IMAM AL-RIDA

Salah-Ads

Professor of Mesr University

Introduction and commentaries from Abdul-Husayn Taleie

Professor of Qum University

***Abstract**: The present article is a part of the book "Al Bayt Al-Nabi" (Cairo: Dar Al- Husayn al-Islamiyya, 2009/1430), which is being published for the first time.*

***Key words**: social interactions, social relationship, society.*

Introduction

The affection towards Ahl al-Bayt (PBUH) is the common point between Shia and Sunni scholars. The perfections of the Prophet's family are so luminous that all fair people are absorbed to them, and open up their tongue to relate these virtues. Sunni Egyptian scholars have also written various works and try to reflect the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt as much as they can. Of course, it should be noted that their sources were mostly Sunni texts. Researchers know how much of these works have undergone changes and distortions. The most important feature of these books is manifestation of the love of Ahlul-Bayt that that due to our lack of knowledge of them and neglected the opportunities we are given for advertisement of the truths regarding them.

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The book "Al Bayt Al-Nabi" by Salah Ads is one of the written sources concerning Ahlul Bayt. The author of this book is of Sunni Egyptian scholars who has some works on Sunni Ilm al-Hadith like: the brief of Sirah ibn Hisham, the brief of Al-Bukhari, and the brief of Fath al-Bari, Qamus Alfaz and 'Ibarat Ahadith Al-Bukhari. And also some works about the history of Islam in various time like: Mukhtasar Usdul Ghabah, Mukhtasar Al-Hurub Al-Salibiyah.

Resources of the book are mainly old Sunni texts, such as: Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Sirah Ibn Hisham, Sahih Bukhari and its description "Fath al-Bari", Al-Asabah and Usdul Ghabah (two books about the Companions), Tarikh Tabari, Tarikh Al-Khulafa Siyuti, al-Mukhtasar Abul-Fida, Al-Suluk lil Ma'refah duwal al-Muluk Miqrizi. The only source of the book that directly talks about Ahl al-Bayt is the Book of Nur al-Absar by Shebalanji. It is clear that as we have said some parts of the book can be criticized seriously. However, there is a special good atmosphere in the book.

In these accounts, a kind of superficial look and escape from analysis - and perhaps with some exaggeration, optimism towards enemies of the Imams can be detected which affect loyalty to the text. Perhaps the advice to keen readers to critically examine this series of articles may compensate this problem to some extent.

Another point is that Dr. Salah Ads, like some contemporary Egyptian writers, is not accustomed to include sources of his claims in the book. This can undermine content, but anyway they write in this way and a translator should translate the same.

A number of Dr. Ads' counterparts, considers Ahl al-Bayt exclusively limited to the five and offspring of Imams buried in Egypt; but Ads escaped this apparent error and included the history of the twelve Imams in his book, which is one of the privileges of his book.

In this article, translation of a part of this book about Imam Rida is offered. I hope it can be a step to knowing proofs of God.

Abdul-Husayn Taleie

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Imam Ali al- Rida

The eighth Imam, Imam Ali al- Rida ibn Musa al-Kazim Ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq ibn Muhammad al-Bāqr Ibn Ali Zein al-'Abedin ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (May God be satisfied with him.)

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was born in the year 148 A.H. and his poet was De’bel.

One day he came out from Ma'mun’s court that Abu Nuwas saw him. He approached him, saluted and said, "The offspring of the Prophet!" I've composed some poems about you that I would like you hear. He said, “read”. Abu Nuwas said:

مطهرون نقيات ثيابهم
تجرى الصلاة عليهم كلما ذكروا
من لم يكن علويا حين تنسبه
فما له فى قديم الدهر مفتخر
اولئک القوم اهل البيت عندهم
علم الكتاب و ما جانت به السور

Also, De’bel came to Imam Ali 'al Rida and said: " oh, the offspring of Prophet!" I have composed a verse eulogizing you Ahlul Bayt, and I have sworn that I do not read it for anyone before I read it for you. I like you hear it from me.

Ali al- Rida said: read. De’bel read:

ذكرت محل الربيع من عرفات
فأجريت دمع العين بالعبرات

[In the text 27 verses is cited from De’bel.]

When he read his poetry, Imam Ali al-Rida commanded a bag of one hundred dinars be given to him. De’bel returned it. He said: "I swear by God, I have not come here for money, but I have come to look at his blessed face and greet him." I do not need money. If he thinks it is proper, he gives me his blessed clothes.

Imam Rida gave his clothes to him and he returned a hundred-Dinar bag. De’bel moved to Iraq by a karavan. The thieves attacked them and looted their property. When the thieves were engaged in the division of the stolen things, one of them whispered:

أرى فيئهم فى غير هم متقسما
و آيديهم من فيئهم صفرات

De’bel asked: Do you know who composed this poem? He said: "A poet from the Khuzai tribe, named De’bel, who is a poet of Ahl al-Bayt, who wrote this poem in their praise."

