



## Analysis and Review of 60 Raḍavi Ta‘ziyeh Plays

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### Abstract

The present article analyzes and reviews 60 ta‘ziyeh plays related to Imam Riḍā (AS) and his family, compiled in a descriptive-analytical index. A large portion of these plays was available to the researcher in manuscript form and is examined here for the first time. The plays under review cover a wide range of subjects, from the life and martyrdom of Imam Kāẓim (AS) to the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS) and his descendants, and even post-martyrdom miracles. This report analyzes the narrative structure, characterology, frequency of character appearances, poets and sources, as well as recurring patterns in these plays. The findings show that Ghulām‘alī Nād‘alīzādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī) with 30 plays (50%) is the most prolific poet, Imam Riḍā (AS) appearing in 39 plays (65%) is the most frequent character, and Ma‘mūn with 22 plays (36.4%) is the main antagonist of this collection.

**Keywords:** ta‘ziyeh, Raḍavi ta‘ziyeh plays, religious drama, manuscript analysis

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## Introduction

Ta'ziyeh or shabīh-khwānī (passion play), as a religious drama, gradually took shape from the late Safavid period; it developed during the Zand period and finally reached its peak of prosperity and glory during the Qajar period. The central theme of ta'ziyeh plays is the event of 'Ashūrā and the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (AS), which in Shiite culture is considered one of the most important turning points in history. However, other historical events and doctrinal subjects also hold a special place in this religious drama; although ta'ziyeh poets have tried in all their plays (from the day of pre-eternity to the Day of Resurrection) to allude to the event of 'Ashūrā. Among the themes considered in ta'ziyeh plays is the life of Imam Riḍā (AS), his journey to Khorasan, and his martyrdom at the hands of Ma'mūn al-'Abbāsī. Furthermore, the story of the life and martyrdom of the family and companions of Imam Riḍā (AS), as well as his miracles, are other subjects that have attracted the attention of ta'ziyeh poets from about two hundred years ago to the present. Although there is no precise date for the composition of the first ta'ziyeh play, considering the devotion of Iranians to the Eighth Imam and the location of his noble shrine in Iran, one can guess that the ta'ziyeh of Imam Riḍā's martyrdom was among the first non-'Ashūrā subjects to attract the attention of ta'ziyeh poets.

## Background

In recent years, efforts have been made to collect Raḍavi ta'ziyeh plays, which are mentioned below:

**Defter-e Ta'ziyeh 2:** This volume, published in 1996 (1375 AHsh) through the efforts of Davūd Faṭḥ'alī Begī, contains three Raḍavi plays. The compiler took the plays "Surkhak-e Mal'ūn" (The Cursed Surkhak) and "Zuvvār-e Gharīb" (The Strange Pilgrims) from Raḥīm Mo'inī Kurdānī (a ta'ziyeh performer from Sāvojbolāgh) and the play of the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS) from Taqī Nuvīsī (a ta'ziyeh performer from Tehran), and compared the latter play with the version of Hāshim Fayyāḍ. At the end of the "Pisar" (Son) section in the "Zuvvār-e Gharīb" play, the copying date of 1285 AH (1868/69 CE) is recorded, and the scribe introduces his source as a person named Mīrzā Ḥusayn'alī, who received the manuscript through a certain Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn.

**Ta'ziyeh-hā-ye Raḍavī:** This work was published in 2009 (1388 AHsh) through the efforts of Davūd Faṭḥ'alī Begī and Mahdī Daryāyī and contains 9 Raḍavi ta'ziyeh plays. In the introduction of this work, it is claimed that the poet of these plays, or some of them, is "Anjum" (a famous ta'ziyeh poet from Arak during the Qajar period), whose pen name appears in two plays: "Tavalod-e Imam Riḍā (AS)" (The Birth of

Imam Riḍā) and "Saqqākhāneh-ye Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī" (The Public Water Fountain of Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī). Mahdī Daryāyī and Muḥammad'Alī Sayfī recreated some plays, such as "Ibrāhīm-e Sarbakhsh". At the end of the "Shāh Chirāgh" version, the copying date of 1309 AH (1891/92 CE) is noted, and the copying date of the "Tavalod-e Imam Riḍā (AS)" and "Saqqākhāneh-ye Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī" versions is 1296 AH (1878/79 CE). This collection contains numerous typographical and spelling errors.

