



**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF
IMAM ALI MUSA AL-RIDHA (A.S)**

BY
M. M. DUNGERSI (Ph.D.)



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IMAM ALI BIN
MUSA (A.S.)

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CONTENTS

Preface . . . 1

Chapter 1: Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s.): Childhood and Early Manhood . . . 4

Chapter 2: Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s.): Period after the Martyrdom of his Father . . . 9

Chapter 3: Political Situation during Imam Ridha (a.s.)'s Times . . 15

Chapter 4: Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s.): His Character and Personality . . . 27

Chapter 5: Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha (a.s.): His Knowledge and Contribution to Learning . . . 32

Chapter 6: Imam Ali bin Musa (a.s.): His Martyrdom and Burial . 40

Chapter 7: Merits of Visiting Imam Ridha (a.s.)'s Mausoleum . . . 45

Chapter 8: Some Sayings of Imam Ridha (a.s.) . . . 47

Chapter 9: His Miracles . . . 51

Chapter 10: His Family . . . 55

Questions . . . 56

PREFACE

In the late 50's and early 60's, when I was a madressa student in School Faize in Zanzibar-Africa, there was no such a subject as Islamic History on the madressa curriculum. Naturally, therefore, when I joined the teaching staff of the Huseini Madressa in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania in early 80's and when I was subsequently assigned to teach Islamic History, I was at a loss, not knowing exactly what to teach.

Not that there was no syllabus for this subject. Rather, my main concern was the scope of the syllabus. For at the core of Islamic History syllabus was the study of the life of the Prophet (may peace be upon him and his progeny) and those of the other thirteen MASOOMIN from his progeny.

In my view, besides Yusuf Laljee's excellent book, *KNOW YOUR ISLAM*, there was no other simple but informative text that could be used comfortably by both the teachers and the students alike. Even then, the section on the life-history of MASOOMIN was rather sketchy in *KNOW YOUR ISLAM*.

Since those days, I have felt the need to compile brief teaching notes on the lives of our Twelve Imams (may peace be upon them all) with two objectives in mind: First, to focus on all those areas of information, not exclusively historic, that would enable the learner to appreciate the complex situations in which our Imams lived and performed their duties as divinely appointed guides for the universe. Secondly, to present this information in a style which has at its core the interest as well as the aptitude of the teachers and students alike. I found this task easy to conceive in mind, but very difficult to implement. Needless to say, I could accomplish little in this field until when I migrated to the USA.

As luck would have it, at Huseini Madressa in New York, I was

once more assigned to teach Islamic History. For reasons I need not disclose them here, I found this task even more daunting than it was in Africa.

Fortunately, at this critical time when I was groping in darkness in search of suitable teaching text for my class, I was commissioned by Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the Chief Missionary of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, to write teaching units encompassing the lives of our Twelve Imams (may peace be upon them) for the Correspondence Course of the Mission. To me this was Allah – sent bounty in two ways.

Firstly, this commission gave me courage and confidence that I hitherto lacked. Now I had the support of one of the most renowned Shia scholars of our times – Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

Secondly, I would not have to worry about searching for sponsors to finance the printing, the publishing and the circulation of my writings; the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania would do that.

This unit and others to follow are therefore the result of the initiative and complete support of Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the administration of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania and its ex-chairman Al-haj Fidahusein Abdullah Hameer.

Both the substance as well as the style of this unit (and the ones to follow) have been overly simplified, to comply with Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar’s advice that “We have to keep in mind that these units are meant for youths and not for scholars.”

All said and done, despite the maximum precautions that were taken to keep this unit free of factual or any other errors, if, however, some have remained uncorrected, the responsibility is mine.

May Allah forgive me for these unintentional errors and may He reward here and in the hereafter all those who have in one way or another, assisted me in the writing, the production and the circulation of this unit.

WASSALAMU ALAYKUM WA RAHMATULLAHI WA BARAKATUH.

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New York, USA

CHAPTER 1

IMAM ALI BIN MUSA AL-RIDHA (A.S.): CHILDHOOD AND EARLY ADULTHOOD

INTRODUCTION

Imam Ali Bin Musa is the Eighth Imam from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). Like his father, he was a 'Masoom' (never committed any sins nor made any mistakes). He was born in Medina on 11th Zilqad 148 AH one month after the martyrdom of his grandfather, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.).

Our Eighth Imam is popularly known by his title, Al-Ridha. How he came to be Al-Ridha, we shall learn in Chapter 5. Our eighth Imam is also known as Abul Hasan and Imam Dhamin (the guarantor).

HIS PARENTS

His father was Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.). His mother was known by several names such as: Umm Banin, Najma, Tahira, Khizran and Tuktum.

She was a slave-girl from North Africa. A man by the name of Hassam bin Ahmed tells us how this lady came in the house of the Imam.

Hassam says that one day he accompanied the 7th Imam to the place in Medina where slaves used to be brought from different countries to be sold. The Imam (a.s.) approached one slave-owner and asked him if he had in his possession a particular slave-girl about whom the Imam (a.s.) gave full description. The slave owner agreed having this slave-girl but he said she was not for display as she would be sold only to a member from the family of Bani Hashim. The Imam (a.s.) did not introduce himself. He just went away.

On the second day, the Imam (a.s.) sent Hassam instructing him

to buy the same slave-girl for any price. Hassam did as he was told. The slave-owner after selling her, asked Hassam as to who was her new owner, because he had been told by a learned Christian woman that this slave-girl would marry a very great person and would give birth to a very noble child. Hassam then told the slave-owner that the new owner was Imam Kadhim (a.s.).

The slave-girl was named Najma. The Imam (a.s.) gave her to his mother, Hamida Khatoon. After a short time, Lady Hamida saw the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in her dreams. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) asked her to marry Najma to Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.). This, she did. From this marriage Imam Ali Ridha (a.s.) was born.

Bibi Hamida's advice to her son, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was, "O my son, Najma is a girl the like of whom I have never seen. I shall not be surprised if Allah, very soon, causes a virtuous progeny to start from her. I am advising you to be always good to her."

Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) used to call her TUKTUM. She was also known as Tahira.

She was the most pious woman in her times. Her love for prayers of Allah was so high that she wished to have a wet-nurse who could take care of the young Imam so that she could have more time to worship Allah.

HIS BIRTH

When the Imam was in his mother's womb, she would feel no weight at all. She would hear the voice of the child read the praises of Allah.

She says that when the eighth Imam was born, he supported his body on the ground with his palms. He then raised his head towards the sky in praise of Allah. Then Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) entered the room. He congratulated Najma for being the mother to a great person.

She wrapped the child in a white piece of cloth, and gave him to Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) who said ‘ADHAN’ in the child’s right ear and ‘IQAMAH’ in his left ear.

Ibne Babawayyah (also known as Shaykh Saduq), a famous Shia scholar, says that when Imam Ridha (a.s.) was born, his father Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) told those who were there that like other Imams, his son Ridha was born fully circumcised.

Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) is also reported to have said that when Imam Ridha (a.s.) was born, he saw the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Imam Ali (a.s.) in his dreams saying, “O Musa! Your son (Ridha) will see with truth and speak with god-given wisdom. He is free from all weaknesses and impurities. He is full of wisdom and knowledge. He is the most knowledgeable person of his times.”

As a matter of fact, the sixth Imam, Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) used to tell his family and his followers that soon a unique child would be born in his family and he would be known as Ridha. The Sixth Imam would always praise the seventh Imam in front of his followers. One way of praising him was to tell people that from the seventh Imam would be born a child who would be the most intelligent in the family of the Prophet and would complete the job the Sixth Imam had started.

The Sixth Imam also advised his family never to oppose al-Ridha and to be loyal and obedient to him.

HIS EARLY LIFE

His childhood and youth were spent with his father. There is not much written about Imam Ridha (a.s.) during this time. However, throughout this period, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) let his followers know that after him his son Ali Ridha would be the Imam. Shaykh Mufid mentions several such incidents in his *Al-Irshad*; we shall consider only a few of these incidents.

- Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) told Ali bin Yakteen, pointing at Imam Ridha (a.s.), “This Ali is the Lord of my children and he has my “Kuniyah” (other name) of Abul-Hasan.”
- A man by the name of Ziyad Bin Marwan visited Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.). Imam Ridha (a.s.) was present. Imam Kadhim (a.s.) said, “O Ziyad, this is my son. His writing is my writing; his words are my words ... whatever he says is the truth.”
- A woman from the descendants of Jafar Bin Abu Talib reports that Imam Kadhim called his family members (including her) and told them that Imam Ridha (a.s.) was his trustee and his successor. The Imam added, “Whoever has a debt from me let him collect it from this son of mine. To whomsoever I made a promise, let him get its fulfilment from him.”

It was very important for Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) to let his followers know who their next Imam would be because already his followers had been split into several grouping, following the death of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.). For example, there were those who claimed that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was still alive in heaven and he was the Imam of the time. Others claimed that Hazrat Muhammad Hanafia was still alive and was the Imam of the time. Some people regarded Ismail, the already dead son of Imam Sadiq (a.s.), as their Imam. Then, there were those who thought Abdullah Aftah, Imam Kadhim’s brother, as the Imam of the time.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

Imam Ridha (a.s.) spent thirty five years of his early life with his father. It was a life of quietness but full of sadness, for he shared with his father all the difficulties from the Abbasid Kings: Mahdi, Hadi and Haroon. He saw his father being harassed and put in prison. He witnessed the Sadat (children from the progeny of the Prophet) being ill- treated and then killed in the most cruel ways.

