

## Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha (A. S.)-The Exquisite Sun of Bani Hashim

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### Abstract

Ali Ibn Musa al-Rida was the eighth great grandson of Fatima Zehra (daughter of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him) and Ali Ibn Abi Talib and he is also the eighth Imam of Shiite believers. He was an embodiment of etiquette, manners and charity and he imparted to us the qualities of a believer. His teachings were ‘How a man should strive to be a believer of Allah (S.w.t)?’ He highlighted in his preaching’s the ways to seek the pleasure of Allah (s.w.t) was through piousness, tolerance and persistence in our righteous deeds. He also emphasized us that for a believer to control his/her nafs (psyche) is prominent among his actions. Because of Imam Ali Ridha’s (a. s.) high moral traits and pleasing personality, he (a. s.) was considered the exquisite sun of Bibi Fatima Zehra and the Bani Hashim clan. This paper aims to show that Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha’s reward from Allah (s.w.t) is complete peace of mind as he stuck to his spiritual values being away from his homeland.

Keywords: Etiquette, Manners, Spiritual values, peace of mind, Alaihis Salam in short is written as (a.s.) which means ‘peace be upon him’, Imam means leader.

Prologue

Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha (a. s.), the eighth Imam was the descendent of the Holy Prophet Mohammad e Mustafa (peace be upon him). His prominent traits were piety, patience and perseverance in seeking the pleasure of Allah(s.w.t.). He was pious like his predecessors and was a scholar of highest caliber on the Universe and the most glorious person with magnificent ranking. (Hasan 418)<sup>1</sup>

He was named as Ali, after his great grandfather Ali Ibn Abu Talib and his Kuniyat or Patronymics was Abul Hasan. His father's name was Imam Musi e Kazim (a.s.) and mother's name was Najma Khatoon, she was also known as Taktum, Khiyazaran and Tahera. She was from North Africa and was a well-known, religious and sensible lady of that age.

Few of Imam Musa al-Ridha's Alqab or Compellations were Sabir, Zaki, Wali, Razi, Wasi, Faazil, Sadeq, Wafi, Zamin, Raouf and Alim-e-Aal-e-Mohammad (Scholar of Prophet's progeny). 'Some of his other titles are Gharib ul-Ghuraba (the loneliest stranger), Moin uz Zaufa al Fuqara (the helper of weak and poor people), Shams-al-Shomoos (the brightest sun), Anis ul Nafus (the close friend of the souls.)' (Turabi 13)<sup>2</sup> 'He is also called Imam Zamin e Samin (Zamin means safety and security and we give travellers in the safety of our eighth Imam Musa al-Ridha as they proceed on journeys.)' (Askari 161)<sup>3</sup>

Imam Musa al-Ridha was born in Madina on a Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> Ziqad 153 Hijri (Lunar Arabic Calender). His most famous epithet was 'Ridha' also pronounced as 'Reza'. His son and Successor Imam Jawad (a.s.) has said in this regard that 'Allah (s.w.t) chose the epithet 'Reza' because the eighth Imam, in his time was the most beloved creature of Allah in the heavens while on earth not only were the Prophet, peace be upon him and the Imams pleased (razi) with him but his friends and foes alike agreed (razi) with his Imamat and acknowledged his great spiritual power and superiority.' (Khorasani 15)<sup>4</sup>

Imam Musa al-Ridha, peace be upon him was endowed with excellent etiquette and manners. He(a.s) was soft-spoken and he neither interrupted a conversation in-between nor

spoke harshly to anyone during a conversation. Listening was his first communication skill and after listening to the other person he used to speak his mind. While sitting in the company of his (a.s) close associates, he (a.s) used to sit straight and in a correct posture. He (a.s) never used to lean on pillows in the company of close friends, rest alone others. His (a.s) tone used to be pleasant while he spoke to his slaves and on no account, he (a.s) used harsh language or harsh words with them.