**Riḍā-Nāmeḥ:** The book *Riḍā-Nāmeḥ* (A Reading of Raḍavi Shabīh-Nāmeḥs), researched and written by Riḍā Kūchakzādeh in 2013 (1392 AHsh), is a research work that, in addition to containing the text of two plays on the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS), also includes the text of seven other Raḍavi plays. An important feature of this work is its valuable introductions, the study of which seems necessary for those interested in ta'ziyeh studies. The copying date of the "Zuvvār-e Imam Riḍā (AS)" (Pilgrims of Imam Riḍā) play is 1285 AH (1868/69 CE), and the copying date of the "Turkaman" (The Turkmen) play is 1294 AH (1877/78 CE), which was likely composed by "Sayyid Ḥusayn Kāshī Ta'ziyeh-Khwān" in the same year or shortly before. The other manuscripts in this collection are undated. At the end of the book, a list of Raḍavi play manuscripts in the Majlis Library and the Vatican Library is provided.

**Other Works:** In addition to the aforementioned collections, some Raḍavi plays have been published sporadically in books such as *Ta'ziyeh dar Iran* by Ṣādiq Hamāyūnī, *Majālis-e Ta'ziyeh* by Ḥasan Ṣāliḥī Rād, *Nāmeḥ-ye Ta'ziyeh* by Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh, *Defter-e Ta'ziyeh 5* by Hāshim Fayyāḍ, etc. However, the number of titles of these plays does not exceed fourteen. It is also evident from the list of play titles in the Vatican Library that the Raḍavi shabīh-nāmeḥs there are generally the same plays published in the mentioned works (see: Ismā'īlī 2017, 105-504). In this collection, compiled by Enrico Cerulli around the 1950s (1330s AHsh), there are 1055 ta'ziyeh plays and sub-sections, some of which are composed in Turkish and Arabic. The titles of these plays number slightly over three hundred, and among them, thirty-six plays with about 10 titles are related to Raḍavi ta'ziyeh plays. Some of these titles are sub-sections of the play of Imam Riḍā's martyrdom, listed as independent plays. Among the Raḍavi plays in the Vatican collection, there is no special/exclusive manuscript.

In the present research, the texts of 60 ta'ziyeh plays have been collected and examined, whose subjects are events related to the life of the Eighth Imam or his relatives. Some of these plays have been published previously in the collections mentioned above. The other plays are examined here for the first time. More than one version has been studied of the plays on the martyrdom of Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS),

the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS), the death of Lady Ma'sūmeh (SA), the martyrdom of Shāh Chirāgh (AS), the martyrdom of Imam Muḥammad Taqī (AS), Silsilat al-Dhahab, Shāh 'Abbās and the Blind Man, and Saqqākhāneh-ye Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī. Alongside sections and passages that are historically documented, some sections and even entire plays in this collection are fictional or have been narrated in later books, which is a common practice in ta'ziyeh, related to the subtleties and conventions of religious drama. Certain inaccuracies are observed in most Raḍavi plays; for example, the assumption that Imam Riḍā (AS) traveled to Ṭūs and resided there, whereas he first traveled reluctantly to Marv, and after Ma'mūn decided to move his capital from Marv to Baghdad, he was martyred on the way by the oppressive caliph and buried in the village of Sanābād in Ṭūs. The theme of the Imam's strangeness and oppression and his miracles occupies the largest volume of content in the older Raḍavi plays. The emphasis on the sufferings of the Eighth Imam and the grief of his relatives and kin for his forced migration serves as an introduction to addressing the plays about the Imamzādegān and the reason for their journey to Iran, as well as Ma'mūn's orders and those of other 'Abbāsid caliphs to obstruct these nobles, resulting in the martyrdom of the brothers and relatives of Imam Riḍā (AS) in various places.

The poets of some of the present plays are unknown, while others, such as Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī, Mullā 'Alī Fākhir, Mīrzā Muḥammad Rūḥānī (Anjum), Sayyid Muṣṭafā Kāshānī (Mīr 'Azā), Riḍwānī Bīdgolī, Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī), and Muḥammad Riḍā Rajabzādeh, are identified. Among these, the largest number of plays in the present collection belong to the compositions of Nādī Dāmghānī, most of which are also superior to other works from a literary standpoint. This report is a descriptive-analytical index of 60 ta'ziyeh plays, providing complete details including the title, poet, characters, plot summary, and source of each play. This index is a rich and valuable resource for researchers in the fields of ta'ziyeh, the history of Shiism, popular culture, and Iranian ritual literature. The manuscript ta'ziyehs, which constitute about half of the ta'ziyeh plays, have been examined for the first time.