Imam Kadhim (a.s.) made all efforts to introduce Imam Ridha (a.s.) to the Muslims as their next Imam, as shown by the following events:

- The author of *Al-Kafi* quotes Ibne Sinan saying that one year before Imam Musa Kadhim was taken to Iraq, he visited the Imam (a.s.). Imam Ridha (a.s.) was with his father. The Imam said, “Those who will deny the right of this son of mine and his “Imamate” after me are like those who wronged Ali Bin Abi Talib by denying his rights after the death of the Prophet of Allah”.
- The author of *Al-Kafi* quotes Yazid Bin Sulayt who says that the year in which Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was martyred, he said, “I will be taken away this year and my authority will pass on to my son Ali.”
- A few days before the seventh Imam was to be imprisoned and to be taken to Iraq for good, he assembled the most important members of Bani Hashim in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, and told them that the next Imam was Imam Ridha (a.s.). He made seven most respectable people from Bani Hashim to accept Imam Ridha’s “Wilayat” in writing.

CHAPTER 2

IMAM ALI BIN MUSA AL-RIDHA (A.S.): PERIOD AFTER THE MARTYRDOM OF HIS FATHER

INTRODUCTION

On Rajab 25 183 AH, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was martyred, and Imam Ridha (a.s.), at the age of 35 years, took over from him as the Imam of the time. He was faced with three major problems: The oppressive King Haroon Rashid, the Waqifia movement and opposition from his family members.

THE OPPRESSIVE KING HAROON RASHID

From the previous unit you learnt how evil Haroon was and how much he hated the Ahlul-Bayt of the Prophet so much, so that he got even Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) killed. His eyes were now on Imam Ridha (a.s.).

To make things worse, some family members of Imam Ridha (a.s.) rose against the government. Although Imam Ridha (a.s.) did not take part in these risings, yet Haroon considered the Imam responsible for them.

Muhammad bin Jafar, the son of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and the uncle of Imam Ridha (a.s.), rose against the government. He did so not because he wanted power for worldly gains but only to remove from power the cruel government which was oppressing Muslims. As a person Muhammad was very pious and God fearing.

Haroon sent a strong army against him under the command of Isa Bin Jalood. His instructions were not only to put down the rebellion, but also to punish severely the Ahlul-Bayt and to treat them like infidels. Isa went to Medina and punished severely the descendants of Abu Talib. He then came to the house of Imam Ridha (a.s.) and told the Imam (a.s.) that it was the wish of

Haroon that the house of Imam Ridha (a.s.) be fully searched and that everything in the house including the personal belongings of the women and children of the house, be taken away.

Imam Ridha (a.s.) was very much upset not so much because he was going to lose everything that he had, but mostly because the honour of the house of the Prophet would be destroyed. He therefore promised Isa that he, the Imam (a.s.), would personally supervise the removal of everything from his house and make them available to Isa's soldier. In return, Isa and his soldiers should not get into the house. The Imam pleaded so strongly that Isa agreed. The Imam's house was left empty. The women of the house of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) were left only with one dress that they had on their backs. Everything else was taken away, even their shoes.

Haroon was still not satisfied. According to the famous Sunni historian, Waqidi, Haroon put Imam Ridha (a.s.) in prison. The Imam (a.s.) was released from this prison on the instructions of Amin, Haroon's son, on the death of Haroon in 193 AH.

Throughout his lifetime Haroon was planning to kill Imam but Allah protected the Imam (a.s.). As an illustrative, consider the following incident.

Abu Salt, Imam's trusted friend and servant, reports that one night Haroon called the Imam to his court. The Imam informed Abu Salt that Haroon intended to kill the Imam but he would not succeed.

When the Imam entered Haroon's chamber, he recited silently a special 'DUA' of protection taught to the 'Ahlul-Bayt' by the Prophet.

The effect of the 'Dua' was such that Haroon could not harm the Imam. Instead, he gave the Imam 100,000 dinars and promised to provide for his other needs.

After the Imam (a.s.) had left, Haroon grumbled, saying, “I wished but Allah wished something different. Allah’s wish was better than mine”. By this Haroon meant that he wanted to harm the Imam but some divine power stopped him from doing so.

THE WAQIFIA MOVEMENT

Because Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was made to spend a lot of his time in prison, it was necessary for him to appoint agents to carry out some administrative work on behalf of the Imam (a.s.). Among the trusted agents of the Imam (a.s.) were: Ali bin Abu Hamza Al-Bataini and Ziyad bin Marwan.

In the year before he was imprisoned for life, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) made it very clear to these agents that they were to follow Imam Ridha’s instructions on the event of Imam Kadhim’s death. Unfortunately, this was never to be with some of these agents, such as Ali bin Abu Hamza Al-Bataini, Ziyad bin Marwan Al-Qindi, and Uthman bin Isa Al-Ruwasi.

After the Martyrdom of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.), Imam Ridha (a.s.) asked these agents to return all the Khums money and other related properties to him. But they all refused to do so. They found it hard to give away the great wealth that they had collected as Khums. For example, Ali Bin Abu Hamza Al-Bataini had 30,000 dinars; Ziyad bin Marwan had 70,000 dinars and Uthman bin Isa had 30,000 dinars and six slave girls.

So as to keep all this wealth for themselves, they found out a quick solution: the Waqifia movement. They claimed that Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) had not died. He had gone into hiding (‘GHAIBA’) and therefore there was to be no Imam after him. They, therefore, refused to recognise Imam Ridha (a.s.) as the next Imam.

For the Imam (a.s.), this was a problem, because it created a division among his followers, some of whom were fooled to leave Imam Ridha (a.s.) and join Waqifia group.

THE FAMILY PROBLEM

Before Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) was taken as a prisoner to Iraq from where he never returned, he had openly named Imam Ridha (a.s.) as the next Imam. He had also written a long will in which he had made Imam Ridha (a.s.) as his sole trustee. He had also instructed all his children and other family members to follow what Imam Ridha (a.s.) told them to do since he was their Imam. The relevant parts of the will are summarised below:

“In the name of Allah the All-Merciful the All Compassionate.

“First and foremost, I want it be witnessed that it is my belief that: There is no other God but Allah, the one who has no partner, and Muhammad Al-Mustafa is His Messenger.

“I also testify that death is inevitable. It is my testimony also that we shall be resurrected from the grave and we shall be made to account for our actions in the presence of Allah who shall then judge us.

“Let it also be known that it is a fact that the Messenger of Allah [Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.)] received revelation from Allah through the Angel Jibrael; I lived and I shall die with this belief.

“I also call you to witness that I have written this will only own accord, in the same way as my great-great grandfather, the commander of the faithful [Imam Ali (a.s.)] did, as did my grandfather Muhammad Baqir and his son Jafar Sadiq.

“I am addressing this will to my son Ali and my those sons who are currently living with him [Imam Ali Ridha (a.s.)]. If the latter show loyalty to the former, they may then continue to live with him. However, my son Ali has the full authority to decide how he wants to deal with his brothers: Either let them be with him or let them go away from him. This choice does not rest with the brothers.

“By this will I am appointing my said son Ali as my only administrator to all the property that is in my name and the trustee to all the properties that are under my trusteeship. He shall dispose them accordingly to all my inheritors, including my sons Ibrahim, Abbas, Qasim and Ahmed and their families.

“Over and above that, he will also be the sole administrator and

trustee of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the income released from the personal and 'WAKF' properties of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.). He shall have full powers to distribute this income as gift or charity or any other way. None of my other children or heir will have any right or say in this matter. His authority over all these properties will be the same as I have it now. Everyone will have to accept his authority the same way they have accepted my authority.

“If anyone disputes or opposes or fights against this authority that I have given to my son Ali over my properties and their disposal to my sons and other heirs, he shall displease Allah and His Prophet and he shall become deserving the displeasure of Angels, the pious people and all the believers.

“Except for my son Ali and Umm Ahmed (one of Imam Kadhim's wives), no one else has the authority to break the seal of this will. Any other person who dares to unseal this Will, will be responsible for its bad consequences on the Day of Judgement.”

This will was witnessed by as many as ten members from the descendants of Abu Talib. Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) then sealed this will and gave authority to Imam Ridha (a.s.) and Umm Ahmed (Imam Musa Kadhim's wife) to break the seal whenever they wished.

Unfortunately, on the death of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.), his sons Abbas, Ibrahim and Zaid refused to recognise the rights of Imam Ridha (a.s.). To make matters worse, they took the Imam (a.s.) to court. As their witnesses they took Umm Ahmed and Ishaq bin Jafar. Fortunately, both these witnesses spoke in favour of Imam Ridha (a.s.). The brothers then had the seal of the will broken by the Judge of Medina, Abu Umran, despite the latter's unwillingness to do so. Despite all these, they lost the case. Imam Ridha (a.s.) however promised to give them all that came to their share and much more but this did not stop them from saying bad things about him.

These brothers, as we shall see in the course of this unit ended up as

failures and had to turn to Imam Ridha (a.s.) for help; the Imam accepted them and let them live with him except for his brother Ibrahim whose defeat at the hands of Abbasi forces at Yemen led to his disappearance; he was never seen again.

CHAPTER 3 : POLITICAL SITUATION DURING IMAM RIDHA'S TIMES

DURING HAROON'S RULERSHIP 170 AH TO 193 AH

Although Haroon Rashid hated Imam Ridha (a.s.), as Waqidi says, the Imam (a.s.) was put for a short time in prison, most of the time Haroon Rashid left Imam Ridha (a.s.) on his own. This is because the martyrdom of Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) turned many people against Haroon. He therefore, had to let matters settle down before causing any harm to Imam Ridha (a.s.).

Secondly, Haroon was worried about the future of his kingdom. He saw trouble brewing. Haroon's eldest son was Muhammad, who was more popularly known as Amin. Amin's mother was Zubaida, the granddaughter of Mansoor Dawanaqi. Amin was therefore an Abbasi from his mother and father's side and had a better claim to the throne than any other son of Haroon. But Amin was not a good administrator. He was a playboy who spent more time in drinking wine and womanising than thinking about how to run his government.

Haroon's second son, Abdullah, known popularly as Mamoon, was better than Amin in every way. He was serious, intelligent and a very good administrator. But his mother was a slave girl from Persia. So he would not be accepted as the successor of Haroon by the Abbaside clan.

Haroon's main problem was: Amin was not fit to be the next caliph but he could not be left out altogether. Mamoon was fit to be the Caliph but he could not be given everything because the Arabs in general and the Abbasids in particular would not accept him as their ruler, his mother being a non-Arab slave.

