



## Imam Ali (Ali Ibn Abi Talib), The Peak Personality Who Shaped Arabic Poetry with His Wise Words

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v5i7.342>

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### **Abstract**

Imam Ali, the sultan of wise words, who had a good command of the Qur'an, hadiths, and poems of the period of ignorance (Jahiliyyah), used literary sentences even in his everyday conversations. He proved to be the pinnacle of literature by skillfully bringing together words in his poems with deep meanings. His poems were examined in Arab and Turkish sources to reveal the literary power of Imam Ali and the beauty of the used language. Studies on the literary aspect of Imam Ali in the Arabic field are more than the studies in the Turkish field. In the literature, much research was conducted about Imam Ali, but very few of these studies examined his literary language side. As he was the basis of Islamic sciences and the master of scholars who grew up in these fields, he occupied a great place in the literature of Muslim countries. We tried to make up for the lack of analysis of Imam Ali's literary language in this context. Imam Ali was a great person who needed to be examined in every aspect of literature. We tried to reveal his literary side, which was a guide for those who came after him.

**Keywords:** *Imam Ali; Poems; Words of Imam Ali*

### **Introduction**

Some historical figures have influenced the masses in the areas where they live with their ability to use the word effectively (Dayan & Yildiz, 2021). Celik and Yildiz (2019) point out that the active use of language in the life of societies has an important role in cultural transmission and cultural relations. In this case, Imam Ali guided the masses as an effective speaker with his sermons and wise words as a historical and cultural heritage. From his poems, one can easily understand that he is prone to poetry and witty, and he responds to his opponents on the battlefields with no fear. Before using his sword, he terrorized his opponents with his poems and beat them with his magnificent words. Imam Ali also left a great legacy to the Arabs to protect their language. He ensured that the Arabic language was not corrupted

and was better understood, intending to preserve the Quran. Having a fluent style and good speech, Imam Ali impressed people with his striking and profound words (Öner, 2011). Saying his sermons with impressive, beautiful, deep and wise words in the manner of a poem indicated that he had a strong oratory and responded to his opponents on the battlefields with a poetic argument as being a quick-witted person. Furthermore, before using his sword, he instilled fear in his opponents with his poems to defeat the Qur'an.

## **Imam Ali**

Imam Ali was born in 600 A.D. in Mecca. His father was Abu Talib, one of the uncles of the Prophet Muhammad. His mother's name was Fatima bint Used b. Hashim. Upon the famine that started when he was only five years old, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), being his cousin, kept Imam Ali with himself until the Hijra to alleviate his burden. From Imam Ali's marriage to Fatma, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Imam Hassan and Imam Huseyin were born (Fıglalı, 1989). Yildiz (2019) notes that "we are born as a guest on the earth, get into a relationship with our natural environment, and our social life perception produces a consciousness in our personal life." That was the time, the period of ignorance when the number of people who lied, buried their daughters alive, worshipped idols, and behaved hypocritically and the main and foremost factor that pushed human beings to be hypocrites was the social environment (AbubakrAbdulrahman et al., 2020). These deeds were quite high, and immorality was considered normal in that environment. However, he was protected from such sins. The fact that he lived a life close to the Prophet Muhammad from his childhood until his death made him the pinnacle of Islamic sciences.

The concepts of valiant, heroic, fearless, warrior, open-handed, the pinnacle of knowledge and wisdom, pious, modest, sincere, intelligent, resilient, reliable, and honest were used for Imam Ali (Gültekin, 2012). Imam Ali had a dark complexion, a beautiful face, black eyes, a dense beard, short stature, broad shoulders, and thick biceps and calves. Imam Ali was the fourth of the four great caliphs. He has been the most mentioned person after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the history of Islam (Güfta, 2002) and he has a vast place in the history of Islam and the literature of Muslim countries.

## **Method**

Turkish and Arab sources have been searched and works belonging to Imam Ali-especially his poems were found. Then his oratory skills were evaluated in terms of language, literature, subject, and scientific depth. It was observed that Imam Ali influenced the religious and social sciences in Islamic geography and became a master for those who grew up in those fields. This manuscript aimed to draw attention to Imam Ali's literary language and contribute to this subject's studies. Imam Ali was generally kept at the forefront with his knowledge, wisdom, heroism, and leadership. As a result, Imam Ali's literary language was emphasized, and his poems were examined in literature studies in Islamic geography.

