing sweet will be the sequel of the (heavenly) home." The narrator adds that Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman also went to visit the martyrs of Uḥud...²

4. It is narrated from Ḥaḍrat Abū Ja'far (Muhammad b. Ali b. al-Ḥusayn) that Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima, daughter of the Messenger of God, visited the grave of Ḥamza, and repaired it marking it with a stone. Yaḥyā adds to this: Then she performed and read prayers and wept [till she demised]³.

6. Among those who have traveled for the pilgrimage to the Prophet, was Bilāl b. Abī Rabāḥ, who was the Prophet's companion and muezzin, and Ibn Asākir narrated with a sound chain of transmission, and says the cause was a dream that Bilāl had seen: He saw the Prophet in the dream that said to him, "O' Bilal! What is this suffering? Is it not the time to come see me? Bilāl woke up scared and sad. He mounted his

1 Uḥud: A mountain near the city of Medina, which in the third year of the emigration one of the battles of the Prophet happened in the nearby, and Ḥamza, the uncle of the Prophet, along 17 other Muslims were martyred.

2 *Wafā al-Wafā bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā* p.932.

3 *Ibid* p.932.

horse and left for Medina. As he arrived at the Prophet's Holy Mosque, he rubbed his face on the grave, wept and confabulated, until Ḥasan and Ḥusayn went to him and he embraced and kissed them...¹

The evidence that we narrated from the early Sunnī sources - which were a few of many - shows that visiting the grave of the deceased - especially the friends of God and one's relatives - is an age-old tradition that the Holy Prophet of Islam initiated, and after His Holiness, his noble daughter and the noble companions have followed it, and the tradition has remained popular in the time of the Infallible Imams and later among the religious scholars.

At the Threshold of Imam Riḍā

Devotees of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) are deeply indebted to him, especially his neighbors and those who have been bestowed a special favor to dust off the pilgrims' feet in his illuminated sanctum, and among this vast number of khādims (the voluntary attendants), the cultural khādims have a greater mission on their shoulders, since their Imam and their master is called "the learned of the Prophet's household (S.A.W)" and conveying the message of this great designation is their heavy

1 Ibid p.1356; *Al-Ghadir* p.147

responsibility.

Of course, from the past till now and among the noble figures of the Muslim world, both Shi'ite and Sunni, there were many of those who faithfully tried to introduce the illuminated face of that magnanimous Imam.

Meanwhile, public devotion to Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as a jurisprudent scholar, and a great intellectual, manifests itself in many of his acts. They consider His Holiness a great mystic, a possessor of the robe of mastership and the “Sultan”, and therefore, he has been named “Sultan of the friends [of Allah] and the Sultan of religion.”

Venerating Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā by two famous Sunni mystics, Shaykh Ahmad Jāmī and Abū Bakr Tāybādī is pleasantly reverberated in the history of mysticism. Shaykh Jāmī has visited Imam Riḍā's Shrine many times, and every time he went on the pilgrimage from Jam, when he reached the Tappa Salām [on the outskirts of Mashhad], which was the nearest elevation overieing the Raḍawī Shrine, and the Holy Shrine was visible, he stop, greet, and bow. The name of Tappa Salām “greeting hill”, now known as such for this reason and was given by Shaykh Jāmī to this hill. Later, a village with the same name was

established in the same place.

Abū Bakr Tāybādī also regularly visited the Holy Shrine, and whenever he could not, he sent one of his sons on behalf of himself to benefit from this grace, and due to these dedications, attendance in Raḍawī sanctuary and recitation of the Qur'an therein, he eventually made great achievements and graces.¹

It has been narrated from 'Ā'isha that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "Anyone who visits my son in the city of Tūs, it is equivalent to performing a Hajj Pilgrimage." She said once? He said, "Twice." She said, "Twice?" He said, "Three times". So 'Ā'isha kept silence and His Holiness said, If you did not fall silent, I would have reached it to seventy².

Rules of Manners of Presence

A look on pilgrimage practices mentioned in the books of pilgrimage shrines (*mazār*) and the likewise shows that presence in the shrine and sanctuary of an Imam and a friend of Allah, should be with accompanied by certain rules of manners.

Observing these manners, all of which are almost

1 Proceedings of "Imam Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, Lifestyle, Empathy and Unison", p. 43, article by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Arab Taymūrī.

2 *Yanābir' al-Mawadda*, p.341.

recommended, helps the pilgrim to take the most advantage of his pilgrimage and take the right steps toward the fulfillment of a mystical pilgrimage. Undoubtedly, the most important manner and duty is the knowledge of the pilgrim to the status of the Imam with God Almighty. As much as the pilgrim's knowledge is deeper and more correct, his behavior in the presence of the friend of Allah will be more measured and his gain from attendance will be more. A pilgrim aware of the rights of the Imam has achieved the most important condition for attendance, it could be correctly claimed that the visited is also pleased with the visitation of such a pilgrim and even is eager for him.