He said: I'm De’bel. Then he read the complete poem. The thieves released the caravan and returned their property for the sake of the poet Ahl al-Bayt, De’bel.

Imam Ali al-Rida was born in 148 A.H., the year when his grandfather, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, died during Mansour rulership.

Imam Ali al-Rida lived 55 years and died at the time of Ma'mun rulership in ٢٠٣. At the time of his youth in the year

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١٦٩ A.H. - during the reign of Hadi ‘Abbasi – he witnessed "Fakh", in which Husayn, the descendant of Imam Hasan, was killed. Husayn ibn Ali ibn Hasan ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib emerged in Medina, people swore allegiance to him, the Abbasid governor of Medina fled, he went to Mecca during the hajj, the Abbasid fought with him, defeated him, cut off his head, they sent his head and his followers’ head to Hadi ‘Abbasi, but he did not give the killers valuable awards.

Among the defeated individuals of "Fakh" event, Idris, the descendant of Imam Hasan bin Ali ibn Abi Talib was saved in the region in the back of Mecca, and escaped to Maghreb, where Idris the second had been erected a rulership after murdering his father with poison. The mentioned Idris is Idris ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Hasan ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib.

The reign of Hadi ‘Abbasi lasted only a year. After him, Haroun al-Rashid became the ruler, and his caliphate lasted for 23 years (193-١٧٠٣).

Four years after the beginning of the Haroun rulership, Yahya bin Abdullah bin Hasan ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib moved to Deylam and started a movement. Rashid send army men commanded by Fazl bin Yahya to defeat him. He gave security to Yahya, but then Fazl and Rashid betrayed him and imprisoned him until he died in custody.

Imam Ali al-Rida saw his father, Imam Musa Kazim, in the year 183, passing away in the jail of Haroun, when he was ٣٥ at that time. After Haroun, he saw Amin's caliphate, which was 5 years (193-١٩٨). Amin opposed the will of his father who wanted Ma’mun be his crown prince, and omitted his name from the official sermons after prays and instead of him named Musa, his son, who was a child as his crown prince.

Anyway the war between Amin and Ma'mun led to the death of Amin in 198 A.H.. Ma'mun ruled from 198 to 218. In the first year of his government in 199, the movement of Ibn al-Tabataba al-‘Alawi (Muhammad ibn Ibrahim bin Isma'il ibn Ibrahim ibn Hasan ibn al-ibn al-ibn Abu Talib) happened. He invited people to Rida. The people of Kufa swore allegiance to him, fought with the Ma'mun army, and defeated them. Then after the death of Ibn Tabataba, clashes took place between the Ma'mun corps and the followers of al-Tabataba al-‘Alawi. In the year 200, Ibrahim bin Musa bin Ja'far ibn Muhammad ‘Alavi rebelled and dominated Yemen.

Abul-Fada said, "In year 201, the immoral people dominated Baghdad,

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robbed people and stole things from people, openly harassed women and children, plundered villages, and bothered people.

People took refuge in a person who had hanged the Qur'an around his neck, proclaimed the good and forbid evil, who was called "Sahl bin Sala'mah." [1]

In the same year, Ma'mun appointed Imam Ali al- Rida as his crown prince to be the next caliph after him because he saw that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt were more deserved to be the government. In addition, he saw Ali al-Rida is the one who is the most trusted and worthy person to be the leader. This apparent confirmation of the worth of Ahlul Bayt has historic value because it has been issued by an Abbasid caliphate when he was in the peak of his power.

Ma'mun was not a usual caliph, he was the most knowledgeable and most elite caliph of them. But the Abbasids did not like this and called for the removal of the crown prince. But Ma'mun did not like this idea and insisted on his words. He even gave his daughter in marriage to Imam Ali al-Rida. Of course, this crown prince died suddenly in 203 A.H. Ma'mun gave the news of his demise to the people of Baghdad, and wrote: « انما نقمتم علیَّ بسببه و قد مات»[2]

This event was at age 55 in the year 203 A.H.

Ali al-Rida was ready to answer any question asked by Ma'mun. His sleep was short and he ate a little. He fasted a lot. He did not miss three days fasting per month. He was very benefactor and gave alms. Most of these alms were in the darkness of nights.

Somebody asked him, "Does Allah dictate people to do what they can not do?" He replied, "The justice of Allah is more than this." They asked: Do people have power over whatever they want? He said they are weaker than this.

Anyway, the greatness of the character of Imam Ali al-Rida was revealed by the commandment of Ma'mun for him to be the crown, which acknowledged merits of him and the Ahl al-Bayt.

Ma'mun considered our master Ali as the supreme companion after the Prophet.