## **Imam Ali's Poetic Potential**

It is never easy to convey the message to the audience in a few words in terms of meaning. Teachers, educators, or parents use long sentences to give direction to their community. Moreover, delivering moral values, giving advice systematically in education needs great spirited educators and educators of service (Tosun & Yildiz, 2015). In this context, observing Imam Ali's poems, one can divide them into two main parts as non-war and war-related poems. His poems, which he said outside of the war, were predominantly about wisdom and advice. While he appeared in a high voice in his poems about the

war, he used soft language in his other poems. His efforts to guide his loved ones and people are very conspicuous in the poems. While humble in his regular poems, he mentions himself to strike fear into his opponents in his war poems. Some of the wise words he said are shown below.

*Fa lau kānat ad-dunyā tanāla bi fathanatin, Wa fadhlin wa ‘uqulin niltu a’la al-marātibi*

“If this world were obtained with ingenuity, excellence, and rationality, I would have obtained the highest rank.”

*Wa lakinnamā al-arzāqu wa qismatun, Bi fadhli malīkin lā bi chīlati thālibin*

“But wealth is a fortune and its distribution solely with the virtue of Allah, not with one's ingenuity.”

*Wa afdhalu qassamallahu li al-mar`i ‘aqlahu,*

*Fa laisa min al-khairāti syai`un yuqāribuhu*

“And the best part of giving from Allah to a human being is his mind (brain), not all other good things close to him.”

*Idzā akmala ar-rachmānu li al-mar`i ‘aqlahu, Fa laqad kamilat akhlāquhu wa ma`āribuhu*

“When the Most Merciful has perfected one's intellect (brain), then it has been perfected character and purpose as well”.

*Ya`īsyu al-fatā fī an-nāsi bi al-‘aqli innahu,*

*‘Alā al-‘aqli yajrī ‘ilmuhu wa tajāribuhu*

“A young man lives in (the middle of) society with his mind, because with his mind, the knowledge (science) and his behaviour go.

*Yazīnu al-fatā fī an-nāsi shichchata ‘aqlihi, Wa in kāna machzhūran ‘alaihi mukāsibuhu*

“A young man becomes noble in (the middle of) society with his reasoning sanity, because if it is blocked (his mind is closed), then the loss will befall him.”

*Yasyīnu al-fatā fī an-nasi qillata ‘aqlihi, Wa in karumat a`rāquhu wa manāshibuhu*

“A young man becomes a disgrace in (the middle of) society because of his lack of reason/mind, even though his ancestry and position are respected” *Wa man kāna ghalāban bi ‘aqlin wa najdatin, Fa dzū al-jaddi fī amri al-ma`īsyati ghālibuhu*

“And whoever (succeeds) reaches with reason and courage, then he will earnestly in the affairs of life (also)” (Arifianto, 2020).

Muawiya said, “I am a virtuous person. In the time of ignorance (Jahiliyyah), my father was a respected lord. In Islamic times, I am also a sultan. I am one of the scribes of revelation. I am the father-

in-law of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and, therefore, the believers' uncle". When he sent this letter to Imam Ali praising himself, Imam Ali also replied with a poem below.

Al-Hamaavi, (1999) states that Imam Ali was quick-witted. His clear and informative poetic answer sent in the troubled and challenging moment was a sufficient example to emphasize his poetic side. The poem that Imam Ali wrote in response to him is as follows:

*"My brother and son-in-law to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)  
The Master of Martyrs is my uncle Hamza  
My mother's son is flying in heaven with angels  
It is Cafer who sacrifices himself for his cause.  
The daughter of Muhammad (PBUH) is my residence and my wife.  
His flesh became one with my blood, and flesh Ahmed (PBUH)'s grandchildren are my children.  
Which of you has as many shares as I do?  
I surpassed all of you in converting to Islam.  
I became a Muslim when I was a child"* (Al-Hamaavi, 1999).

### Findings and Comments

Imam Ali is the person who brings the opposites together and puts the pieces together. A helpless servant who lives alone in his corner, in love with Allah, a brother and faithful companion to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a master who guides humanity, and a gentle and compassionate person to his loved ones. In addition to these, he is seen as a fearless hero who utters sharp words like a sword against the enemy in his poems about war (Demircan, 2006).

While speaking, he avoided the waste of words and sentences and added meaning to words and sentences above the meanings they could carry. He formed profound sentences with simple words. Being ready to answer depending on his scientific depth did not waste his time while reciting poetry. His mastery of putting words together can easily be seen even in his everyday words. His expressions were the source of writing divans for poets and volumes of books for orators.