## 1. Structure and Categorization of the Plays

In this research, 60 ta'ziyeh plays have been examined. A schematic of these ta'ziyehs is provided in the table below for brevity:

| Row | Play Title | Poet | Source |
|-----|------------|------|--------|
|-----|------------|------|--------|

|    |                                                         |                                          |                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1  | Ta'ziyeh of the Birth of Imam Riḡā (AS)                 | Mīrzā Muḡammad Rūḡhānī (pen-named Anjum) | (Fath'alī Begī and Daryāyī 2009, 15–24) |
| 2  | Ta'ziyeh of the Prisoner of Baghdad                     | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 3  | Ta'ziyeh of Imam Kāẓim and Imam Riḡā (AS)               | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 4  | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS)       | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nād'alizādeh 2011, 493–510)            |
| 5  | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS)       | Unknown (Darbandesar region)             | (Şālihī Rād 2010, 2:313–328)            |
| 6  | Ta'ziyeh of the Barmakids and the Requit of Deeds       | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 7  | Ta'ziyeh of the Qubbat Hārūnīyeh (Dome of Hārūnīyeh)    | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 8  | Ta'ziyeh of the Miracles of Imam Riḡā (AS) in the Hijaz | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 9  | Ta'ziyeh of the Farewell of Imam Riḡā (AS)              | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |
| 10 | Ta'ziyeh of Imam Riḡā (AS) in Qom                       | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                   |

|    |                                                              |                                               |                               |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 11 | Ta'ziyeh of Dāmin-e Āhū (The Guarantor Deer)                 | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 12 | Ta'ziyeh of the Miracles of Imam Riḍā (AS) in Nishapur       | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 13 | Ta'ziyeh of the Miracle of the Almond Tree                   | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 14 | Ta'ziyeh of Silsilat al-Dhahab                               | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 15 | Ta'ziyeh of Silsilat al-Dhahab                               | Muḥammad Riḍā<br>Rajabzādeh                   | (Pahlavān 2018,<br>4:297–318) |
| 16 | Ta'ziyeh of Imam Riḍā (AS) in Marv                           | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 17 | Ta'ziyeh of the Miracles of al-Riḍā (AS)                     | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 18 | Ta'ziyeh of the Debates of Imam Riḍā (AS)                    | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 19 | Ta'ziyeh of Imam Riḍā (AS): Ālim-e Asrār (Knower of Secrets) | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)      |
| 20 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS) – 1              | Mīrzā Muḥammad<br>Taqī Nūrī                   | (Nūrī 1844)                   |

|    |                                                                        |                                               |                                           |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 21 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 2                        | Mullā 'Alī Fākhir Māzandarānī                 | (Fākhir 2011, 483–518)                    |
| 22 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 3                        | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)       | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 23 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 4                        | Unknown (Dāmghān region)                      | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 24 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 5                        | Probably Sayyid Muṣṭafā Kāshānī (Mīr 'Azā)    | (Fath'alī Begī 1991, 9–53)                |
| 25 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 6                        | Unknown (Isfahan region)                      | (Kūchakzādeh 2013, 73–116)                |
| 26 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 7                        | Unknown (Nenīz and Rābar districts of Kerman) | (Qanbarī Nenīz 2015, 582–618)             |
| 27 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS) – 8                        | Unknown (Tehran region)                       | (Ṣāliḡī Rād 2010, 2:329–350)              |
| 28 | Ta'ziyeh of Imam Muḡammad Taqī's going to Tūs and returning from there | Probably Riḡwānī Bīdgolī                      | (Fath'alī Begī 2007, 377–390)             |
| 29 | Ta'ziyeh of the Death of Lady Ma'ṣūmeh (SA)                            | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)       | (Nād'alizādeh 2011, 365–376)              |
| 30 | Ta'ziyeh of the Death of Lady Ma'ṣūmeh (SA)                            | Unknown (Darbandesar region)                  | (Ṣāliḡī Rād 2010, 2:393–406)              |
| 31 | Ta'ziyeh of the Death of Lady Ma'ṣūmeh (SA)                            | Mīrzā Muḡammad Rūḡhānī (pen-named Anjum)      | (Fath'alī Begī and Daryāyī 2009, 129–147) |