Then, knowing his sons, Haroon expected them to fight against each other for power and rulership.

Haroon finally came out with a solution which he thought would save his empire (We shall soon see how wrong Haroon was). He decided to divide his empire into three parts each part to be headed by a different ruler. He gave Amin Iraq and Syria up to the borders of the western part of his empire, Mamoon all the lands from Hamdan to the Eastern borders of his empire and his son Al-Qasim the peninsula of Arabia and its sea port. On the death of Haroon, Amin would become the Caliph but Mamoon and Qasim would continue to be rulers of their own kingdoms. On the death of Amin, Mamoon would succeed him. Mamoon would have the right to appoint Qasim as his successor, if he wished.

Haroon took another step. He made his sons give him a promise that they would respect each other's boundaries and would not fight one another. He got this promise from Amin and Mamoon in front of the Kaaba. Each of them wrote a separate promise to accept the other's claims on a piece of paper which were then deposited in the Kaaba. This was in 186 AH.

In 193 AH Haroon died at a village of Sanabad in Tus. He was 48 years old. He had ruled for 23 years and 6 months.

AMIN AND MAMOON AT EACH OTHER'S THROAT 195 AH TO 198 AH

As was arranged by Haroon, Amin and Mamoon became rulers of their own territories. But Amin was not happy with this arrangement. Encouraged by his chief advisor Fazl bin Rabi, he took military steps against Mamoon. Mamoon was weak but he was an able administrator and had wise and trustworthy advisors such as Fazl Bin Sahl. Also luck was on his side. After battling his brother for four years, he was victorious over Amin. In 198 AH, Amin was killed and Baghdad came in the hands of Mamoon, who was recognised as the only ruler of what was left of his father's empire.

During these years when the two sons of Haroon Rashid were fighting each other, Imam Ridha (a.s.) got an opportunity to preach Islam freely. The Prophet's Mosque in Medina was once again the centre of education and learning. By some accounts, Imam's lessons were attended by as many 18,000 students. His fame spread out throughout the empire and people from all over the empire and beyond came to Medina to benefit from his knowledge and learning.

MAMOON CALLS IMAM RIDHA (A.S.) TO KHURASAN IRAN

Although Mamoom became the ruler over the whole Islamic empire after the defeat and death of Amin, he was in a very weak position. The war had left his treasury empty and his army weak. He was required to spend a lot of money to rebuild places like Baghdad which had been badly damaged by the war.

His enemies took advantage of his weakness. There were several uprisings in the distant parts of the empire.

For example, Ibn Taba-Taba rose against the government in 199 AH and Kufa was no more in the hands of Mamoon.

Hijaz, too fell in the hands of the son of Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.).

Notice that the majority of the leaders of these uprisings were sympathisers of the Ahlul-Bayt. Some of them were 'SADAT'. To calm down this opposition against himself, Mamoon came out with a clever idea. He turned to Imam Ridha (a.s.) and offered to put him on the throne and make him the Caliph. The reason Mamoon gave to explain this strange move was that when he was fighting Amin he was so weak that he was definitely going to lose the war. So he made a promise to Allah that if he (Mamoon) came out victorious against Amin, he would give the kingship to Imam Ridha (a.s.). As Allah gave him victory against Amin, he wanted now to fulfil his

promise. Imam Ridha (a.s.) knew of the hidden reason for being offered the rulership. He politely but firmly refused the offer. But Mamoon refused to take no for an answer. In 201 AH he sent his army to Medina to bring the Imam to Marv, Iran - even by force, if necessary. The commander of the army was Rajaa bin Abdul Zahak. The Imam (a.s.) therefore had no choice but to undertake the journey to Iran. Before his departure he called His family and relatives and said goodbye to them, telling them that he would never be able to come back to Medina alive. This was therefore their final farewell.

The shorter and therefore the preferable way to Iran was through Kufa to Karman Shah and Qum. However, this route passed through areas occupied by people friendly to Ahlul-Bayt. Mamoon was afraid that if the Imam (a.s.) passed through these areas, his sympathisers could be upset and be encouraged to rise against the government. The Imam (a.s.) therefore was taken through a longer route passing through areas that were occupied by people who were either unfamiliar with the Imam's greatness or who were the enemies of the Imam (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) was made to travel to Kufa and from there to Basra and then to Marv (Iran) through Ahwaz, Shiraz and Naishapur. Despite this precaution, the Imam (a.s.) had a great influence on the people he met on the way. For example, when the Imam (a.s.) was in a place called Naishapur (in Iran), thousands of people came to see and meet him. They requested him to read out to them any of the Prophet's Hadith. The Imam (a.s.) therefore read out to them a Hadith (which we shall reproduce in Chapter 8 Hadith No. 12) It is said that twenty thousand people recorded this Hadith.

REASONS WHICH MADE MAMOON OFFER THE KINGSHIP TO IMAM RIDHA (A.S.)

Although Mamoon claimed that he wished to make Imam Ridha (a.s.) the Caliph of the Muslims so as to fulfil the promise which he had made to Allah, this was only an excuse. Several other reasons

outlined below were the real causes to force Mamoon make such a special offer to the Imam (a.s.):

1. Mamoon's success against Amin was because of the support of the people of Khurasan (Iran). Indeed, many of his army officers and administrators were lovers of Ahlul-Bayt, especially Imam Ridha (a.s.); to please these people and to continue getting their support, it was necessary to get the support of Imam Ridha (a.s.).
2. As has been noted before, the war with Amin had made Mamoon's army weak. The followers of Ahlul-Bayt took advantage of this and began to rise against Mamoon's government. For example, in Yemen, Ibrahim bin Musa bin Jafar rose against the government and took over the governorship. Mecca fell in the hands of Al-Husayn Bin Al-Hasan; In Basra, Zaid bin Musa bin Jafar rose against the government.

To keep them quiet, Mamoon needed the help of Imam Ridha (a.s.). The best way to get this help would be to make Imam Ridha (a.s.) as an important person In the Government.

3. Mamoon was an intelligent person and knew that those days were approaching when Muslims would rise against the Bani Abbasi (He being an Abbasi), the way they did years ago against the Bani Umayyah. He knew that if people looked deep into the past, they would find out that Mamoon was not a legal Caliph. On the other hand, if Imam Ridha (a.s.) cooperated with Mamoon in running the government, people would accept Mamoon as a legal Muslim leader. Mamoon therefore wanted to use the Imam to legalise his own position.
4. Mamoon was worried by the fact that Imam Ridha (a.s.) was growing popular day by day. By offering Imam (a.s.) the rulership, Mamoon thought he would lower Imam's position in

the eyes of the Muslims. Mamoon calculated that if the Imam accepted to become the Caliph, some of his supporters would be pleased but others would be displeased. They would think that Imam Ridha (a.s.) was after the worldly things. On the other hand, if the Imam (a.s.) refused to become the ruler although some of his supporters would be pleased with him for this, others would blame him for losing this golden opportunity of getting back what belonged to him. In either case, the followers of the Imam would be divided and their support for the Imam (a.s.) would become weak.

5. In the thinking of Mamoon, it was dangerous for his government if Imam Ridha (a.s.) was allowed to preach Islam freely in Medina. The only way to stop him without causing Muslims to rise against the government was to call Imam to Iran with honour. Once in Iran, the Imam could be watched daily and steps be taken against him when the proper time came.

As a matter of fact once the Imam (a.s.) was in Marv, Mamoon employed special spies to keep their eyes on the Imam (a.s.) and inform Mamoon on Imam's every move. One such Royal Spy was Hisham Bin Ibrahim. Before becoming the government's informer he was Imam's special companion. After becoming the Spy he would inform Mamoon everything that was going on in the Imam's home.

6. The Bani Abbas clansmen had never wished Mamoon to be their ruler. They preferred Amin to Mamoon since Amin was a "PURE" Arab; his mother, Zubeida, being the granddaughter of Mansoor Dawanaqi. As a matter of fact when Amin and Mamoon were at war against each other, the Bani Abbas clansmen supported Amin. To win their support, Mamoon let them know that if they continued to oppose him he would turn to the clan of Abu Talib. The best way to do this was to offer Imam Ridha (a.s.) (who was the elder of the house of Abu Talib) the rulership.

It does not come as a surprise therefore that after the death of Imam (a.s.), Mamoon wrote a letter to the Abbasi people inviting them to join him now that Imam Ridha (a.s.) was dead. On this issue, Ibn Khaldun says:

“...Al-Mamoon sent messages to Hasan Bin Sahl, to the people of Baghdad, and to his supporters, apologising to them for naming him (Imam Ridha) as his regent and inviting them to be loyal to him again...”

IMAM (A.S.) REFUSES TO BECOME RULER

When in Iran, the Imam was officially offered the kingship by Mamoon. The Imam (a.s.) refused flatly to accept it. His argument was if Mamoon was divinely appointed Caliph, he had no right to give his kingdom to anyone. If, on the other hand, he was not a divinely appointed Caliph, then the kingdom was not his and how could he offer to anyone what did not belong to him?

Mamoon then ordered him to accept to be crown prince (‘WALL AHAD’) or else the Imam (a.s.) would be killed. The Imam (a.s.) then agreed but with the following conditions:

- He would never engage in any state matters;
- He would take no part in the appointment or dismissal of any person in the government service;
- He would give advice only when his advice was specifically asked for.

Mamoon agreed. The Imam (a.s.) therefore was declared as the crown prince of the Muslim empire at a grand ceremony on 1st RAMADHAN 201 AH.

The Imam (a.s.) knew of the plot behind this move. For example, at the grand ceremony of declaring the Imam (a.s.) as the crown prince, one of the Imam’s followers was very happy; the Imam (a.s.) warned him not to be so happy as the outcome of this ceremony would be bad for the Imam.

The Imam was never happy to be the crown prince. He used to talk of his happier days in Medina where he would go about in the narrow streets of Medina on the back of his animal serving the needy people of Medina as if they were part of his family.