Accordingly, we are faced with some inward and outward aspects in pilgrimage. Observing outward rules of manner such as, requesting permission to enter the Imam's sanctum (reading the permission to enter), greeting, standing toward the Qibla, standing up politely, reading authentic supplication books, reading quietly, recognizing the rights of other pilgrims and respecting them, and performing prayer and reading the Qur'an will increase the pilgrim's enjoyment of this devotional act; as observance of the inward rules of manner, most notably the recognition of the supreme

status of the Imam with the Lord, and obeying his blissful orders in every aspect of life will double his reward.

﴿Our Lord! We believe in that which Thou hast revealed and we follow him whom Thou hast sent. Enroll us among those who witness (to the truth)﴾

Chapter Eight:

The Holy Shrine

The Rḍawī Holy Shrine contains a number of old and new buildings that have been formed around the burial place of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) in Mashhad during twelve centuries. With the gradual expansion, a large and diverse architectural complex with worshipping, services, welfare and cultural-educational applications is formed. The vast size of the Imam Riḍā's Shrine is hundred hectares, with a set of halls, courtyards, mosques, seminaries and service institutions that are formed around the Holy Dome or the Holy Mausoleum. Twelve hectares belonged to the era before the victory of Islamic Revolution and the remaining eighty-eight hectares have been made after 1979.¹

Annually, twenty million people from Iran and all

1 *Sweet Facts*, p.10.

over the world¹ come to pilgrimage and pray for increasing sustenance and tranquility. This Holy Shrine is an Islamic art gallery and the history of Islamic architecture in Iran.

With the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (A.S.), his sacred body was buried in the garden or the palace of Khorasan governor, in Sanābād, Tūs, next to the tomb of Hārūn al-Rashīd, father of Ma'mūn². From the Tahirid dynasty until the end of the Mongols period, the Holy Shrine gradually enjoyed the dome, court and buildings which were built around it such as Bālā Sar Mosque. The city of Nawqān, Tūs which later included Sanābād, gradually became the center of the Shi'ites. During the historical transformations of the period, especially from the Timurid period and the 9th century A.H., and from the Safavid period, this city was known as Mashhad; capital of Khorasan.³

Prior to these developments, Tūs had two more important cities: Nawqān and Tābarān. The city of Tābarān, Tūs is where Ferdowsi's tomb is now located on a part of its ruins. The city of Nawqān also turned

1 *Haram*, No. 50, p. 5.

2 *Imam Riḍā (A.S.)*, p. 54 and 57.

3 *Historical and Cultural History of Mashhad*, pp. 40-47; *History of Mashhad City*, pp. 14 and 15.

to Mashhad. Sanābād was a village near Nawqān, which was later joined to it by the expansion of the city. During the Timurid period, which dominated Khorasan in the 8th and 9th A.H. centuries, Shi'ites became powerful, and the city of Tūs, Mashhad or Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) Mashhad was flourished in this period. The construction of Gowharshād Mosque, Dār al-Huffāz portico and Dār al-Siyāda portico alongside Holy mausoleum, seminaries, markets and many buildings, gradually publicized Mashhad. During the Safavid period, Mashhad became one of the major cities of Khorasan and then the capital of this province. The construction of Gowharshād Mosque created the two southern porticoes of the Shrine, between the northern side of the Mosque and the Shrine. The Gowharshād Mosque itself also promoted the level of the Shrine architecture and became a sumptuous part of the Shrine.

The Safavid period was the time of quantitative and qualitative development of the collection and consolidation of its position in the upcoming transformations of Iran history. The 'Atīq Courtyard was rebuilt and expanded, and some porticos were added. With the encouragement of the Safavid kings, especially with the help of Shah Abbas I, who traveled

several times to Mashhad and Rḍawī Shrine, the Shrine acquired magnificent courts, endowments and many gifts, and the pilgrimage of holy Mashhad became the "pilgrimage of the poor". During the Safavid period, numerous buildings and schools were built around the Shrine and the city. Also, the city water problem was reduced to a certain extent by the drainage of the streets. From then, the gradual expansion of the Shrine and its organization and endowments continued.

In the Nader Shah period and beginning of the Qajar period, the Holy Shrine experienced many ups and downs. In the Qajar period, despite the bad economic conditions, the establishment of a new courtyard was on the agenda, which took about forty years to complete the decoration. But it was a fundamental step that added to the architectural richness of the Shrine, and after that, new porticos were added to the collection. From the beginning of the Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah Qajar, and especially after the Sālār rebellion, the Holy Shrine regained relative peace. Developments in Āstān Quds and its library also took place. In the late Qajar period, the Shrine's condition was deteriorating due to the general disturbance of the country and the mismanagement of the internal management. The Shrine was also damaged by the

Russians' artillery.¹

During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, the renovation of the city and administrative agencies also included the Shrine, and a street was built around the markets and Shrine's buildings. At the end of the Muhammad Reza Shah period, this area was carried out again in a larger scale. For this purpose, markets and many buildings were destroyed around the Shrine and replaced by lawns. In the Pahlavi period, new halls and a courtyard were added to the collection instead of some buildings, such as old caravansaries and schools that were removed from the Shrine's surroundings. With the widespread technical and engineering facilities, some repairs were carried out in the Shrine, which expanded the Holy Mausoleum and made some new porticos.²

The Islamic Revolution was a turning point in the history of the Shrine and this ancient institution experienced the most fundamental changes and expansion in this period. The expansion of the Holy Shrine reached a level that was incomparable to all previous periods. During the period of the Islamic

1 *Āstān Quds; Today and Yesterday*, pp. 24, 28, and 32; *Muntakhab al-Tawārikh (Selection of Chronicles)*, p. 635.