|    |                                                                                      |                                          |                                          |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 32 | Ta'ziyeh of the Death of Lady Ma'sūmeh (SA)                                          | Unknown                                  | (Hamāyūnī 2001, 549–570)                 |
| 33 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Shāh Chirāgh (AS) and his Brothers                      | Poet unknown, recreated by Nādī Dāmghānī | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                    |
| 34 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Shāh Chirāgh (AS)                                       | Unknown (Darbandesar region)             | (Şālihī Rād 2010, 2:352–374)             |
| 35 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Shāh Chirāgh (AS)                                       | Probably Sayyid Muşţafā Kāshānī          | (Fayyāḍ 2001, 43–75)                     |
| 36 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of the Imamzādegān Nāşer and Yāsir and the Death of Ma'mūn | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                    |
| 37 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Shāhzādeh Ibrāhīm (AS)                                  | Unknown (Darbandesar region)             | (Şālihī Rād 2010, 2:377–389)             |
| 38 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imamzādeh Dāvūd (AS)                                    | Unknown (Darbandesar region)             | (Şālihī Rād 2010, 2:409–421)             |
| 39 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imamzādeh Muḥammad 'Ābid (AS)                           | Mīrzā Muḥammad Rūḥānī (pen-named Anjum)  | (Fath'alī Begī and Daryāyī 2009, 95–109) |
| 40 | Ta'ziyeh of the Imamzādegān Işhāq and Aşghar (AS) (buried in Vars)                   | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                    |
| 41 | Ta'ziyeh of Imamzādeh Yaḥyā (AS) (buried in Semnān)                                  | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                    |
| 42 | Ta'ziyeh of Ibrāhīm Sarbakhsh                                                        | Mīrzā Muḥammad Rūḥānī (pen-named Anjum)  | (Fath'alī Begī and Daryāyī 2009, 53–61)  |

|    |                                                                                       |                                          |                                           |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 43 | Ta'ziyeh of Surkhak Mal'ūn (The Cursed Surkhak)                                       | Unknown                                  | (Fath'alī Begī 1991, 85–109)              |
| 44 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Muḡammad Taqī (AS)                                  | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 45 | Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Muḡammad Taqī (AS)                                  | Unknown                                  | (Ismā'il Mojallī, n.d.)                   |
| 46 | Ta'ziyeh of De'bel Khuzā'ī (RA)                                                       | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 47 | Ta'ziyeh of Abū Ṣalt Harawī (RA)                                                      | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 48 | Ta'ziyeh of Kolāh-e Derāz-e Kūdzarī (The Long Hat of Kūdzar)                          | Mīrzā Muḡammad Rūḡhānī (pen-named Anjum) | (Fath'alī Begī and Daryāyī 2009, 113–125) |
| 49 | Ta'ziyeh of the Healing of Sulṭān Sanjar                                              | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 50 | Ta'ziyeh of the Miracle of Imam Riḡā (AS) and the Rescue of Pilgrims from the Mongols | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nādī Dāmghānī, n.d.)                     |
| 51 | Ta'ziyeh of Shāh 'Abbās and the Blind Man                                             | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)  | (Nād'alizādeh 2011, 167–176)              |
| 52 | Ta'ziyeh of Rawṣat Khold Barīn (Shāh 'Abbās and the Blind Man)                        | Muḡammad Riḡā Rajabzādeh                 | (Pahlavān 2018, 4:297–318)                |

|    |                                                               |                                               |                                                |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 53 | Ta'zīyeh of Saqqākhāneh-ye<br>Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī                  | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)                       |
| 54 | Ta'zīyeh of Saqqākhāneh-ye<br>Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī                  | Mīrzā Muḥammad<br>Rūhānī (pen-named<br>Anjum) | (Fath'alī Begī and<br>Daryāyī 2009, 63–<br>74) |
| 55 | Ta'zīyeh of Saqqākhāneh-ye<br>Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī                  | Muḥammad Riḍā<br>Rajabzādeh                   | (Pahlavān 2018,<br>4:297–318)                  |
| 56 | Ta'zīyeh of Dāvūd the Jew                                     | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)                       |
| 57 | Ta'zīyeh of Zuvvār-e Gharīb<br>(The Strange Pilgrims)         | Unknown                                       | (Fath'alī Begī 1991,<br>111–147)               |
| 58 | Ta'zīyeh of the Turkmen and the<br>Pilgrims of Imam Riḍā (AS) | Probably Sayyid<br>Muṣṭafā Kāshānī            | (Kāẓimī 2008, 519–<br>528)                     |
| 59 | Ta'zīyeh of Hormoz-e Balkhī                                   | Unknown (Qom<br>region)                       | (Kūchakzādeh 2013,<br>265–304)                 |
| 60 | Ta'zīyeh of Imam Riḍā (AS) and<br>Intercession                | Ghulām'alī<br>Nād'alizādeh (Nādī<br>Dāmghānī) | (Nādī Dāmghānī,<br>n.d.)                       |