How much unhappy the Imam (a.s.) was to accept even this position of the heir to the throne, is explained by the Imam's servant Yasir who saw the Imam (a.s.) raise his hands to heaven and pray: "Lord! You know I have been forced to accept (Wali ahad). So do not hold me responsible like you did not hold responsible your servant and Prophet Yusuf for working in the government of Egypt."

To prove that the Imam (a.s.) was next in line to the throne, Mamoon did the following:

- He called an assembly of the officers and noblemen and asked them to give Oath of allegiance to the Imam (a.s.). As a matter of fact, the first person to give his Oath of allegiance was Mamoon's son Abbas.
- He minted currency bearing his own name and the name of Imam Ridha (a.s.) on them.
- He ordered that Imam Ridha's name be mentioned in the sermons of Juma prayers as successor of the caliph.
- To celebrate the occasion, Mamoon gave away as gifts thousands of dinars. Poets were invited to praise Imam (a.s.) and the Imam was invited to give a sermon to celebrate the occasion.

HOW DID PEOPLE REACT TO IMAM'S APPOINTMENT?

The clansmen from Bani Abbas were very angry with Mamoon, as they did not understand the true reason why Mamoon did what he did. They were jealous of the Imam (a.s.), thinking that the Imam's honour would rise. They did not know that Mamoon was only trying to save his kingdom using the name of the Imam (a.s.).

Some of the followers of the Imam (a.s.) were also upset. They did

not understand why the Imam (a.s.) would want to cooperate with Mamoon and be his crown prince. What they did not understand was that the Imam was being forced into accepting this offer and his refusal could mean his immediate death at the time when the Muslim world needed him most.

As a matter of fact, some people began to criticise him on his face for becoming part of the government. He used the example of the Prophet Yusuf to explain to them why he was part of the government. He said that according to Quran, Prophet Yusuf offered his services to the Aziz of Egypt so as to help the people. On the other hand, he, the Imam, was forced to work for Mamoon who at least from the outside was a Muslim and so better than the Aziz of Egypt who was not a Muslim by any account.

Remember also that Imam Ali (a.s.) had taken part in the committee of six people appointed by Omar bin Khattab to appoint his successor. Also remember that Imam Ali (a.s.) helped, from time to time, the government of Omar and Othman when he, as the Imam, felt this was necessary. In the same way, Imam Ridha (a.s.) helped Mamoon in his government when he thought that this would benefit the Muslims. As a matter of fact, Imam Ridha (a.s.) gave explanation himself. This happened when someone asked him "O son of the Messenger of Allah! What made you to accept to get involved with the question of succession to the throne?" The Imam (a.s.) replied "The same thing that caused my grandfather, commander of the faithful to get involved in the SHURA".

MAMOON DECIDES TO KILL IMAM RIDHA (A.S.)

When Mamoon forced Imam Ridha (a.s.) to become the crown prince of his kingdom he thought that the Imam (a.s.) would gradually give himself away and become his supporter. Mamoon then would run his government in whatever way he wanted. He soon found out that he was wrong. Instead of becoming his partner in crime, Imam Ridha (a.s.) became the critic of the government

whenever the government broke the rules of Islam. If the Imam (a.s.) was called to give his opinion, he would give it with justice, even if this meant hurting Mamoon. Consider the following incidents.

- Imam (a.s.) saw a slave pour water on the hands of Mamoon in the act of performing “Wudhu”. Imam (a.s.) politely but openly advised Mamoon that what he was doing was wrong. In the act of worship of Allah, every person has to do every action himself and must not involve anyone else.
- On every Monday and Thursday Mamoon used to carry out justice in his court. The Imam (a.s.) would sit next to him. A person was brought accused to have been a thief. He admitted his crime but blamed Mamoon for that. His argument was: He was forced to steal because he had no other way to earn a living and that he would not steal if Mamoon had not taken away what belonged to him. Whereas he deserved to be punished, so did Mamoon. As matter of fact Mamoon should be punished first then he the thief.

Mamoon was very angry. He told the thief that whatever his argument, he (Mamoon) would definitely punish him (the thief).

The thief replied, “How can a slave punish his master? Your mother was a slave acquired from the Muslims’ money - I being one of such Muslims. You are my slave, and I am your master.”

Not knowing what to say, Mamoon turned to the Imam, expecting the Imam to bail him out. But the Imam (a.s.) told him that the culprit had put forward a very strong argument, with complete evidence.

Mamoon freed the thief but was very angry with the Imam though he did not show it openly.

Also Imam Ridha (a.s.) used his position in government to help Muslims and to strengthen Islam. For example, the killing of the Sadat that had become an important government business during the times of Mansoor, Mahdi, Hadi and Haroon, was put to an end during Imam Ridha's times. He encouraged the Sadat to migrate to such distant lands as India, China and Iran.

Secondly, the ban on Muslims paying visit to the grave of Imam Husayn (a.s.) in Kerbala enforced by Haroon was brought to an end by Imam Ridha (a.s.). Mamoon had put a condition that for anyone wishing to go to Kerbala should get Imam Ridha's personal guarantee. The Imam gave this guarantee to all and sundry. This is one of the reasons why he came to be called Imam Dhamin.

Thirdly, the Imam began teaching the madh-hab of Ahlul-Bayt openly. He opened doors of different knowledge to the world so much so that his fame spread throughout the world. Even non-Muslim scholars began to come to Iran to benefit from him. Through his discussion with Christian and Jewish scholars such as Jaslik and Rasul Jaloot respectively, he saved Islam from being polluted by false ideas coming from Greek philosophy introduced by Mamoon.

His fame and name become a household story. Mamoon began to worry that those days were not far to come when his entire kingdom would forget about him and turn to the Imam. Mamoon's fears became very strong after the following incident.

It was the day of Eid. Mamoon, to show to people his own generosity, offered the Imam to lead the Eid prayers. The Imam agreed but on condition that he would be allowed to do so in the same way as the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) used to do. His condition was accepted.

When the time of prayers came, the Imam (a.s.) came out of his

house dressed in white. He was barefoot. He walked towards the place set aside for prayers with his workers and friends all dressed like him. He would say aloud, “Allahu Akbar” and everyone else would follow him saying “Allahu Akbar”.

When the people saw this sight, they too removed their shoes and joined him. When the soldiers saw this sight, they were affected so much that in the hurry to join the Imam, they removed their shoes without untying their shoe-laces!

Mamoon’s spies informed him of what was happening and advised him to stop the Imam from leading the Prayers or else there was a risk of Revolution.

Mamoon sent his messenger to stop the Imam leading the Prayers. The Imam went back to his house. People were so much disappointed that no one prayed the prayers of Eid on that day.

Mamoon, therefore, decided that it was no longer safe to have the Imam around. Mamoon could now afford to lose the Imam because he was no more weak. He had succeeded in putting down all those who were opposing him. He, therefore, planned for the Imam’s murder. We shall see how this plan was carried out later. Here it is enough to note that the Imam was soon after this incident, martyred by Mamoon’s orders.

CHAPTER 4

IMAM ALI BIN MUSA AL-RIDHA (A.S.): HIS CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

INTRODUCTION

Why was he called Ridha?

Our Eight Imam is known more by his title - Ridha - than by his real name Ali.

Some asked our ninth Imam: “Is it true - as people say - that your father Ali Bin Musa was called ‘Ridha’ because Mamoon gave him this title?”

The Imam was not happy to hear this. He said that the title of Ridha was given to his father not by Mamoon but by Allah Himself. Allah gave him this title because Allah and His Prophet were pleased with him.

Our seventh Imam, Hazrat Musa bin Jafar used to say, “Think of my son as Ridha and address him as Abul Hasan for he will call people towards the pleasure of Allah and His Prophet.”

The main elements of his character which made him best person in the world are summarised in this chapter.

HUMBLE

He was very humble and treated people with kindness and respect without seeing whether they were rich or poor. Consider the following incidents which illustrate the Imam’s humbleness.

- Ibrahim Ibne Abbas Al-Suli says, “I never saw Abul Hasan Al-Ridha (a.s.) angry with any one; nor did I see him interrupt anyone nor did I hear him refuse to do someone a favour, when this was possible. Never would he stretch his legs in front of people nor lean on something when those in his company did not do so. Never did he call his servants and those who waited

on him with a bad name. When he was ready to eat, he sat with his attendants and had meals together.”

As a matter of fact, when he was on his journey to Marv (Iran), a rich man was travelling with him. At the time of taking meals, he requested the Imam (a.s.) to have a private meal with him, away from the Imam’s servants. The Imam (a.s.) insisted to have his meals with his servants arguing that they were children of the same parents: Adam and Eve.

- Once a guest was with the Imam when the candle light was about to blow off. The guest wanted to fix the candle. The Imam would not let him do so. The Imam fixed the candle himself saying that, “We do not let our guest take this trouble.”
- Once, while in Marv, the Imam (a.s.) went to a public bath room. There he met one person who did not know the Imam (a.s.). He asked the Imam (a.s.) to massage his body. The Imam (a.s.) gave the man the massage. When people who knew the Imam saw this incident, they were very angry with the person. The person was now frightened and thought that the Imam (a.s.) would punish him for his bad behaviour. But the Imam (a.s.) remained quiet as if nothing had happened.
- Once a man told the Imam (a.s.) “By Allah, you are the best of all people.” Although the man said the truth, the Imam to show his humility replied him saying: “Do not swear so. Better than me is one who is more obedient to Allah and more pious. By Allah, these verses of the Quran still apply ...”
Then the Imam read these verses: “And we have made you nations and tribes so that you may know each other; verily the best of you to Allah is the most pious one.” (Ch.49, v.13)

GENEROUS

His generosity was for everyone: The poor and the rich, the friend

and the enemies. To illustrate this point a few examples are given below.