2 *Āstān Quds; Today and Yesterday*, pp. 63 to 65, 150 to 154.

Revolution, the great plan for the construction of the Holy Shrine was put on the agenda. In this project several porticos and courtyards, the University of Islamic Sciences and new magnificent buildings for the Āstān Quds Museum and Library was built in the Shrine and surrounding area. Also, reconstruction, restoration and strengthening of the old buildings of the Shrine were put into the agenda in the best and most technical way. Revamping old buildings, such as porticos and chambers of Inqilāb Courtyard has opened a new era in contemporary architecture.

Therefore, the Shrine of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) represents the architectural features of each period during its thousand and two hundred years life. Especially since the Timurid period, the architecture of every period in the Shrine construction is clearly crystallized. An old organization such as Āstān Quds, whose organizational record consists of more than four hundred years of written document, has had a solid style and organization.

Holy Mausoleum

The Holy Mausoleum is a large hall in the form of a four arches (*chār ṭāqī*). The tomb of Imam is located beneath it, and the other porticos and halls of the

Shrine are built around it. The outward appearance of the Holy Mausoleum is the same as the golden facade of the dome. The interior view includes the golden tile on the dado, the mosaic tile in the walls, as well as framing and the magnificent mirrored muqarnas above the arches and under the dome. The dome or the Holy Mausoleum is the primary core of the Shrine. With the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (A.S.) at the beginning of the 3rd century A.H., his sacred body was buried in the garden of the Khorasan emir, Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭaba, which was located in Sanābād, Tūs village. The building, or the palace of this garden, was the burial of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Abbasid Caliph. Ma'mūn buried Imam alongside his father in this place. This building, whose characteristics are not exactly known, was formed at least until the 6th century A.H. with a state close to the current situation and had a significant decoration. Also, the Bālā Sar Mosque was built in the very small space in its west. In the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century A.H., the exquisite golden tiles of the tomb dado, known as Sanjarī tiles, were installed.¹

With the construction of the Goharshad Mosque in

1 *Khorasan, Monuments and Luminaries*, p. 14.

the 9th century A.H. along the Shrine, the Dār al-Siyāda and Dār al-Huffāz porticos were built in the south of the Holy Mausoleum. A century later, on the orders of Shah Tahmāsp, the Holy Dome was covered with gold. Though until the 8th A.H. century, the grave of Hārūn al-Rashīd remained at the center of the building and Imam's tomb in the side, but gradually, with the increasing of Shi'ite power and eventually its formalization at the time of the establishment of the Safavid dynasty, the Harūn's grave faded, only the tomb of Imam (A.S.) was remained in the Mausoleum in a wooden box. At present, we can see tiles known as Sanjarī and golden tiles, which date from 580 to 760 A.H., in Mausoleum dado.¹ On top of it, a row of inscriptions containing the verses from the Dabīr al-Mulk Farānhānī with Nasta'liq script by Mīrzā Hussein Qulī, appears on the clear marble from Qajar period. After the dado, the entire space of the four arches of the main walls of the dome covered with mosaic tiles and embellished with the most striking designs of colorful flowers and geometrical pictures, all of which

1 "An Antecedent Study of an Architectural Work in the Raḍawī Shrine: Sanjarī Inscriptions", p. 33; "The traditions of the Golden Octagonal and Octagon Tiles of the Imam Riḍā (A.S.) Shrine" (p. 13).

have been installed in contemporary times. Between the mirror works, under the dome, and the tile works of the walls, there is a Thulth inscription containing the Sūrat al-Jum‘a written by Alī Riḍā Abbāsī.

Bālā Sar Mosque

Second to the Holy Mausoleum, the oldest part of the Shrine is this mosque. A small, beautiful rectangular space is located in the west of the Mausoleum or above the Imam's head, which leads to the Holy Mausoleum, Dār al-Siyāda and Dār al-Shukr. This mosque is a small room that was built at the time not far from the Imam's martyrdom near the Mausoleum, and is the second oldest building of the Shrine. We can find information about this mosque after 381 A.H. In 734 A.H., when Ibn Baṭūṭah visited the mosque, it also had tile decorations like the Holy Mausoleum. It's exquisite prayer niche with porcelain tile has been transferred to the museum and replaced with a new prayer niche with Kūfic and Thulth inscriptions.¹

Dār al-Siyāda Portico

Dār al-Siyāda is one of the most historical and

1 *Maṭla' al-Shams*, p. 2, p. 391; *Development of the Holy Shrine*, pp. 118 to 120.

important porticos of the Shrine in the form of a large hall in the southwest and west of the Holy Mausoleum, which was considered to be the largest portico of the Shrine before the Islamic Revolution. From this portico, you can go to the Holy Mausoleum, Dār al-Huffāz, Dār al-Wilāya, Goharshad Mosque and Parīzād School. This portico is probably related to the Timurid period and may have been built at the same time as the Goharshad Mosque. The presence of hostels for sayyids in Islamic monuments is linked to the expansion of Sādāt's efforts and in Mashhad, it was under the supervision of Mūsawī Sādāt. In the middle ages of Islam, various inscriptions, dadoes and mirror works make it one of the most beautiful parts of the holy Shrine. It can be said that this portico in terms of tile works and inscriptions is a collection of handicrafts and shows the Iranians' talent in different arts.¹