Raḍavi ta'zīyeh plays can be divided into seven general categories based on content and time period:

### 1.1. Ta'zīyehs related to Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS)

This category includes 6 plays (plays 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8) dealing with the life, imprisonment, and martyrdom of Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS). A common feature of these plays is the role of Hārūn al-Rashīd as the main agent of torment and martyrdom, and the role of Sindī ibn Shāhik as the direct executor of torture and murder with poisoned dates. In most of these plays, Imam Riḍā (AS) is also present and receives the trusts of Imamate from his father.

### **1.2. Ta'ziyeh of the Birth of Imam Riḡā (AS)**

The first play (Ta'ziyeh of the Birth of Imam Riḡā) is an exception in this collection and deals with the story of buying the slave girl Taktam (Najmeh Khātūn), her marriage to Imam Kāẓim (AS), and finally the birth of Imam Riḡā (AS). This ta'ziyeh is dominated by an epic and joyous atmosphere, which distinguishes it more from other ta'ziyehs.

### **1.3. Ta'ziyehs related to Imam Riḡā's journey to Iran**

This category includes 7 plays (plays 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) dealing with the events and miracles of Imam Riḡā (AS) on his way to Khorasan. Recurring patterns in these plays include: entering a city and releasing the she-camel to determine the residence, creating a spring through a miracle, healing the sick and blind, narrating hadith to the people, and foretelling his own future martyrdom.

### **1.4. Ta'ziyehs related to Imam Riḡā's presence in Marv until his martyrdom in Tūs**

This category, with 13 plays (plays 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 60), is the most important part of the collection. The main focus of these plays is Ma'mūn's and his courtiers' continuous conspiracies to trap, humiliate, disgrace, and finally kill Imam Riḡā (AS). Repeated tricks such as praying over a seemingly dead boy (plays 16, 22), the story of the gardener and the grapes (plays 16, 22, 23, 24), the story of the old woman and her dead son (plays 23, 24), debating with religious scholars (play 18), and the Eid al-Fitr prayer (plays 16, 22) are repeated in these plays. In all these cases, the Imam, with his knowledge and grace, thwarts the plans.

### **1.5. Ta'ziyehs related to Lady Ma'sūmeh (SA)**

This category includes 4 plays (plays 29, 30, 31, 32) dealing with Lady Ma'sūmeh's journey to Iran to visit her brother and ultimately her death in Qom. In one version (play 29), her martyrdom by poison in Sāveh is narrated.

### **1.6. Ta'ziyehs related to the Imamzādegān and Children**

This category, with 14 plays (plays 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, and 45), deals with the vengeance-seeking uprisings of the children and descendants of Imam Riḡā (AS) (such as Ibrāhīm, Shāh Chirāgh, etc.), the oppression of Ma'mūn and local governors towards the sādāt (descendants of the Prophet), and the martyrdom of Imam Jawād (AS) by Mu'taṣim. The narratives in this section generally have a deeply emotional and tragic structure.

### 1.7. Ta'ziyehs related to related characters and historical events

This category includes 15 plays (plays 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60) that expand the narrative beyond the Imam's lifetime. The subjects of these plays include: literary and religious figures (De'bel Khuzā'ī, Abū Ṣalt Harawī), post-martyrdom miracles (healing the sick, rescuing pilgrims, intercession on the Day of Judgment), historical figures (Nāder Shāh, Faṭḥ'alī Shāh, Sulṭān Sanjar, Shāh 'Abbās), and myth-making/building of shrines (Saqqākhāneh-ye Ismā'īl Ṭalāyī).

## 2. Characterology and Frequency Analysis

In these examined plays, there are numerous characters. Studying the totality of these characters can provide useful insights, such as which characters were most favored by the poets, and the ratio of positive to negative characters.