- A man by the name of Yasa bin Hamza says that once while he was in the company of the Imam, a man, dark in colour, tall in stature, came to the Imam. He told the Imam that he had run short of money, having spent it all while on pilgrimage to Mecca. Could the Imam lend him some money? He would give the loan back as charity while in his country, as he was well-off financially in his country.

The Imam gave him the amount the man needed. While giving the money the Imam hid behind the door so that he could not see the man's face, and the man too, could not see the Imam's face. The Imam also told him not to give the money back in the form of a charity.

After the man was gone another person who was present asked the Imam why the Imam had given the money hiding behind the door. The Imam replied, "I didn't want to see the signs of humiliation on his face for having asked for help. Haven't you heard the Prophet's Hadith that anyone who gives charity in secrecy gets rewards (THAWAB) equivalent to performing seventy pilgrimage to Mecca, and anyone who does bad openly become humiliated and he who hides his shortcomings may be forgiven by Allah? There is also the saying by a poet that when he returns from a visit to ask for a favour he has already lost his self-respect"

- When the Imam was in Marv - Iran, he wrote a letter to his son, Muhammad, telling him always to carry with him enough money to be able to meet the demands of those who came to him asking for financial help. The Imam (a.s.) also in the same letter wrote that if a man from his family asked for financial help he should be given not less than fifty dirhams. He could give even more if he so wished: If a woman from the family asked for financial help she too should get not less than fifty dirhams. The

Imam added, “O my son through your generosity I wish Allah to raise your position. So spend freely in the way of Allah and have no fear at all, as the Creator of the Universe would never let you become poor.” His son followed this advice so much that he became known as “JAWAD” or the generous one.

- It is reported that besides giving generously to those who came to him, Imam Ridha (a.s.) would visit the needy people who were too shy to go to him and give them money in the darkness of night.

Imam Ridha did not limit his generosity only to his friends, but also to his enemies. Although his brothers Abbas and Zaid treated him badly, he was always generous and forgiving to them. As a matter of fact, Zaid who had risen against Mamoon in Baghdad, was imprisoned and was released on Imam’s guarantee; he lived with the Imam till he died.

Earlier in this unit we saw how Isa Jalood robbed the Imam. Later on during the time when Imam was the crown prince, Isa Jalood was brought as a prisoner to Mamoon. Imam whispered to Mamoon, asking for Isa Jalood to be forgiven. Isa Jalood thought that the Imam was taking his revenge and was telling Mamoon to punish him. Isa Jalood therefore addressed Mamoon saying, “Do to me exactly opposite of what he has whispered to you.”

Mamoon laughed and said, “Your wishes are granted. Imam Ridha had asked for your forgiveness but I’ll give you what you asked for”. He gave instructions that Isa be put to death.

PIOUS

Like other Imams from the house of the Prophet, no one was as pious and God fearing as was Imam Ridha. He would spend his nights in prayers, and days in fasts. Abu Salt reports that while he was accompanying the Imam in the town of Sarkhas, he noticed the Imam spend a lot of his time worshipping Allah. In one day he would pray 1000 Rakats of “Salah” (prayers).

A similar report comes from Rajaa Bin Zahak who was Mamoon's officer accompanying the Imam from Medina to Marv. He says that he was with the Imam throughout the journey and claims that he had never seen any person as pious as the Imam nor had he seen any better worshipper.

The Imam used to fast at least 3 days in a month and he used to say that if any person fasts three days in a month, Allah would reward him as if he fasted for the whole year.

Despite all this, he always discouraged people not to praise him for his prayers. The Imam would always tell such people that any person who was more pious than him was better in the presence of Allah.

CHAPTER 5

IMAM ALI BIN MUSA AL-RIDHA (A.S.): HIS KNOWLEDGE AND CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

It is our belief that all the Imams from the progeny of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) who have been chosen by Allah to lead the Muslims, are the most knowledgeable persons in the world.

Unfortunately, all the Imams did not get equal opportunity to serve mankind and thus show their skills. Among those Imams who got such opportunities was Imam Ridha (a.s.), especially in the last few years of his life in the court of Mamoon.

People of his times, who in one way or another, had come in contact with him considered him as a scholar with no equal. Such people included family members, servants, government officers and scholars.

For example, Imam Musa Kadhim (a.s.) used to advise his family, saying, “Ali, your brother, is the most learned person among the descendants of Muhammad (s.a.w.w.). Therefore ask him about your religion and memorise what he tells you, for my father Jafar Bin Muhammad used to say to me on several occasions, ‘The learned scholar of the family of Muhammad is in your loins, How much I wish I had met him, for he is named after the commander of the faithful (Imam Ali (a.s.))’”.

Abu Salt who was a servant and a friend of the Imam says, “I have never seen a person as knowledgeable as Ali bin Musa Al-Ridha (a.s.). Every scholar who knew him would say the same thing. Once, Mamoon gathered a large group of men comprising experts on religion, jurists and orators and made them compete with

Imam (a.s.). Imam Ridha (a.s.) proved to be the best in all fields of knowledge and everyone who had taken part in that contest agreed on the excellence of the Imam (a.s.)”.

Ibrahim Ibne Abbas Al-Suli who was a member of the court of Mamoon says, “I have never seen any person asking any question to Imam Ridha (a.s.) and not getting a satisfactory answer. Nor have I seen any person of his times as learned as he was. Mamoon used to ask him many question, on all branches of knowledge and the Imam would always satisfy him with best answers all supported by verses from the Quran.”

Rajaa Bin Abdul Zahak, who was Mamoon’s trusted courtier and who had gone to Medina to bring the Imam to Marv (Iran) says, “By Allah, I have never seen any person as pious and as God-fearing as was Imam Ridha (a.s.). Nor have I seen any person other than Imam Ridha (a.s.) who remembers Allah so frequently.

“People, who knew that the Imam (a.s.) was in their area, would visit him and ask him many questions on their faith and he would reply them all giving examples from ‘Ahadith’ that he had learnt from his forefathers, one after the other, till the Prophet (s.a.w.w.).

“When I arrived in the court of Mamoon, he asked me to report on the Imam during the journey from Medina to Marv, I told him about everything that I saw of him during day time or at night, while he was riding or he was at rest and Mamoon replied, ‘Yes, O son of Zahak this is the most learned and pious person on the face of the earth’”.

On other occasions when discussing on his wisdom to choose Imam Ridha (a.s.) as his successor Mamoon said “...there is no one on the face of the earth as distinguished, virtuous, or pious as he is nor is there anyone who is accepted to the poor and rich alike as is he.”

Ibne Maja, one of the most famous Sunni jurists considers Imam Ridha (a.s.) as “The master of Banu Hashim.”

The author of *Tarikh Naishapuri*, Al-Hakim says that Imam Ridha (a.s.) used to issue rulings on matters of religion when he was hardly 20 years of age.

These are but a few examples to show how knowledgeable the Imam (a.s.) was in the eyes of his friends and enemies alike.

Let us now look briefly at some of the special areas of learning in which the Imam (a.s.) had the opportunity of showing his excellence.

MEDICAL SCIENCE

It is said that one day Mamoon gathered a group of physicians of the body and the mind to discuss some important health-care issues. Among those present were two renowned Christian physicians Yohana Bin Masawayh and Jibrael bin Bakhtisoo, and an Indian philosopher Salih Bin Salhama. The Imam (a.s.) was present but he kept quiet.

Mamoon asked the Imam (a.s.) if there was any contribution that he could make towards this discussion on the subject of health-care.

The Imam (a.s.) replied that his knowledge on Medical Science was based on his own observation and tests as well as on what he had learnt from his ancestors. He added that what he knew was of such vital interest for everyone that he would write it down for the benefit of mankind.

Soon after that, Mamoon had to go on state business to the Balks. From there he wrote to the Imam (a.s.) requesting him to compile his work on medical science as he had promised.

Imam (a.s.) wrote down, in the form of a letter, a treatise on medical science to be known as *Al-Risala Al-Dhahabiyya Fil Tibb*, to Mamoon. This treatise is existing even today.

In this treatise Imam explains briefly but very specifically how one should lead a balanced and healthy life through preventive and curative ways.

Imam (a.s.) deals with such branches of science as Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry and Pathology as they affect health-care. He mentions several preventive and curative medicines. He also talks about nutrition as it affects ‘human health’.

Remember that he does all this at the time when Medical science was still primitive. For example, the science of Bacteriology was still unknown.

His writing was detailed but simple to follow and put into practice. Mamoon showed it to the scholars and experts of his times and all had nothing to say except to praise the Imam and his treatise.

Mamoon was so much impressed by this work that he made it to be written in gold and to be preserved in his treasury. It therefore became famous as *Al-Risala Al Dhahabiyya Fil Tibb* or *the Golden treatise on Medicine*.

Although countless discoveries and inventions have taken place in medical science since those days, Imam Ridha’s writing on Medical Science continues to enjoy the reputation it had when it first appeared, and has continued to arouse interest in scholars of Medical Science.

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Mamoon had a great love for education and learning. He set aside large sums of money to be used to establish centres of learning. According to Ameer Ali “Schools and colleges were opened in all directions, and richly endowed”. He invited scholars in all areas of learning from Islamic as well as non-Islamic countries to come and work in his institutions of learning. Works in Greek, Latin

and Sanskrit were being translated into Arabic. Several Jewish and Christian scholars held important positions in government institutions and in the court itself.

For whatever reason, Mamoon would organise regular debates and dialogues between these non-Muslim scholars and Muslim scholars to discuss on secular as well as religious issues.

Whenever Imam Ridha (a.s.) was present in such gatherings, the result would be: He would prove to be the best amongst them all. However gifted and intelligent his opponents might have been, he would defeat them in arguments based on their own specialised knowledge. If the discussion was on religion, his opponents would either be silenced or be converted to Islam.

ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE (LAW)

Imam Ridha (a.s.) showed his skills at Islamic jurisprudence at a very young age. As a matter of fact, by the time he was hardly twenty years, he was already giving rulings on Islamic law.