Al-Halavi (2014) states that Imam Ali was a soft-hearted, strong-natured, fine-feeling, conscientious, and excited character. He had a vast imagination, sharp temperament, talent in painting, superior representation, charming statements, and has order and rhythm in his discourses. He indicates that even his everyday words can be considered poetry, and the poems he wrote attracted people's attention. He says that a person who possesses these characteristics is a talented poet. He even suggests that if one thinks that Imam Ali did not have any poems, he should still be called a poet. He adds that the matter is not Imam Ali's poetry but whether some poems belong to him or not after his death (Al-Halaavi, 2014).

Imam Ali recited poems in almost every event and on every subject. Accordingly, Al-Havaari (2009) thinks that since the environment in which Imam Ali's life is suitable for poetry, it should be considered natural for him to recite poetry everywhere and in every situation. He emphasizes that many people from his family, relatives, companions, and caliphs sang poetry.

Imam Ali's words were clear, and he did not include exaggeration anywhere in his words. He said a lot with few words without escaping to artificiality. This feature was because he acted with the style of the Qur'an, and he was fed from the pure source of the prophethood so that his mind was luminous. Moreover, he came from a religious environment, so he had a nature-centered logic.

There were secrets in his words. The contrasts in his words opened the door to mysteries, surprised people, and made them sail towards a deep and beautiful meaning. He showed them the way of peace with lessons and lessons by making them think of a solution. The depth and seduction of his thoughts overcame the words and subordinated them to himself. As soon as his words reached the ears, they immediately took their place in the hearts. There was variety in their words. He skillfully made sudden transitions from one style to another. Her beauty in transition impressed and swayed the audience. It reflected the feelings of people in a way that shook their hearts. After synthesizing his ideas and dreams with his feelings, he brought them to the top and then presented them to humanity with an explosion of emotions (Al-Havaari, 2009).

In Imam Ali's words, we see a divine knowledge and the smell of the words of the Prophet Muhammad. It is the center of virtue. Rhetoric spread with it. His words and sermons, like his poems, carry scientific depth and literary weight, and they constituted a valuable source and a guiding example for scholars. Orators and preachers, who took him as an example, expressed their feelings and emotions with his words (Radi, 2010).

Câhiz (1998) emphasizes that even Imam Ali's "A person's worth is measured by the things he praises" saying needs to be explained with books full of information. In addition to his mastery of putting words together, he was adept at bringing words and meanings together and using them. His artistic rhetoric is easily seen in his sermons. He was the only companion who knew fiqh issues with his evidence and examples (Kannaas, 2014).

The master of the literati is the master of those who speak well. He taught people rhetoric and beautiful writing. He gave the rules of fluency to the Quraysh. He is the founder of science and wisdom, the teacher of scholars, and the person on which communities are based. The sciences of tawhid, tafsir, fiqh, truth, mysticism, and sect came from him. Ibn Abi Hadid revealed the knowledge of Arabic grammar and created the system. He stated in his work that Imam Ali was the person who taught the features and rules of the Arabic language to Abu'l Asvadi'd-DuImam Ali (Ibrahem, 1959). As a result of Imam Ali's studies for Arabic based on his sensitivity to Arabic, even if Arabs lived with other nations, their language was not harmed. These studies formed the basis of all the studies of Arab linguists (Al-Havaari, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

Imam Ali is a golden spring made up of the Qur'an and Hadiths. Whoever benefited from this source, his work gained value. The Prophet Muhammad implied that "I am the city of knowledge, and Imam Ali is its gate" (Avci, 2004). We can better understand that Imam Ali is the pinnacle of Islamic sciences and Arabic literature. He became a lighthouse for people who grew up in literature and literature-related fields. Since he was a guide to scholars, teachers and mentors, he became a source of pride for them and gained value with him. His words, combined with his intelligence and knowledge, have come from the past without losing weight. Even those whose job is to write poetry or do science could neither sing poetry nor do science like Imam Ali. We can easily see his lifestyle, thoughts and messages he wanted to give in his poems and words. He did not sacrifice words for meaning and meaning for words. He readily gave the message he wanted to convey by giving them their due. After combining the poetic heritage of the 'Age of Ignorance' with Islam and passing it through his sea of knowledge, he presented it to humanity as poetry and wise words.

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