### 2.1. Main Characters

Based on the prepared frequency table, the ten main characters of this collection in order of frequency are:

| Rank | Character            | Number of Plays Present | Percentage of Plays | Category                 |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1    | Imam Riḍā (AS)       | 39                      | 61.8                | Infallibles (Ma'sūmīn)   |
| 2    | Ma'mūn               | 22                      | 36.4                | Caliphs and Enemies      |
| 3    | Abū Ṣalt Harawī      | 17                      | 27.3                | Companions and Narrators |
| 4    | Imam Jawād (AS)      | 16                      | 25.9                | Infallibles (Ma'sūmīn)   |
| 5    | Hārūn al-Rashīd      | 11                      | 18                  | Caliphs and Enemies      |
| 6    | Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS) | 10                      | 16.6                | Infallibles (Ma'sūmīn)   |
| 7    | Vizier               | 12                      | 19.4                | Courtiers                |

|    |                    |    |      |                             |
|----|--------------------|----|------|-----------------------------|
| 8  | Jabra'īl (Gabriel) | 10 | 16.6 | Angels                      |
| 9  | Lady Ma'ṣūmeh (SA) | 10 | 16.6 | Ahl al-Bayt and Imamzādegān |
| 10 | Messenger/C        | 10 | 16.6 | Secondary Characters        |

## 2.2. Analysis of Central Characters

**Imam Riḡā (AS):** Appearing in 39 plays (over 60%), he is the central character of this collection. In these plays, he appears in various roles: son of Imam Kāẓim (AS), father of Imam Jawād (AS), crown prince of Ma'mūn, an unparalleled scholar in debates, possessor of grace (*karāmāt*) and miracles, and finally a wronged martyr who is martyred with poisoned grapes. Imam Riḡā (AS) is also present in other examined ta'ziyehs, but in these 39 plays, he has a central, main, or semi-main role, while in other plays, he does not appear seriously except for a few scenes.

**Ma'mūn:** With 22 appearances (36.4%), he is the most important negative character and the main antagonist of the collection. He is a symbol of 'Abbāsīd enmity towards the 'Alawids and the main agent of the conspiracies and ultimately the martyrdom of Imam Riḡā (AS).

**Abū Ṣalt Harawī:** With 17 appearances (27.3%), he is the third most frequent character and the most important narrator and witness to events. He plays a central role as a loyal companion, a solace in loneliness, a listener to prophecies, and an executor of the Imam's wills.

## 2.3. Categorization of Characters

**Infallibles (Ma'ṣūmīn):** Imam Riḡā (AS) (39 plays), Imam Jawād (AS) (16 plays), Imam Mūsā Kāẓim (AS) (10 plays), Lady Fāṭimah (SA) (3 plays), Imam Ḥusayn (AS) (3 plays), the Holy Prophet (PBUH) (3 plays).

**Ahl al-Bayt and Imamzādegān:** Lady Ma'ṣūmeh (SA) (10 plays), Shāh Chirāgh (4 plays), Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far (4 plays), Ishāq ibn Ja'far (2 plays), and other Imamzādegān.

**Caliphs and Enemies:** Ma'mūn (22 plays), Hārūn (11 plays), Mu'taṣim (2 plays), Sindī ibn Shāhik (7 plays), the Barmakid family (7 plays in total), executioners and local enemies.

**Companions and Narrators:** Abū Ṣalt (17 plays), De'bel Khuzā'ī (3 plays), 'Alī ibn

Yaqṭīn (2 plays).

**Non-Human Characters:** Jabra'īl (Gabriel) (10 plays), Hātif (a celestial announcer) (6 plays), 'Azrā'īl (Azrael) (5 plays), Angels (3 plays), Shayṭān (Satan) (1 play).

**Ordinary People:** Hunter (8 plays), Gardener (6 plays), Barber (2 plays), Blind man (3 plays), Old woman (2 plays), Merchants and innkeepers, and others.

**Later Historical Figures:** Nāder Shāh (1 play), Fath'alī Shāh (2 plays), Shāh 'Abbās (2 plays), Sulṭān Sanjar (1 play).