At the time when Mamoon nominated the Imam (a.s.) as his successor some of the courtiers showed their displeasure, asking if the Imam (a.s.) was fit for this post. At that time a man called Muhammad bin Isa Al-Yaqteeni spoke in favour of the Imam (a.s.) saying that he alone had collected eighteen thousand answers to the questions asked to the Imam.

The Imam (a.s.) himself tells us that when the scholars of Medina met to answer questions of the members of the public, he too would join them and when they could not answer any particular question, they would all turn to him and he would then answer it for them to the satisfaction of the public.

MASTER OF LANGUAGES

Imam (a.s.) lived at the time when Mamoon invited scholars from

different parts of the world to his Court in Marv. As the Imam was always made an important part of all the discussions that took place in the Court amongst these scholars, he was able to show his skills at different languages that these scholars were familiar with. Records show that the Imam had an opportunity of showing his command of Arabic, Persian, Latin, Greek, Indian and Balkan languages. Few instances are described below to give the readers some specific examples.

- Abu Ismail Sindhi reports that “When I first visited Imam Ridha (a.s.), I addressed him in my native language: (Sindhi). This is because I did not know even one word of Arabic. The Imam (a.s.) talked with me in my language. When I was leaving, I asked him to make me understand and communicate in Arabic. He did so through his Miracle. Now I am fully conversant in Arabic.”
- When Imam (a.s.) discussed with the Jewish Rabbi (“Rasul Jaloot”) and with Roman Catholic Bishops (“Jaslik”) he did so in Hebrew and in Greek (and Latin) respectively. He made references to the original sources of their scriptures and read the relevant parts from memory. The Rabies and the Bishops praised him for his accuracy and his proficiency at these languages in which their Holy books were written.
- The natives of what is central Asia (Balk lands) today would converse with the Imam (a.s.) in their native tongues and Imam (a.s.) would solve their problems to their utmost satisfaction.

Imam Ridha (a.s.) also knew the languages of animals and many occasions have been recorded when he was found to communicate with animals. Consider the following instance.

- When Imam (a.s.) was on his way to TUS, and he was at village of Ahwan, a flock of deer came out from the woods and addressing the Imam, they said: “O son of the Prophet! Do not continue with this journey for your host’s intention is evil. He is plotting to kill you.” The Imam replied to them that although

he was aware of the evil desires of his host, he could not use this knowledge to reserve the events that were about to happen to him; the Imam therefore continued with his journey.

In those days people must have found it very difficult to accept the fact that Imam (a.s.) could communicate with animals. Today, Science has proved that indeed animals and insects have their own Languages and there are human beings - although very few of them - who through training and experience can learn these languages and communicate with animals and insects.

OTHER BRANCHES OF KNOWLEDGE

With Allah's permission, Imam Ridha (a.s.) would talk about things that would happen in the future. There are many such instances but we shall look at only a few of them as a way of illustration.

- Shaykh Mufid records in his book *AI-Irshad* that Imam Ridha (a.s.) went to Mecca for Hajj in the same year in which Haroon Rashid also went for Hajj. Imam (a.s.) turned to a hillock called Fari and said, "Fari, the one who destroys you will have his body cut into pieces - limb by limb." Those who heard the Imam say so could not understand why the Imam was saying so. However, this mystery was soon solved. Haroon's Minister, Jafar Bin Yahya, went upon Fari and ordered that a resting place that had been built there earlier for Haroon be destroyed. On returning to Baghdad, Haroon ordered Jafar to be killed. His body was cut into pieces - limb by limb.
- When the Imam (a.s.) was on his way to Marv, he stopped at Sanabad in TUS in the province of Khurasan. He stayed in the house of Harun Bin Quhtaba where Haroon had been buried. Imam (a.s.) told his companions that soon he would die and he would be buried in the neighbourhood of Haroon's grave. He even showed some of his companions the exact place where he would be buried. A few years later, whatever the Imam (a.s.) had said happened.

- Fazl bin Sahl, Mamoon's prime minister requested Mamoon and Imam (a.s.) to accompany him to the bath (Hamam) to avoid misfortune that astrologers had thought would befall on Fazl. Imam's (a.s.) advice for both Mamoon and Fazl was that they should not go to the 'Hamam' on that Wednesday, as something evil would happen on that day at the 'Hamam'. Mamoon stayed away. Fazl went to the bath and he was attacked and killed.

CHAPTER 6

IMAM ALI BIN MUSA (A.S.): HIS MARTYRDOM AND BURIAL

EVENTS LEADING TO HIS MARTYRDOM

As was explained earlier in this unit, Mamoon had called Imam Ridha (a.s.) to Iran for selfish reasons. So far as Mamoon was sure that the Imam's presence in the Court could not cause any trouble for him, he let the Imam live. However, seeing how well the Imam was serving Islam, Mamoon began to fear that the entire Muslim community would soon turn wholly towards the Imam; his own position would become weak. Moreover, Mamoon also did not fear any more uprisings from the Sadat. Mamoon therefore thought it was time for him to do away with the Imam (a.s.) by killing him.

He knew how popular the Imam (a.s.) was. His plan to kill the Imam (a.s.) had to be carried out very carefully and secretly so that he should not be blamed for it. Otherwise he could end up losing his own throne.

Mamoon planned to travel to Baghdad where he had not gone since winning it from his brother Amin. He decided to take the Imam (a.s.) with him and kill him secretly on the way.

In 203 AH Mamoon therefore undertook his journey to Iraq, accompanied by Imam Ridha (a.s.). When they arrived at the town of Sanabad in Tus, in the province of Khurasan Mamoon decided to break his journey so as to have a rest. The real reason for Mamoon to stop at Sanabad was to carry out his secret plan of killing the Imam (a.s.).

THE IMAM'S MARTYRDOM

Through divine guidance the Imam (a.s.) knew the evil intention of Mamoon. For just before leaving Marv, Imam (a.s.) informed one of his friends Hasab Bin Ubad that he would not live to see Baghdad.

When at Sanabad, a day or two before he was poisoned, the Imam informed two of his friends and workers about Mamoon's intention to kill him: They were Harthama Bin Aayan and Abu Salt Harawi who later reported what the Imam had informed them before passing away.

Harthama says that two days before the Imam had become very sick and then pass away, he called him to his tent. He was sad. He then said to Harthama, "O Harthama! My life is about to end. I shall soon meet my Allah, and my forefathers."

The Imam (a.s.) then told Harthama in details how Mamoon would force the Imam to eat grapes and drink pomegranate juice both of which would have been poisoned. From this poison the Imam would die.

The Imam (a.s.) then instructed Harthama not to allow Mamoon to interfere with the arrangement of washing his dead body and shrouding him, although Mamoon would very much want to do so. So as to stop Mamoon from doing this Imam (a.s.) advised Harthama to inform Mamoon secretly that the Imam (a.s.) had warned him that should Mamoon ignore Imam's instructions regarding the washing and shrouding of Imam's body, then Allah would punish Mamoon for his crimes immediately instead of reserving it for the hereafter. Imam (a.s.) assured Harthama that after this warning Mamoon would stay aside and Harthama would be left to do as the Imam (a.s.) wished.

The Imam (a.s.) further informed Harthama that after Mamoon had left, a white tent would appear around the Imam's dead body. Harthama would have to wait outside for a while and then he would go inside to find the body washed and fully shrouded.

The Imam (a.s.) warned Harthama that Mamoon again would interfere, wishing to bury the Imam near Haroon's grave in such

a way that the Imam's head would be in the direction of Haroon's feet. But he would not succeed. The land would prove to be of solid rock. At that moment Harthama was to advise Mamoon on the fresh location as advised by the Imam. At this location a ready-made grave would be found. However, the Imam's body was not to be lowered in the grave. This is because, soon a pool of water would appear in the grave. Then a few small fish would appear, swimming in the water! Soon after that, a big fish would appear and would swallow all the smaller fish. After that the big fish as well as the water would disappear. Only then would the Imam's body be placed in the grave.

Harthama says that on hearing this he became very sad and returned to his home. Next day, Mamoon's messenger came to him with the message that Harthama was to inform the Imam (a.s.) that he should go to Mamoon's palace immediately.

On getting this message the Imam (a.s.), accompanied with Harthama, went to Mamoon's palace. On his way Imam (a.s.) reminded Harthama of the previous night's conversation and the instructions that he was to carry out.

Harthama reports that when Mamoon saw the Imam (a.s.) he greeted him respectfully. Then he ordered his servants to bring for the Imam the grapes that he had specially kept for the Imam (a.s.)! When Harthama heard this he turned to see what effect this had on the Imam (a.s.). He noticed no change at all. But Harthama himself was so disturbed that he quietly walked away.

Before noon, Imam (a.s.) returned home, only after he had been poisoned by Mamoon. He became very sick. To show his own innocence, Mamoon put on a show as if he was really worried. He paid Imam (a.s.) a visit and called in the best doctors to treat him. But on that same night the Imam (a.s.) passed away from this world. "From Allah do we come and to Him shall we all return."

IMAM'S BURIAL

As the Imam (a.s.) had anticipated, Mamoon did try to interfere with Imam's body but both Harthama and Rayyan bin Abu Salt prevented him from doing so.

As a matter of fact, all that the Imam had told Harthama (and Abu Salt) happened.

Although, on the surface it appeared that the body washing, shrouding and burial arrangements were performed by Mamoon's people, the truth is all these service were performed directly or under the supervision of Imam Ridha's son, Imam Muhammad Jawad (a.s.), who came to Sanabad by miracle.

As Imam (a.s.) had said, Mamoon tried to bury Imam Ridha (a.s.) behind Haroon Rashid's feet but he could not. Imam (a.s.) was buried in the grave that was found already made for him. The miracle of the appearing and then disappearing of the fishes also took place and Mamoon could do nothing but say, "In his lifetime he used to perform miracles. Now that he is dead he still performs miracles."

CONCLUSION

Readers may be wondering to know what happened to Mamoon after Imam Ridha's martyrdom. I shall end this chapter by narrating a few incidents on the life of Mamoon till his death in 218 AH at the age of 48 years.