Dār al-Huffāz Portico

The Southern Hall of the holy mausoleum is one of the historical porticos of the Shrine. From this hall you can walk to the Holy Mausoleum, Dār al-Siyāda, Dār al-Sallām and Goharshad Mosque. Dār al-Huffāz is one

1 *The Timurid Architecture in Khorasan*, p. 254; *Shams al-Shumūs*, pp. 116 and 17.

of the buildings of the Timurid era, which is generally attributed to Goharshad, Timurid Shāhrukh's wife. But there is also news of its attribution to 'Alishīr Navā'ī, the patron of art Minister in Timurid period. Considering the important position of this portico on the way of His Holiness pilgrimage, there are a variety of beautiful mirror works and inscriptions in this portico. Like many shrine's historical spaces, this portico had tile works in the past, but during the Qajar period and in 1296 A.H., covered by mirrors, and after that, it has been repaired for several times. In this historical portico, a special ceremony to recite the Qur'anic verses and special sermon for people who know the Qur'an by heart in Āstān Quds is held every day in the morning and in the evening. In this ritual, which is known as the ceremony of the Şuffa, Āstān Quds Qur'an reciters recite the words of Allah and Nāşir al-Dīn Tūsi's twelve lines prayer. For this reason, it is known as the Dār al-Huffāz or the house of Qur'an reciters. Four main doors of the portico are all in gold and are regarded as the most exquisite doors of the Shrine, among which, the front door is the largest and most exquisite one and installed after the Islamic

Revolution¹.

The Tomb of Shaykh Bahā'ī Portico

The Shaykh Bahā'ī tomb is a small hall in the southeastern part of the Shrine, where the tomb of Shaykh Baha'uddīn 'Āmilī, the great scientist of the Safavid era, is located. The tomb of the Shaykh, also known as his place to teach, was a room in the corner of Āzādī Courtyard until the beginning of the present century. At this time, the room was expanded to become a small hall and a gravestone was placed in the center of the room. Except for the floor and the dados that are made of marble, the walls and ceiling are covered by mirror works².

Imam Khomeini Portico

Imam Khomeini Portico is the largest portico of the Shrine, located in the southeastern part of the Holy Mausoleum. Actually, this portico is the covered Imam Khomeini courtyard. It is connected to the Goharshad mosque, Rḍawī Grand Courtyard, Āzādī courtyard, Dār al-'Ibāda portico and tomb of Shaykh Bahḥ'ī. Construction of this porch was started in 2002 at the

1 *Maṭla' al-Shams*, 2, pp. 344 and 379; *The Timurid architecture in Khorasan*, p. 254; *Shams al-Shumūs*, p. 135.

2 *Shams al-Shumūs*, p. 316.

site of Imam's courtyard and its decorations are now being completed¹.

Allāhvirdī Khān Dome Portico

It is located in the northeast part of the Holy Mausoleum and it is one of the most magnificent samples of the Safavid art. The building is adjacent to Dār al-Zīyāfa, Dār al-Sa'āda, Tawhī Khāna, Dār al-Faiḍ, Ḥātam Khānī Dome and the Inqilāb Courtyard. This portico was built in 1021 A.H. at the request of Allāhvirdī Khān, the brave commander of Shāh Abbās I, one year before his death. He was buried in this place. This magnificent portico is a masterpiece in terms of architecture and art decoration. Since it was not supposed to spoil Holy Dome view, the dome is made with one ceiling, without drum and in low altitude².

Ḥātam Khānī Dome Portico

The portico is connected to the lower part of the Holy Mausoleum and is one of the Safavid buildings of the Shrine. The building was made in the name of Ḥātam Beyg Urdūbādī; a poet and notable man of

1 *Sweet Facts*, pp. 48 and 49; *Lovers' Qibla*, p. 88.

2 *History of Mashhad City*, p. 176; *Iranian architecture, the victory of shape and color*, p. 272.

Safavid era. The Ḥātām Khānī Dome is related to the Holy Mausoleum, Dār al-Salām, Dār al-Sa‘ādah and Allāhvirdī Khān Porticos. Ḥātām Beyg Urdūbādī passed away in 1019 A.H. during the Shāh Abbās I rule and was buried in this portico. The internal facade of the portico is marble on the floor and the dadoes, but from the top to the dadoes and the ceiling is completely covered with mosaic tiles¹.

Tawḥīd Khāna Portico

Tawḥīd Khāna Portico is located in the north of Holy Mausoleum, and is one of the works attributed to Mullā Muhsin Fayḍ Kāshānī during the Safavid period. This portico is connected to Dār al-Fayḍ, Dār al-Shukr, Allāhvirdī Khān Dome, Golden Porch of Nādirī and steel grill of Inqilāb Courtyard. This place is a simple hall that opens across from the Holy Mausoleum. The dadoes have wooden carving and they are one of the most beautiful examples of sculpture art in the Faḥ Ali Shah Qajar period. All the walls and the dome above the dados are covered with a mirror work. In its decoration, you can see many types of kārbandī and muqarnas.²

1 *Lovers' Qibla*, p. 68.