### 3. Analysis of Poets and Sources

Based on the available information, the poets of these 60 plays are as follows:

| Row | Poet                                       | Number of Plays | Percentage of Total |
|-----|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1   | Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī)    | 30              | 50                  |
| 2   | Mīrzā Muḥammad Rūḥānī (pen-named Anjum)    | 6               | 10                  |
| 3   | Unknown (no identified poet)               | 14              | 23.4                |
| 4   | Probably Sayyid Muṣṭafā Kāshānī (Mīr 'Azā) | 4               | 6.5                 |
| 5   | Probably Riḍwānī Bīdgolī                   | 1               | 1.6                 |
| 6   | Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī                   | 1               | 1.6                 |
| 7   | Mullā 'Alī Fākhīr                          | 1               | 1.6                 |
| 8   | Muḥammad Riḍā Rajabzādeh                   | 3               | 5                   |

#### 3.1. Analysis of the Poets' Status

**Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī):** With 30 plays (half of the total), he is the most prolific poet of this collection. The thematic scope of his works is very wide, covering almost all subject categories. Most of his works were in manuscript form and available to the researcher.

**Mīrzā Muḥammad Rūḥānī (pen-named Anjum):** With 6 plays (10%), he is the second most prolific poet of this collection. His works are mostly collected in the

book *Ta'ziyeh-hā-ye Raḡavī* (Raḡavi Ta'ziyehs) and mainly include ta'ziyehs about Imamzādegān and folk tales.

**Plays with Unknown Poets:** 14 plays (25.5%) have no identified poet, indicating the popular, oral, and generational transmission of many ta'ziyehs. These plays were mostly collected from various regions of Iran (Darbandesar, Dāmghān, Isfahan, Kerman, Tehran, Qom).

**Plays with Probable Attribution:** 5 plays (9.1%) are probably attributed to two other poets (Sayyid Muṣṭafā Kāshānī, known as Mīr 'Azā, and Riḡwānī Bīdgolī), which requires further research for confirmation.

### 3.2. Sources Used

The sources used in this index are very diverse:

| Row | Source                                                | Number of Plays |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1   | Manuscripts (in the possession of the researcher)     | 29              |
| 2   | Book: <i>Majālis-e Ta'ziyeh</i> (vol. 2)              | 5               |
| 3   | Book: <i>Ta'ziyeh-hā-ye Raḡavī</i>                    | 5               |
| 4   | Book: *Deft-e Ta'ziyeh 2*                             | 3               |
| 5   | Book: <i>Nāmeḡ-ye Ta'ziyeh</i>                        | 3               |
| 6   | Book: <i>Riḡā-Nāmeḡ</i>                               | 2               |
| 7   | Book: <i>Ta'ziyeh dar Iran</i>                        | 1               |
| 8   | Book: <i>Hefḡah Majles-e Shabīh-Khwānī</i>            | 1               |
| 9   | Book: <i>Ta'biyeh</i>                                 | 1               |
| 10  | Book: *Deft-e Ta'ziyeh 5*                             | 1               |
| 11  | Book: <i>Mīr 'Azā Kāshānī dar Qalamrow-e Ta'ziyeh</i> | 1               |

|    |                                                            |   |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 12 | Miscellaneous manuscripts                                  | 2 |
| 13 | Manuscript of ta'ziyeh plays in the Malek National Library | 1 |
| 14 | Book: <i>Jung-e Ta'ziyeh-ye Fākhir</i>                     | 1 |
| 15 | Book: <i>Ta'ziyeh dar Jahan-e Irani</i>                    | 3 |

Most of the plays (29 plays) were obtained from original, handwritten manuscripts, most of which belong to the ta'ziyehs composed by Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh and were in the researcher's possession. Published books in the field of ta'ziyeh (such as *Majālis-e Ta'ziyeh*, *Ta'ziyeh-hā-ye Raḍavī*, *Nāmeḥ-ye Ta'ziyeh*) were also used.

#### 4. Recurring Patterns and Themes

Examining the stories of the plays reveals the existence of recurring narrative patterns. These story patterns are discussed below:

**Pattern of Martyrdom by Poison:** The martyrdom of Imam Kāẓim (AS) with poisoned dates, the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS) with poisoned grapes or pomegranate, and the martyrdom of Lady Ma'sūmeh (SA) with poison in a dish (āsh) represent a common pattern in how these nobles were martyred.

**Pattern of Trickery and Disgrace:** In several plays, enemies, using tricks such as praying over a seemingly dead person (who is alive) or the story of the gardener, intend to disgrace the Imam, but through the Imam's grace (*karāmat*), their tricks are exposed and they themselves are disgraced.