Rich and poor, black and white and people of all walks of life were welcome to eat along with Imam Musa al-Ridha on his food spread. While eating he (a.s) used to call his servants to sit and eat along with him. Imam Musa al-Ridha(a.s) used to pray throughout the night and used to keep minimum three fasts every month and told others to do the same as according to him (a.s) keeping three fasts every month is equal to fasting throughout the month. He (a.s) used to abundantly give charity and mostly he (a.s) helped people during nights so that his (a.s) identity was not revealed. In the months of summer, he (a.s) used to sit on a sac and preach and in winter he (a.s) used to sit on a blanket and preach his followers.(Hasan 427-428)<sup>5</sup>

Imam Musa al-Ridha (a.s) always used to wear coarse clothes and sometimes when he (a.s) went outside he (a.s) used to wear elegant clothes over coarse clothes for the sake of the world. His (a.s) attire was always graceful and neat and he used to perfume himself (a.s). While conversing with people he (a.s) was always pleasant and bore a smile. Whenever anyone needed his help, he (a.s) was always there for them. He never missed a funeral and recited the Holy Quran on different times of the day. At any time, he (a.s) took labour, first he (a.s) used to fix the wage of the labourers and after the work was over, he (a.s) used to pay their due and extra money as bonus to the labourers. (Turabi 22-24)<sup>6</sup>

Maula Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha has stated that, 'This world is a prison for a momin and a paradise for the disbeliever'.<sup>7</sup>Consequently, for Maula Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha

this worldly body, his nafs, and ruh were a prison and thus he strived to get away from it and seek the nearness of his lord almighty through practicing piety and patience and controlling himself from short-lived benefits and gratifications. As a believer we should remember and follow his teachings and also never forget Maula Ali Ibn e Abi Talib's (Son-In-Law of Prophet Mohammad's) saying that 'Every breath you take is a step you put forward towards death.' (Jafery 540)<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Quran also states:

*The life of this world has been made appealing to those who disbelieve, and they ridicule those who believe . . . (Surah Baqarah verse 212)<sup>9</sup>*

The Verse (2:212) makes a divergence between believers and disbelievers, and the difference in their outlook. This life, with its fleeting apprehensions and short-lived benefits and gratifications, is all that the disbelievers know and aspire for. Subsequently, their scope is limited, their vision is blurred, and they are deprived of the higher understanding and greater recompence experienced by believers. Accordingly, they ridicule the believers.

Believers are selfless in their approach to life; they have high hopes for humanity, and they care for the progress and well-being of others. They make great personal sacrifices for the sake of their beliefs and ideals. Therefore, in the coming world where the spiritual ranks will be shown, believers will be positioned with elevated and divine positions according to the will of Allah (s.w.t).

Thus, we should strive to be a true believer and follow the footsteps of Imam Musa al-Ridha and other Imam's and teachings of Holy Quran. As a true Momin we need to always aspire to leave these worldly attractions and fight for the nearness of Allah (s.w.t). We should struggle to control our nafs or Psyche from the worldly distractions which will become the shackles of hellfire for us on the judgement day.

After the martyrdom of seventh Shiite Imam Musa al-Kadhim,(father of Musa al-Ridha) at the hands of Haroon, aversion against the Abbasid Caliphate augmented in the hearts of the people. On the death of Haroon, power passed to his sons Amin and Mamoon. Amin was conspired and killed by his brother Mamoon. Now the whole authority of throne was in the hands of Mamoon. People resented Mamoon and in order to use the popularity of the Ahlebait and win support of the shias he (Mamoon) offered Imam Musa al-Ridha (a. s.) the heirship to the throne and he forcefully summoned Imam Musa al-Ridha(a.s) to Khurasan.

*Those who migrate for the sake of God shall find many places for refuge in the land in abundance (Surah Nisa, Verse 100)<sup>10</sup>*

The verse (4:100) states that those who emigrate in the vast land of Allah (s.w.t), in the way of Allah (s.w.t) will find many secure and bountiful sites. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him-his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah (s.w.t) is ever forgiving and merciful.

In simple words the Ayat (4:100) states that Allah (s.w.t) will bestow a heavenly reward for the person who detaches himself from the land he belonged. If he sticks to his spiritual values that will give him complete peace of mind which makes the temporal loss insignificant. Thus, Imam Musa al-Ridha's reward from Allah (s.w.t) is complete peace of mind as he stuck to his spiritual values.

ImamMusa al-Ridha (a.s) bade farewell to his kith and kin and his friends, relatives and acquaintances. He (a.s) went to the grave of his great ancestor and the last messenger of Prophethood, Rasool e Khuda (peace be upon him) and said, 'oh great grandfather! I have to leave Madina. My heart weeps to leave your grave. I don't have peace for even a moment; I have come to bid my last farewell.'(Hasan 442)<sup>11</sup>

Imam (a.s)'s sister Fatima Bint e Musa e Kadhim (a.s.) loved him dearly and was heart-broken and gloomy when Imam Musa al-Ridha was leaving for Toos. While bidding

their last farewell, people were agitated in Madina, they were falling at the feet of Imam al-Ridha (a.s) and crying, some were mourning in deep sorrow and were lamenting, good-bye the great grandson of Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h), good bye Oh! Imam e Ridha (a. s.) After undergoing the turmoil of travel, the King of virtuous, Imam Musa al-Ridha (a.s) came to Toos, Khurasan.