After the martyrdom and burial of Imam Ridha (a.s.), Mamoon and his army continued with their journey to Baghdad. As the people of Baghdad were opposed to Mamoon and as it was not very safe for him to go there, he stayed behind at Halwan and instead sent his army under the command of Hamid Tusi.

Hamid Tusi established some law and order in Baghdad. Then

Mamoon marched into Baghdad. His main opponents were the Bani Abbas who hated Mamoon because he had killed his brother Amin (whose father and mother were both Abbasids) and had named Imam Ridha (a.s.) as his successor. To win them, he first asked them to go back to him as Imam Ridha (a.s.) whose appointment as his successor had angered them, was now dead.

He went one step ahead by naming his brother Abu Ishaq (Mu'tasim) as his next successor. He brought back the Abbasid tradition of the black uniform for the soldiers and black flag instead of the green uniform and green flag that had been introduced when Mamoon had appointed Imam Ridha as his successor.

After Imam Ridha (a.s.), Mamoon lived for 15 years. In 218 AH while he was in Tarsus he died after a short illness.

His brother Abu Ishaq (Mu'tasim) succeeded him as the next Caliph. We shall learn more about him when we discuss the life of our ninth Imam, Hazrat Muhammad Taqi, peace be upon him.

CHAPTER 7 : MERITS OF VISITING IMAM RIDHA'S MAUSOLEUM

“AHADITH” ON THE MERITS OF VISITING IMAM RIDHA'S MAUSOLEUM

Many traditions have been recorded on the importance of visiting the mausoleum of Imam Ridha (a.s.) in Mash-had Iran. I shall mention only a few of them in this unit.

1. The Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) is reported to have said that “That time is not far when part of my body will be buried in the country which was founded by Dhulqarnain and at a place called Sanabad. Anyone who will undertake a journey to visit there despite difficulties and dangers, I guarantee to secure for him paradise on the Day of Judgement from Almighty Allah.”
2. Shaykh Saduq reports Imam Ridha (a.s.) to have said that any person who shall visit his mausoleum in spite of the difficulties and dangers of undertaking such a journey, will receive a visitation and help from Imam (a.s.) on three very frightful occasions on the Day of Qiyamat. These three occasions are: at the time of receiving records of his deeds (Naama-e-A'mal); secondly, when he will be giving his accounts and thirdly when he will be passing over the bridge of Siraat.
3. Shaykh Tusi has recorded that a man by the name of Muhammad Bin Abu Nashr claimed to have read the writings of Imam Ridha (a.s.), stating that any person who visited his shrine would get same reward as performing 1000 pilgrimages (Umra) to Mecca. Muhammad inquiries from Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) if indeed there was so much Thawab in visiting the grave of his grandfather, Imam Ridha (a.s.). Imam Naqi (a.s.) not only confirmed this Hadith but added to it saying that: “A person who performs such a visitation fully knowing and abiding by his responsibilities towards the Imam (a.s.) will get Thawab equal to 2000 Hajj.”

4. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) is reported to have said, “I am offering from Allah a guarantee to go to Paradise to that person who pays a visit to the shrine of my father in Tus and who recognises him as the true Imam.”
5. Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) is reported to have said that Imam Ridha’s (a.s.) grave is amongst lands of Paradise. Allah will save from Hell fire he who visits this grave, and will send him to Paradise.

CHAPTER 8 : SOME SAYINGS OF IMAM RIDHA (A.S.)

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons why we study the life history of the Aimmah appointed by Allah is to seek right guidance through them. We get this guidance when we follow the footsteps of these Imams. One way of doing this is to act on the advice that they have left behind for us. We call these advice Ahadith.

In this chapter we shall learn about some of the Ahadith from Imam Ridha (a.s.).

The Imam (a.s.) has said:

1. There are certain things which give freshness to the mind. They are: wearing of perfume, eating of honey, horse-riding and watching of the greenery.
2. Do not avoid using perfume. Ideally wear perfume daily. Otherwise wear it after every three days. If you cannot do that, then wear it at least on every Friday.
3. If you acquire any good quality, do not feel proud about it. Rather, pray to Allah that he should enable you to continue enjoying it and that he should perfect it for you.
4. We forget that this life is temporary and expect to live very long. The truth is, death is going to end all our long expectations. Do not let your worthless desires make you become proud. Live a life of modesty and do not have too many high hopes. The life in this world is like a passing shadow, and a traveller. The traveller rests under the shadow and then goes away.
5. People blame time for all their misfortunes. The truth is, there is nothing wrong with time. The problem is with us, not with

time. If time could speak, it would tell us of all our weaknesses and thus embarrass us.

6. A man's true friend is his family, and his real enemy is his ignorance.
7. A true believer is he who is happy when he does a virtuous deed but is very sad when he commits a sin; he then prays for his forgiveness.
8. There are three most fearful times for every human being: first when he is born, second when he dies and third, when he will be brought back on the Day of Judgement.
9. Allah has ordered for three things to be performed together with three other things. He has paired prayers (Salat) with Zakat. Prayers (Salat) of a person who does not give Zakat remain incomplete for acceptance. Allah has ordered a believer to thank Him and the believer's parents. He who thanks Allah but not his own parents will be regarded to have ignored thanking Allah. Allah asks the believers to be pious and be kind to their kith and kin. Piety without kindness to one's relatives is useless.
10. A person cannot acquire wealth until he has in him five qualities:
 - a. Worst type of misery
 - b. Long expectations
 - c. Worst type of greed
 - d. Bad feelings for his kith and kin
 - e. Preference of this world over the hereafter
11. Imam Ridha (a.s.) quotes the Prophet to have said that: The conditions that make a person be a true believer are: his verbal acceptance, his conviction of the heart and his performance of the requirements of faith.

12. Shaykh Saduq relates the following incident from the words of an eye witness, Ishaq Bin Rahwiya, who says:

When Imam Ridha (a.s.) was in Naishapur on his way to Tus, scholars and narrators of Ahadith approached the Imam (a.s.) requesting him to tell them any hadith from which they could derive benefits.

The Imam at that time was sitting behind curtains on his camel. He drew the curtains and addressing the people who had gathered to hear him said, "I heard it from my father Musa bin Jafar, who heard it from his father Jafar bin Muhammad, who heard it from his father Muhammad bin Ali, who heard it from his father Ali Bin Muhammad (a.s.), who heard it from his father Husayn bin Ali (a.s.), who heard it from his father Ali Bin Abu Talib (a.s.), who heard it from his Prophet (s.a.w.w.), who heard It from the Arch Angel Jibrael, who heard it from Allah who said, 'LA ILAHA ILLA LLAH is a fort; whoever enters it is safe from my punishment.'

Having said this, the Imam paused and his camel moved forward. The Imam then stopped his camel and addressing his listeners, he added, "But there are certain conditions, and I am one of those conditions."

Commenting on this tradition, Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal says that, "The chain on which this tradition is based is so strong and effective, that if the tradition is read to a lunatic, he regains his senses."

13. Imam Ridha (a.s.) is reported to have said, "Minor sins (Gunah-e-Saghira) lead to major Sins (Gunah-e-kabira). Do not therefore indulge in minor sins lest they put you on the way to major sins, for he who becomes negligent of small sins, commits major sins."

14. The Imam (a.s.) said, "Even if there was no fear of the Hell, nor the allurements of heaven, we would still have to show obedience to Allah because of the uncountable bounties He has given to us."

15. Suleiman Bin Jafar reports that once he was in presence of the Imam (a.s.) in the Imam's house. The Imam's servants had hired a labourer to help them do some work. The Imam asked them if they had agreed with the labourer on his charges. The servants said they had not. The Imam (a.s.) was unhappy about this and said, "Haven't I instructed you many times before not to engage the services of a worker before agreeing in advance on his remuneration? This is because even if you pay three times more than what is reasonable for a job to a worker whose rate was not fixed, it will appear inadequate. On the other hand, if you pay slightly more than what you agreed in advance, you will please the worker enormously."

CHAPTER 9 : HIS MIRACLES

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding units, we have already considered what miracles are and why and when the twelve Imams, appointed by Allah as successors of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), show such miracles.

In this chapter, we shall examine a few miracles that are associated with Imam Ridha (a.s.).

MIRACLE ONE

In the year in which Imam Ridha (a.s.) came to Tus, the people of Tus experienced a drought. There was no rain and shortage of water began to be felt everywhere. The enemies of Islam began to blame Imam Ridha (a.s.) for this, saying that the drought was caused by Imam Ridha's presence.

Mamoon was worried and he asked Imam Ridha to pray to Allah, asking for rain showers. Imam instructed all Muslims to assemble in the desert on Monday. The Imam then prayed to Allah, seeking His Mercy. No sooner had he done so, then there was lightning and thunder. Clouds formed in the sky. Fearing that rain would fall on them, people wanted to run away to their homes. The Imam told them not to rush home as the clouds that had formed above them would rain elsewhere. In this way, ten times Imam assured people not to run away as the clouds appearing on the sky were meant to shower elsewhere.

However when the clouds appeared on the eleventh time, Imam (a.s.) asked people to retire to their homes as this time the clouds above them would produce heavy rain. Soon after that, it rained heavily. The parched land was brought back to life and all the vessels used to store public water were filled with water. The drought had come to an end.

Everybody in town began to talk about this miracle. One enemy of the Imam (a.s.) approached the Imam (a.s.) in presence of Mamoon, asking the Imam to publicly deny that he had performed a miracle. When the Imam (a.s.) said that he could not stop people from praising Allah's bounties, the man, challenged the Imam to show another miracle by giving life two lions drawn on a carpet spread in the court.

Without any hesitation, the Imam (a.s.) turned to the carpet and ordered the imaginary lions to become real. Everybody who was present there saw two roaring lions. Imam's next instructions were "O you lions! Devour this enemy of Allah." The lions pounced on that person, tore him into pieces and ate him completely.