**Pattern of Miracle and Healing:** Healing the blind, creating a spring in the desert, healing the sick, and rescuing from attackers are recurring patterns in the miracle plays.

**Pattern of Vengeance (Blood Revenge):** After the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (AS), his brothers and descendants (such as Ibrāhīm, Shāh Chirāgh, etc.) rise up and are martyred in their quest for vengeance.

##### 4.1. Main Themes

**Strangeness (Ghorbat):** The strangeness of Imam Riḍā (AS) in the land of Ṭūs, the strangeness of Imam Kāẓim (AS) in the prison of Baghdad, and the strangeness of the Imamzādegān in cities far from home are prominent themes in these plays.

**Oppression (Mazlūmiyyat):** The oppression of the Imams and Sādāt at the hands of unjust caliphs, with an emphasis on thirst at the moment of martyrdom, loneliness, and abandonment, is a central theme.

**The Imam's Grace and Knowledge:** In all the plays, the Imams overcome their enemies through esoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-ghayb*), prophecies, miracles, and grace.

**Otherworldly Reward:** In some plays (such as play 60), the otherworldly reward for pilgrims and the Imam's intercession (*shafāʿat*) are emphasized.

## 5. Geographical Distribution

Some plays whose poets were unknown were associated with specific regions of Iran. The table below shows the distribution of these manuscripts:

| Row | Region                   | Number of Plays |
|-----|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 1   | Darbandesar (Tehran)     | 4               |
| 2   | Dāmghān                  | 1               |
| 3   | Isfahan                  | 1               |
| 4   | Nenīz and Rābar (Kerman) | 1               |
| 5   | Tehran                   | 1               |
| 6   | Qom                      | 1 <sup>1</sup>  |

This geographical distribution indicates the extent and influence of the art of ta'ziyeh performance in different regions of Iran. Each region, with its local culture, produced and performed specific versions of these ta'ziyehs. The existence of multiple versions of the same subject (such as the martyrdom of Imam Riḡā with 8 different versions from various regions) demonstrates the richness of this dramatic tradition and its local recreations.

## 6. Conclusion

The descriptive index of 60 Raḡavi ta'ziyeh plays is a valuable treasure trove of information about one of the most important branches of ta'ziyeh performance in Iran. These plays offer a multi-layered and extensive narrative of the life, times, and

influences of Imam Riḍā (AS) and his family, encompassing from birth to martyrdom and even beyond. The findings of this report indicate:

1. Ghulām'alī Nād'alizādeh (Nādī Dāmghānī) with 30 plays (50%) is the most prolific poet of this collection of ta'ziyehs.
2. Imam Riḍā (AS) with 39 plays (65%) is the most frequent character, and Ma'mūn with 22 plays (36.4%) is the main antagonist of the collection.
3. Abū Ṣalt Harawī with 17 plays (27.3%) is the third most frequent character and the most important narrator and witness to events.
4. 14 plays (25.5%) have no identified poet, indicating the oral and popular nature of ta'ziyeh.
5. Most of the plays (29 plays) were obtained from handwritten manuscripts, indicating the researcher's extensive field work.
6. The plays were collected from various regions of Iran (Tehran, Dāmghān, Khorasan, Māzandarān, Isfahan, Kerman, Qom), demonstrating the geographical extent of ta'ziyeh performance.

These plays depict a portrait of Imam Riḍā (AS) as both infallible and learned, yet also a stranger and wronged, and at the same time a refuge and healer for the people. Studying this index provides deep insight into the popular Shiite culture of Iran and the lofty position of Imam Riḍā (AS) within it, and shows how the art of ta'ziyeh, drawing upon historical sources and popular beliefs, has created a lasting narrative of this noble Imam.

## 7. Suggestions

1. Research on unknown poets and stylistic comparison for their possible identification.
2. Comparative study of different versions of the same subject (e.g., 8 versions of Imam Riḍā's martyrdom) from various regions.
3. Study of the influence of local dialects, cultures, and music on the recreation of these plays.
4. Linguistic analysis of the poetry of Raḍavi ta'ziyehs.
5. Examination of the role of women in these plays (characters such as Lady Ma'ṣūmeh, Ḥamīdah Khātūn, Najmeh Khātūn, Umm al-Faḍl, etc.).
6. Comparative study of these plays with authentic historical sources on the life of Imam Riḍā (AS).

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