In the case of Fadak, ‘Umar ibn Abdul ‘Aziz returned it to the Ahlul Bayt, but the next rulers withdrew it, and Ma'mun returned it to Ali al-Rida again.

Commentaries

١. It should be appreciated from Dr. Salah Ads that in the era of prevalence

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of injustice and rumors revealed a droplet of the sea of virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt and recorded them in his book. In the previous words, I said that declaring truth is what which has given a special value to his book such as including the poems of Abu Nuwas and De'bel, each of which can be regarded as a historical proof of the oppression and hardship done to Ahlul-Bayt.

٢. Ads was written the word "Fakh فخ" twice as "Vezوج", which is corrected, and we did not know he copied this word in this way from somewhere or it was a typo mistake. In addition, the coupling of the daughter of Ma'mun was with Imam Jawad (pbuh), not Imam Rida. Of course, these errors should not stop us.

٣.It has been mentioned earlier that limiting our research to the settings lifetime of a scholar- let alone an innocent Imam will not give us a broad and sharp picture of what he has done. This kind of information is only some useful historical tips that pave the way to the main discussion, but they are only introductions. The reader of this article expects to see what Imam Rida (peace be upon him) has done and said to guide people but he could find no answer in this article.

The reader likes to read a report (even a brief report) about the debates of Imam Rida with the heads of religions, meetings of His Holiness with Ma'mun and the other one for example with Ali ibn Jahm regarding the important issue of the prophets' infallibility and dozens of other titles, but not even find a line or a hint!

٤. How did Imam Rida pass away and why? Was it a normal death? The least level of discussion for a researcher is to see the discrepancies exist among old resources in this regard. And this should open up another discussion in this book, but we still do not find any discussion about it, except a few unfinished words of Abul-Fada.

Thus, we are faced with a very brief and dispersed report.

٥.Some of the important events of His time have been mentioned in many sources of Sunnis, such as the narrative of the Hadith of the Selselatul Dhahab سلسلة الذهب in Neyshabur, and the narrated traditions of the Abu-Salt Herawi, which have special place in the Sunnite Rejila رجالی sources. Why does the Egyptian Master not mention them?

٦.It is very surprising that a knowlegable historian, after twelve centuries, continues to remained trapped in the

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deception of Ma'mun, and does not see Imam's identity by his actions. Holding discussion meetings to declare Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) superiority does not make any virtue for Ma'mun.

The caliph, on one hand, hold such a meeting, and on the other hand, violated the very right of the son of Amir al-Mu'minin. His description is what is mentioned in the Qur'an,

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

"They denied them unjustly out of pride, though their souls acknowledged them. See, how was the end of the corrupt workers!"

which is denial of right after internal confession to it.

It is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an, that the cause of separation from the right, is not ignorance, but is jealousy and violation of rights of others:

و ما تفرقوا الا من بعد ما جائتهم البينات بغيا بينهم

"***And we will continue to bless you, after all***"

فما اختلفوا الا من بعد ما جائهم العلم بغيا بينهم

Everyone in his or her behavior can see that the main motive for his/her behavior, is not knowledge but is will. Ma'mun's life was tyrant-based, and for power he did not have mercy on his brother. Is he expected to behave better with others?

٧. The Fadak story should also be analyzed in the same way. Neither were Ahlul Bayt in need of the income ofa piece of land, nor returning a piece of land could prove legitimacy of a caliph. In fact, Fadak means Muslim guardianship; the fact that all the rulers of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid - even 'Umar bin 'Abdul 'Aziz and Ma'mun - did not accept.

Therefore, when Haroun asked Imam Musa Kazem (peace be upon him) about the border of Fadak, Imam answered the whole territory of the country of Haroun.

So it is a very naive idea to see returning Fadak as a sign of the usurper's goodwill.

٨. Hundreds of hadiths from Imam Rida are recorded which are the clear light on the way of truth seekers, which have been mentioned in Shiite and Sunni sources.

Hakim Neyshabouri has a book titled "Mafakhir Al-Rida ", some of its parts are found in other works. Also, several books titled "Musnad al-Rida ", which the narrators are Sunnite..

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Several books specifically address this issue.

Closing eyes on all of these proofs consequence is to think that the story of Imam Rida is a historical story belonging to the past, which has nothing to do with our life.

In such a situation, the sun is not culprit, but blame should fall on the one whose eyes are closed and prefers to move eyefolded rather that lightness.

And God warns:

" أفمن يمشى مكبا على وجهه أهدى أم من يمشى سويا على صراط مستقيم؟"

٩. The issue of pilgrimage of Imam Rida's shrine (pbuh) in Khorasan is one of the most important cultural axis in the opinion of both Shiite and Sunni. Failure to pay attention to this important issue by a great researcher is not acceptable.

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[1] Mukhtasar Tarikh al-Bashar, Abu al-Fida, p.2, p.34

[٢]ibid,vol.2, p. 36

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