2 *Riḍā 's Court*, p. 30; *Shams al-Shumūs*, p. 114.

Dār al-Wilāya Portico

This grand and magnificent portico is one of the buildings which were built after the Islamic Revolution. Dār al-Wilāya is adjacent to the Inqilāb Courtyard, Dār al-Siyāda, Dār al-Sharaf, Dār al-Ikhlās, Dudar Seminary, Parīzād Seminary and Jumhūrī Courtyard. Dār al-Wilāya is one of the most magnificent examples of the mirror works after Islamic Revolution. This portico with an area of 2000 meters was built in 1986 in the old place of some markets, arcades and buildings around the Shrine.¹

Dār al-Hujja portico

This portico is one of the largest porticos of the Shrine collection that is located in the lower floor of the Inqilāb Courtyard, sanctuary of Shaykh Tūsī and sanctuary of Shaykh Hurr ‘Āmilī. In addition to the two main eastern and western entrances, from this portico you can go to Dār al-Ijāba, Dār al-Wilāya, Dār al-Ziyāfa and Allāhvirdī Khān Dome. In this portico, you can see the latest techniques of mirror work and the height of contemporary Islamic arts, along with the ultimate technical and engineering expertise of Āstān

1 *The History of Astan Quds Razavi*, 2, p. 171; *Astan Quds, Yesterday and Today*, p. 164; *Sweet Facts*, p. 43.

Quds. Dār al-Hujja is the second largest portico of the Shrine complex after Imam Khomeini portico, designed to increase the size of the roofed pilgrimage space. This portico is one of the buildings constructed after the Islamic Revolution, which was inaugurated in 2008. In order to build this portico, the foundations of Inqilāb Courtyard, including two huge eastern and western porches of the courtyard, were firmly strengthened, and the entire Inqilāb Courtyard and the eastern and western blocs were excavated. This grand portico, with its expanses of about fifteen thousand square meters, consists of two large vestibules which are related to the sanctuaries with escalator, and a large hall with about one hundred and eighty two pillars.¹

Goharshad Mosque

This mosque is the largest mosque in Mashhad, which was built in the 9th century A.H. in Timurid period and in the southwest of the Shrine. In its construction, the highest architectural proportions and the most beautiful effects of Islamic art have been used. This mosque is connected to Dār al-Siyāda, Dār al-Huffāz, Dār al-Salām, Dar al-Izza and Imam Khomeini porticos, as well as Quds courtyard and Shaykh Baha'

1 *Sweet Facts*, p. 51.

al-Dīn sanctuary. The Goharshad mosque was built by Gawām al-Dīn Shīrāzī, the famous architect of the Timurid era, on the order of Goharshad, Shahrokh's wife (ruled from 807 to 850 A.H.). The mosque is completed in 821 A.H. In 829 A.H. Goharshad left great endowments by a deed of dedication, so that the mosque would always stay in the best form. The mosque has four porches that the south porch, the largest one, opens to a huge dome house. Two minarets are placed on two sides of the porch and annexed to it. The three smaller ones are in the same size. On the two sides of the porches there are magnificent prayer halls.¹

Shah Mosque

The Shah Mosque or Seventy-two Martyrs' Mosque is one of the most exquisite works of the 9th century A.H. in Timurid era, located in the southwest of the Shrine, opposite the western doorway of Grand Courtyard. In fact, this mosque is a tomb which is known as the mosque. The name of Amīr Malik Shah and date of 855 A.H. in the inscription of the porch has attributed it to some nobles of the Timurid era.

1 *Mosque and Endowments of Goharshad*, pp. 44-51; *Timurid Architecture in Khorasan*, pp. 241 and 242.

The building has a total area of 660 square meters and consists of a dome with two shells and two prayer halls, two minarets and a porch. The four facades of the entrance door are independently linked to the lateral spaces of this dome house. With similarities between this building and the Blue Mosque, Tabriz, perhaps the architect of both mosques is Ahmad b. Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Tabrīzī.¹

Parīzād Seminary

This building which is located in the southwest of Holy Mausoleum, in front of the Dudar Seminary, is part of the Holy Shrine spaces in which the cultural and propaganda activities are carried out. This seminary has walkways to Dār al-Wilāya and Dār al-Siyāda porticos. The Parīzād Seminary dates back to Timurid period and is now considered as the oldest school in Mashhad. In the past, this school was in the sideline of main market. This seminary is attributed to an obscure figure called Parīzād Khānum; one of Goharshad's companions. This seminary has a small building and four porches with twenty-two chambers in two floors. School facade is made mostly of brick and plaster. In addition to the beautiful and artistic

1 *The Timurid Architecture in Khorasan*, pp. 416 to 419.

brick works and gypsum inscriptions, tile works with arabesque designs has been used in chambers¹.