Those present begged the Imam (a.s.) to send away those lions before they could devour any of them. The Imam (a.s.) instructed the lions to return to their original state and they did so.

The man who was devoured by the lions never came back. Allah knows what happened to him.

MIRACLE TWO

While on his way to Tus, Imam Ridha (a.s.) broke his journey for a while in Baghdad, and put up at a believer's house. After a day or so the believer warmed his public bath (Hamam) only for the Imam (a.s.).

In this neighbourhood there lived a person who was suffering from leprosy (a disease which cause one's skin to go white and then decay and give out very bad smell). He decided to seek Imam's help. When the Imam was about to enter the bath house, this person came to the Imam (a.s.) and asked for help.

The Imam (a.s.) took some water from the bath, read Sura Fatiha and sprinkled the water over the body of the leper. The leper was totally cured.

People who were standing by could not believe what they saw. Indeed, a miracle had taken place.

Many people became Shias of Imam Ridha (a.s.) after this incident.

MIRACLE THREE

A man by the name of Habib Nayaji reports, “One day I dreamt that the Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was sitting in our local Mosque. I went to sit facing him. In front of the Prophet was a plate full of dates. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) picked a handful of dates and gave them to me. In the state of dream, I counted the dates and found them to be eighteen. I then awoke. I interpreted this dream to mean that I have eighteen more years to live. I blamed myself for not asking the Prophet for more dates.”

Twenty days after this incident, Habib learnt that Imam Ridha (a.s.) had visited the local Mosque. He rushed to the Mosque. He saw exactly what he had seen twenty days earlier in his dreams. The only difference was in place of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was Imam Ridha. Habib went and sat in the same place he had done in his dream. Imam Ridha (a.s.) took a handful of dates from a plate in front of him and gave them to Habib.

On counting the dates, Habib found them to be eighteen. Turning to the Imam (a.s.) he said, “O the son of the Prophet! Please give me some more.”

The Imam smiled and replied, “O Habib! If my grandfather had given you more than eighteen pieces in your dream I too would have done so.”

Habib says that he had not disclosed his dream to anyone. The Imam (a.s.) knew it through miracle.

MIRACLE FOUR

It was the custom of the court of Mamoon that any time Imam

Ridha (a.s.) came to visit Mamoon, the courtiers would stand up and lift the curtains so that the Imam could pass unhindered. Because of the instigation of some of the jealous court officers, one day the courtiers decided not to lift the curtain.

When the Imam came in, the courtiers stood without lifting the curtains.

Suddenly a strong Wind began to blow. Curtains were lifted because of the gust of the Wind and the Imam (a.s.) passed through them unhindered.

When the courtiers noticed this, they could not help but compare Imam (a.s.) with Prophet Solomon, both of whom, they said, had control over Wind.

From then onwards the courtiers never failed in their duty to lift the curtains for the Imam (a.s.).

CHAPTER 10 :

HIS FAMILY

HIS WIVES

Imam Ridha's wife, from whom Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) was born, was known as Subaika or Sukaina. She was a Nubian. She is also known as Khayzran and she was from the same tribe as the Prophet's wife, Hazrat Maria, the Coptic maid who then became Muslim.

When Imam (a.s.) came to Tus, there Mamoon made him marry his daughter, Umm Habiba. However, according to Shaykh Mufid, Imam had married Umm Habiba when still in Medina.

HIS CHILDREN

According to Shaykh Mufid, the Imam (a.s.) had only one child, Hazrat Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.). Other scholars say he had five sons and one daughter.

HIS BROTHER

Earlier in this unit, we learnt about Imam Ridha's brothers - Ibrahim, Zaid and Abbas - who took the Imam to court. Later on, when the world turned against them they returned to Imam Ridha (a.s.) for protection. The Imam forgave them and let them stay with him.

In this unit, we shall learn something about Imam Ridha's brother, Qasim.

Qasim was a very pious person. Fearing Haroon Rashid's oppression, he went into hiding far away from Medina. He lived and died in Hilla, Iraq. There is great Thawab in visiting his shrine. Imam Ridha (a.s.) is reported to have said, "Those who live far from where I shall be buried may visit the grave of my brother Qasim and they shall get the same reward (Thawab) as visiting my grave."

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. Briefly describe who Imam Ridha's mother was. In your description consider the following factors:
 - a. Where was she from and how did she get to Medina?
 - b. What were the views of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Hamida Khatoon about her?
 - c. Illustrate her character

2. In (a) to (e) below, indicate which is the most correct answer:
 - a. Imam Ridha (a.s.) was born when:
 - i. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) was still alive
 - ii. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) had just died
 - iii. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) had already passed away several years earlier
 - iv. None of the above

 - b. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) used to speak about Imam Ridha (a.s.) because
 - i. He wanted to praise Imam Kadhim (a.s.)
 - ii. He was an Imam
 - iii. He wanted the family to be prepared for their future Imam
 - iv. The answer is not given

 - c. It was important for Imam Kadhim (a.s.) to let his followers know the position of Imam Ridha (a.s.) so that
 - i. They could consider him together with Ismail and Abdulla in deciding who would be the next Imam
 - ii. They could test him when the seventh Imam was still alive
 - iii. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) would be pleased
 - iv. They would have no difficulties in knowing who the next rightful Imam was

- d. The best description of Imam Ridha's life in company of his father is
 - i. Quiet but sorrowful
 - ii. Peaceful but sorrowful
 - iii. Short and without much activity
 - iv. None of the above

- e. Imam Kadhim (a.s.) compared those who would deny the Imamate of Imam Ridha (a.s.) with the enemies of Imam Ali (a.s.) so as to
 - i. Warn his followers of the dangers of not accepting Imam Ridha (a.s.) as the eighth Imam.
 - ii. Encourage his followers to choose anyone whom they thought fit, like some people did with Imam Ali (a.s.)
 - iii. For no specific reason
 - iv. Avoid future misunderstandings

CHAPTER 2

1. Write short notes about the life of:
 - a. Isa Bin Jalood
 - b. Muhammad Bin Jafar Sadiq (a.s.)
 - c. Um Ahmad
 - d. Ishaq Bin Jafar Sadiq (a.s.)

2. Who started the Waqifia movement? Why? What was Imam Ridha's attitude towards this movement? Why?

3. What kind of treatment did Imam Ridha (a.s.) get from his brothers? How did he treat them? Why?

CHAPTER 3

1. Explain the reasons behind the following
 - i. Most of the time Haroon Rashid left Imam Ridha (a.s.) on his own
 - ii. Haroon Rashid could not appoint Mamoon as his sole successor

- iii. Amin's cause of death was his own brother Mamoon
 - iv. In the period 195 to 198 AH Imam Ridha (a.s.) could teach Islam freely
 - v. The 'Sadat' rose against Mamoon's earlier period of rulership
2. List as many reasons as you can to explain why Mamoon's offered his throne to Imam Ridha (a.s.). Write briefly on any 3 reasons.
 3. Did Imam Ridha (a.s.) willingly go to Iran on the invitation of Mamoon? Explain.
 4. Under what conditions did Imam Ridha (a.s.) agree to be Mamoon's "WALI AHAD"?
 5. Explain how was it possible that Mamoon who made Imam Ridha his "WALI AHAD" also got him killed.
 6. When some people complained to the Imam (a.s.) as to why he had been co-operating with Mamoon what explanations did the Imam (a.s.) give?

CHAPTER 4

1. Briefly explain why the eighth Imam is called Ridha.
2. Write a brief essay on the character of the Imam, focusing on his humility and his generosity.
3. Having studied the character of Imam Ridha (a.s.) say which of his actions can we follow easily and which ones are difficult to carry out. Give examples and reasons.

CHAPTER 5

1. "Family-members, servants, government officials and scholars who in one way or another came in contact with the Imam (a.s.) found him an exceptional person."
 - For each of these four groups of people (i.e. family members, servants, government officers and scholars)
 - a. Give two names under each category
 - b. Explain what each said about the Imam.

2. In (a) to (f) below choose the most appropriate answer from (i) to (iv).
- a. Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) had wished he could meet Imam Ridha (a.s.) because Imam Ridha (a.s.)
- was the only learned scholar of the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.).
 - was from the loins of Imam Kadhim (a.s.)
 - was in a way like Imam Ali (a.s.)
 - was the commander of the faithful
- b. Imam Ridha's knowledge was:
- In every field
 - In languages, medical science and theology
 - On religion
 - None of (i), (ii) and (iii)
- c. Imam Ridha's knowledge on medical science was acquired by him
- Through miracle
 - Through research
 - From his ancestors
 - From research, ancestors and from Allah
- d. Which one of the following is not true about Al-Risala Al-Dhahabiyya Fil Tibb
- It was in the style of a letter
 - It was a work on Medical science
 - It was written with the help of two Christian physicians and an Indian philosopher
 - Among many other things, it deals with curative and preventive medicines
- e. The most wonderful thing about Al-Risala is
- It passed the tests of the scholars and experts
 - It is written in gold and preserved in treasury

- iii. It is as important today as when it was first written
- iv. It is detailed but simple

f. The most outstanding thing about Imam Ridha's knowledge was

- i. He was superior in all branches of learning
- ii. He defeated his opponents whoever they were
- iii. His superior knowledge in every branch of knowledge either silenced his opponents or turned them Muslims
- iv. (i), (ii), (iii) above

CHAPTER 6

1. Explain the following statements
 - a. Mamoon went on a journey to Baghdad in 203 AH
 - b. Mamoon broke his journey at Sanabad
 - c. Mamoon forced the Imam (a.s.) to eat grapes
 - d. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) came through miracle to Sanabad
 - e. Mamoon called the best doctors to treat Imam (a.s.)

2. What steps did Mamoon take to kill Imam Ridha (a.s.)? Mention one or two actions that Mamoon took after the Martyrdom of Imam (a.s.) which prove that Mamoon did not have any real love for Imam (a.s.).

CHAPTER 7

1. Briefly discuss the merits of visiting the mausoleum of Imam Ridha (a.s.).



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