Mamun Rasheed Ibn Haroon Rasheed was the most obnoxious man and he was the bitterest enemy of the household of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). He had made Imam Musa al-Ridha as his heir to the throne to fulfill his menacing designs. Imam Ridha (a.s.) reluctantly accepted the heirship. He (a.s) said: ‘As we the Ahlebait have a right to the Khalifath, Mamoon is not offering me what is not mine’.(Askari 161)<sup>12</sup>

While accepting the heirship to the throne Imam e Ridha (a.s) declared the condition that he (a.s) would not take any part in the executive, legal matters, appointments and dismissals as he (a.s) did not consider the system to be upright and he did not want himself to be a pawn in the organization. Imam e Ridha (a.s) shirked the Royal life which was offered to him (a.s) and led a simple life. He (a.s) devoted himself completely to imparting the teachings of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Holy Quran.

Imam e Musa al-Ridha(a.s) refused to give his endorsement to any of Mamoon’s plans, which were against the teachings of Islam. Mamoon was afraid of Imam e Ridha (a.s)’s growing popularity. He decided to kill the Imam (a.s) by giving poison. He summoned Imam (a.s) to his palace and when Imam Ridha(a.s) came, the cunning man got up from his seat in respect of the Imam and insisted the pious Imam Musa al-Ridha to sit beside him. Then the conceited leader forced Imam (a.s) to eat grapes which were laced with poison.

After eating just a few buds of grapes Imam Musa al-Ridha said in Arabic *Inna lillahe wa inna illayherajeoon*, (which means ‘we belong to Allah and to Him shall we return) and

got up and started to leave the palace. The conceited leader asked, where are you going Imam Musa al-Ridha? Imam (a.s) replied, to the place you wanted to send me. Imam (a.s) placed his Aba (A loose sleeveless outer garment) on his head and moved. After reaching home, Imam (a.s) was quite restless, the poison had started its effects, and Imam (a.s) started to vomit. Aba Salat, Imam's servant relates that Imam Ridha suffered intense agony as the poison began to take its effect. Imam Ridha was alone and away from his homeland and distressed. He (a.s.) did not have a moment's peace. Oh my God! What a pathetic time it was for the kind-hearted Imam(a.s). He (a.s) was uneasy, in trauma and troubled. When he (a.s) got the last death hiccup, he (a.s) recited the Kalimah *La Ilaha Illallah*. (Which means 'there's no God but Allah')

There are different traditions or Riwayat's about his date of martyrdom or Shahadat. In India his date of martyrdom is mostly commemorated on 17<sup>th</sup> Safar 203 Hijri<sup>13</sup> (Arabic Lunar Calender). In the book *Chowdah Sitare* (2001) by the author, Syed Najamul Hasan it is stated that Imam Musa al-Ridha transitioned from this mortal world to hereafter on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> Ziaqad 203<sup>14</sup>(Arabic Lunar Calender) in yet another tradition according to the Scholar Sheikh al-Saduq in his *Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha*, states: "What is accurate is that he died on the 13th of Ramadan, on a Friday, in the year 203 Hijri."<sup>15</sup>

He is referred to as Gharib ul Ghuraba, as He (a. s.) died alone, far away from his motherland. His sister Fatima Binte Moosi e Kazim (a.s) and his son loved him dearly but were miles away from him. Thousands came to his funeral and thronged the streets as he was taken for burial.

It is a belief of Shia Muslim's that after the martyrdom of Imam Musa al-Ridha his great grandmother Bibi Fatima Az Zehra (the daughter of Prophet Mohammad) came out of her (s.a) grave. She was mourning her great grandson and said, these tyrants neither let me be in peace in my life nor in my death. They oppress, slay and poison my children. They have

extinguished the most exquisite sun of Bani Hashim. Accept the Salam of the reader of this paper and the author of this paper, oh Maula Musa al-Ridha! the most virtuous and humble Imam, the one who lies far away from his province.

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