Dudar Seminary (House of Qur'an)

This seminary was built during the Timurid era opposite Parīdād Seminary and is now on the sidelines of the Jumhūrī Courtyard and serves as the center of the Qur'anic activities of the Shrine. This school, also known as Amir Sayyidī School, was founded in 843 A.H. by one of the governors of Khorasan and Tūs. Part of this school was the family temple of Amīr Ghīyāth al-Dīn Khāja Bahādur, the founder, and he himself was buried there in 860 A.H. This section is featured in the south of the school with two tiled domes. The Dudar Seminary is in the building with four porches and a yard in the center as well as thirty two chambers in two floors around the yard.²

Inqilāb Courtyard

Inqilāb courtyard ('Atīq courtyard) is the oldest courtyard of the Holy Shrine in the north of Holy Mausoleum. This courtyard has four porches and some chambers in two floors.

1 Khorasan Seminary, pp. 103-106.

2 The seminary of Khorasan, pp. 116 and 117; *Teimurid Architecture of Khorasan*, pp. 335 to 337.

The main building of the courtyard dates back to Timurid era, but its present form, which has expanded from ancient courtyard, related to the Safavid era and the Safavid Shah Abbas I. As the old courtyard was small, Shah Abbas, who at the beginning of the 11th century A.H. decided to renovate the city of Mashhad and the Shrine, ordered for development of the courtyard, and placed porches on its four sides. A large creek was drawn from the city into the courtyard, passing through the courtyard and leaving it out.¹

During the Qajar period, a tower was built over the western porch, and a large clock was placed on it, also a shaky building was built for drum house over the eastern porch.

In Pahlavi period, a new tower for the clock and a solid building was built for kettledrummers in the same place. During the Islamic Republic's period, the floor was dismantled and the courtyard and its huge porches were strengthened, Dār al-Hujja large portico was built underneath the courtyard.

Inqilāb courtyard is a unique collection of elements of Islamic architecture and special symbols of the Holy Shrine (A.S.). The two minarets, built in the north and

1 *History of Mashhad*, pp. 167 and 168.

south of the courtyard, are gilded and inscribed. One of these two does not have a definite date, but it was covered by gold at the same time the dome was covered by gold in the Safavid period, and the other is related to Afsharid era.¹

The excellent samples of Thulth and Nasta'liq inscription are seen on the forehead, margins, and inside four porches of the courtyard. The huge Nādirī Sangāb (a huge stone dish that was filled with water and was used for ablution or drinking), which is made from a one-piece marble stone is located in Ismāil Ṭalāī drinking water repository is a trophy of the Herat conquest by Nader Shah and a beautiful examples of masonry art. Shām Gharībān ceremonies for martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (A.S.), which is attended by the servants of His Holiness, are held in this courtyard.²

Āzādī Courtyard

This courtyard which is also known as New Courtyard, is one of the Qajar buildings and known as the Āzādī Courtyard after the Islamic Revolution. The second historic courtyard of the Shrine was built at a

1 "The Development of the Architecture of Āstān Quds Raḍawī", p. 38.

2 *Guidance or History*, p. 125 and 180; *Shams al-Shumūs*, p. 234.

distance in the east of Holy Mausoleum. Its construction began at the time of Faṭḥ Ali Shah (1212 to 1250 A.H.), with Hāj Miūzā Mūsā Khān Rashtī in charge. But its decorations lasted until the time of Muhammad Shah (1250-1264 BC) and Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313 A.H.), so that the golden porch known as the Nāṣir golden porch.¹ This four-porch courtyard was almost like 'Atīq Courtyard. This courtyard is like 'Atīq courtyard with a golden porch and a clock tower, and their overall design is also close. In the Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi period, on top of the southern porch of the courtyard, which in the past was known as the servants' kitchen porch, a tower was built, and the old clock was transferred from the 'Atīq courtyard (Inqilāb courtyard) to this place. This clock was made in 1893. For this reason, the porch is also known as clock porch of Āzādī Courtyard.²

Jumhūrī Courtyard

The courtyard that is open to Shaykh Tūsi, Dār al-Wilāya, Dar al-Hidāya Porticos and Shaykh Bahā'ī

1 *ĀstānQuds, Yesterday and Today*, pp. 101 and 150; *Lovers' Qibla*, p. 97; *History of Mashhad City*, pp. 339 and 353.

2 *Selection of Chronicles (Muntakhab-al-Tawarikh)*, pp. 660 and 661.

Sanctuary has been built after the Islamic Revolution and is located in the west of the Holy Mausoleum. In this courtyard, like the two historical courtyards, elements such as golden porch, drinking water repository and minaret have been designed and implemented.

The Jumhūrī Courtyard is a four-porch one-floor courtyard. All four porches are in opposite symmetry; however, the two eastern and western porches are not in the middle, and the shape of the courtyard is not a regular foursquare. The Historical Dudar Seminary of the Timurid constructions is located on the margin of this courtyard, and now it is used as the “Dar al-Qur’an al-Karīm” of Āstān Quds. The eastern porch has gold works and magnificent decorations. There is a prayer niche on the south porch, as well as two inscriptions on the occasion of the bloody incident of ‘Ashūrā 1994, in Persian and Arabic on black marble installed on both sides of the porch. Two golden minarets are built on the northern and southern porches of the courtyard. These structures have very elegant decorations from the combination of enamels and gold in the form of building inscriptions on their stem. Drinking water repository of the courtyard is in front of the golden porch. It is built in a new style and

has an unconventional octagonal shape with a blue circle on it. A sundial clock and the qibla compass, made of white marble are located next to the courtyard pool. In this structure, each hour is divided into four fifteen-minute parts, and using it, the real local noon, the direction of the qibla, the real local meridian and the movement of the sun, eight hours in advance and eight hours after the local noon is recognizable.¹

Quds Courtyard

This courtyard is one of the structures after the Islamic Revolution. Quds Courtyard is located in the qibla side of Goharshad Courtyard, and it is adjacent to Grand Rḍawī Courtyard, Goharshad Mosque, Shaykh Bahā'ī Sanctuary and Imam Khomeini Portico.

This square-shaped courtyard is made of four porches, whose qibla porch is larger. Qibla porch is connected to a dome house. The dome is covered with turquoise tile in accordance with the color of the Goharshad Mosque dome, in which beautiful arabesque designs are used. Fourteen chambers are located on each northern and southern side. The names of the Fourteen Infallibles along with traditions exist

1 *Sweet Facts*, pp. 66 and 67; *the History of Astan Quds Razavi*, vol. 1, p. 282.

on the portal of the chambers. A drinking water repository in the shape of the Qubbat al-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock) of the Jerusalem is built in the middle of the courtyard, which is in harmony with the name of the Quds courtyard.¹

Rḍawī Grand Courtyard

The largest courtyard of the Shrine is located in the southern part of the Holy Mausoleum. The courtyard was built after the Islamic Revolution, with a capacity of about seventy thousands of prayer performers. The Grand Courtyard is the southernmost courtyard of the Shrine complex. This courtyard was designed and built after the Islamic Revolution. It has three porches. Its south porch is very large, and its eastern and western porches are smaller. Each porch has two minarets that those belonging to southern porch with about seventy meter height are the tallest minaret in the Holy Shrine. Two escalators are also installed next to the pools, which provide access to the underpass car parks.²

Central Library of Āstān Quds

The Central Library of Āstān Quds, from

1 *History of Astan Quds Razavi*, vol.1, pp. 280-282.

2 *Sweet Facts*, pp. 62-64.

organizational viewpoint, more than 500 years, and regarding the treasuries inside is more than 1100 years old, and today it is one of the largest libraries in Iran and the Islamic world. The current building of central library was built after the Islamic Revolution. This magnificent library, which is a masterpiece of Islamic art and architecture, is located at the Shaykh Tūsi sanctuary, and the northwest of the Inqilāb Courtyard. Construction of the magnificent current building started in 1981, and in 1993 with an area of twenty-eight thousand and eight hundred square meters was completed, and since the second half of 1994 was put into use. This building has special features, modern equipment and adorned with the best Iranian-Islamic arts.

The library is built on three floors, inspired by Islamic architecture around a central courtyard. A small yard is also located at the entrance of the library. This large building has extensive manuscript and printed treasuries, several large study rooms, book and objects restoration workshops, and a splendid meeting hall. The architecture of these courtyards is in the traditional style with porches around. The facade of these courtyards consists of a combination of brick and tile, and on the ceilings is kārbandī with plaster. The

corners of eight porches are connected two by two on the sides, and are made of plaster muqarnas, which interconnects the chamber and the front porch.¹

Holy Shrine Museums

Multiple magnificent interconnected buildings in the east of the Holy Shrine and the western margin of the Kowsar Courtyard enclose the museums of Āstān Quds; with the exception of the Anthropology Museum which is located inside the historical bath of Mahdī Quli Beyk in the western margin of the Holy Shrine. The building of the museum was built during the first Pahlavi period, and was destroyed and rebuilt during the second Pahlavi period. Then, during the Islamic Republic period, with the manifold expansion of the museums, changes were made in the old building and several other buildings were added, the last of which was carpets treasury that with more than 6000 square meters was opened, in which the best practices of museum maintenance were used to display the finest work from the Safavid period onward. The entrance to the main section of the museum is a magnificent high hall, built on the roof of which is a magnificent kārbandī in the form of an enormous

1 *Holy Shrine*, No. 75, pp. 26-28.

plaster muqarnas made by the contemporary Āstān Quds architects and artists.¹ Also, the new and great building of the Supreme Leader's Gift Museum is under construction in the vicinity of the establishment.

Mahdī Qulī Beyk Bathhouse

The historical bathhouse, located on the southwest of the Holy Shrine and in the vicinity of the Shah Mosque, has been renovated in recent years and has become the museum of anthropology of Āstān Quds. The bath was built in 1027 A.H., on the order of Mahdī Qulī Beyk Mīrākḥur, from the court of Safavid Shah Abbas I, and dedicated to Āstān Quds. The building has a portal, entrance vestibule, locker room, hothouse, bath pool and other components of the old public baths and in terms of its size, is one of the largest historical baths in Iran. The main structure is made of bricks lime, plaster, stone, glass, metal and tile. The decorations of the building include paintings on the plaster and colorful tiles below. Another feature is mural patterns. This section has a plaster cutting and plastering with twenty eight layers, of which thirteen

1 *All the shrine carpets*, pp. 46 and 47.

layers are painting decorations.¹

Rḍawī University of Islamic Sciences

Rḍawī University of Islamic Sciences is one of the largest and most important seminary-university units of the country. It includes a large construction complex in the northeast of the Inqilāb Courtyard, consisting of Khayrāt Khān and Mīrzā Ja'far Seminaries as a unified educational establishment. These two schools were the works of the Safavid era that were rebuilt after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and renovated exactly as the original building, and by turning the space between these two seminaries into an educational space in 1984, a single establishment was created. The university space in four floors and different parts and sections possesses classrooms, conference rooms, library, dormitory, dining room and courtyards, and plenty space of the two seminaries in a genuine and spiritual atmosphere belongs to the seminary students' dormitory. The two historical buildings are decorated with brick and tile facade, with seven-colored mosaic inscriptions from prominent artists such as Muhammad Hossein Shahīd Mashhadī, Mahdī Shahīd

1 *Mahdī Qulī Beyk*, pp. 11-33.

and Muhammad Hassan Riḍwān¹

Guest House

The guest house (or dining hall) of the Holy Shrine is a four-story building, beside Shaykh Hurr ‘Āmilī Sanctuary that everyday welcomes thousands of pilgrims and the servants of the Holy Shrine with full equipment. Different stages of preparation and cooking the food and reception of guests are done in the same building. The Holy Shrine, has had a special kitchen for cooking since at least the Safavid era. The location of the guest house, which in the past was divided into two separate sections for the pilgrims and Khādims was changed in different periods from the Safavid to Afsharid and Qajar until it settled since about fifty years ago in the present location and it became a single guest house, and with several stages of change and development, it developed into the current state in the recent years.²

Dār al-Shifā of Āstān Quds and Rḍawī Hospital

A modern and renovated building, next to the Shirazi U-turn in the west of the Holy Shrine is

1 *The seminary of Khorasan*, pp. 142 and 155.

2 *Lovers' Qibla*, p. 170; “*Razavi Guest House from Safavid to Late Qajar*”, pp. 52-53.

dedicated to the Dār al-Shifā. It is basically an establishment with a 500-year history that by the support of Āstān Quds from the old times has offered health care and well-being services. The current building of Dār al-Shifā is built in 2009 and in four floors has various medical, therapeutic, and pharmaceutical sections, and receives a large number of pilgrims and patients every day. Prior to that, Dār al-Shifā was located in buildings inside or on the outer sides of the Holy Shrine.¹ In addition, owing to the increasing needs of pilgrims and neighbors to specialized and advanced health and medical services, Āstān Quds set up Rḍawī Hospital in Mashhad. The construction of the hospital began in 1992 with an infrastructure of 56,000 square meters in five floors and was opened in February 2005. The second phase of the hospital, with an infrastructure of 37,500 square meters, was launched in 2013 in six floors. The hospital with numerous departments, sections and clinics is one of the largest and most advanced hospitals in the Middle East, and has received a high degree of excellence from the Accreditation Canada Institution (ACI) in the first successful evaluation.

¹ *Lovers' Qibla*, p. 169; “*Dār al-Shifā' of Astan Quds Razavi during the Safavid Period*”, p. 69.

Islamic Research Foundation

The Islamic Research Foundation is the Āstān Quds research organization studying Islamic and humanities and is based on a grand four-story building on the northern side of the Holy Shrine and the southern side of Tabarsi U-turn. This building, which was inaugurated in 2002, has a central yard and the floors surrounding it, which include research groups, administrative departments, a specialized library, a conference hall and residential section. Also in a part of the building, the document and media management of the central library, including repository of documents and press archives and some administrative and service departments of the library organization are based in the building. In the decoration of this building, especially in the exterior, entrance hall, halls and exhibition spaces, elements of Islamic art and architecture have been used.¹

Tombs and Graves

The devotion of the people to the Rḍawī Court is a source of their interest and passion for burial in the Rḍawī Holy Shrine. This interest has existed since the early Islamic centuries. Hence, thousands of great figures

1 *Sweet Facts*, p. 100.

have been buried in the Shrine of the Holy Imam in various religious, political, scientific, literary and social fields throughout history. Because the public tendency was very high, several graveyards have been created around the Shrine, in which famous people are buried. Until the Pahlavi era, burial in all the Shrine spaces from the porticos to the courtyards was prevalent; however since then, except for very rare cases, which belonged to noble men and special figures, it is limited to the graves inside a few courtyards called *riḍwān* “Paradise” under certain circumstances. Today, by spreading and renovation of the Shrine, the grave of people buried inside or the cemeteries around except for a handful have been eliminated, and these sections have turned into worshipping and service spaces. This includes Hātam Khānī and Allah Verdī Khān Domes, the grave of two political and military men of the Safavid period. Except for Yūsuf Khāja (Amīr Sayyedī), Shaykh Bahā'ī, Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmilī, Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Faqīh Sabzevāri and some other scholars and great men, who have a grave stone or even independent tomb spaces, the marks of other graves are recorded in museum or in various books.¹

1 *Buried Dignitaries at Raḍawī Shrine*, pp. 115, 281, and 316.