

Biography of the Author

The eminent scholar, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi was born in the year 1345 AH (1924 CE) in the city of Shiraz, Iran to a religious family who were well known for their great level of spirituality and noble ethical traits. His Eminence finished his elementary school studies in Shiraz and due to his eagerness to learn, his powerful memorizing capabilities, and other great talents, he was regarded as one of the extraordinary students from amongst his fellow classmates. Thus, he was able to complete two years of studies in one year!

The conditions that existed in Iran in those days obligated this young man, who possessed such a talent and great aptitude, to choose the path of University studies to increase his knowledge and attain advanced levels of secular studies. However through the hand of fate, the blessings of the Maintainer of the Universe, and his own internal desires, this young man developed an attraction to becoming better acquainted and delve deep into the genuine teachings of Islam. This attraction was intensified when after the spring of 1348 AH (1937 CE) (just after he finished his primary school), the Islamic Seminaries went thru a major transformation and had taken on a completely new form.

His Studies

His Eminence started his formal Islamic studies at the age of 14 in Madressah Agha Babakhan Shirazi and within a short period of time, was able to complete the introductory studies such as *Sarf*, *Nahw*, *Mantiq*, *Bayan*, and *Badī*, which were all needed to advance to the next level of Islamic studies.

After completing these sciences, he turned his attention towards the fields of Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul al-Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence). Once again, due to the exceptional capabilities that he possessed, he was able to complete all courses in the introductory and intermediate levels of Islamic study in only 4 years—a task which normally takes 12 to 15 years. During this time, a group of students from the Islamic Seminary in Shiraz were also benefiting from the classes that he himself was teaching.

The positive criticisms and personal opinions of His Eminence on the classes being held in Qum, and regarding the need to include additional information in the texts currently being taught in various

theological seminaries there, definitely played a role in the bright future that awaited him. While in religious gatherings in this city, his capabilities and genius, as well as meticulous and deep thought were witnessed by others; thus, no one was able to deny his God-given talents.

Although this brilliant star was only a mere 18 years old, through his deep penetrating knowledge and a gift for written expression, he was able to write a commentary on the book *Kifayatul Usul* (one of the major books of *Ilmul Usul* that must be studied in the Theological Seminary). In this commentary he was able to bring to light the ambiguous issues mentioned in this classic book. At the age of 18, he formally entered the Theological Seminary of Qum. For the next five years, he was present in the religious gatherings and classes of some of the greatest teachers of those days, such as Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Husain Burujerdi and other great personalities (may Allah be pleased with them all).

In 1369 AH (1950 CE) Ayatullah Shirazi made his way to the Theological Seminaries of Najaf Al Ashraf. His purpose was to become better acquainted with the great scholars who were studying and teaching there, to learn more about their ideas and thoughts. It was here that he was able to take part in the classes of some of the greatest teachers of that era such as: Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abul Qasim al-Khu'i and Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj `Abdul Hadi ash-Shirazi and other great teachers (may Allah sanctify their spirits).

At the age of 24, His Eminence was granted the status of having complete Ijtihad from two of the great scholars of Najaf al-Ashraf. In addition, Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim even wrote a short, but comprehensive letter of commendation for His Eminence's notes on the lessons of Fiqh (The Book of Taharah).

His thirst for acquiring and gaining more knowledge continued with the great teachers in Najaf al-Ashraf. However, since he did not have the means to survive and continue his studies in this holy city, he was forced to return to Iran in the year 1370 AH (1951 CE). He made his way back to the holy city of Qum which was now the centre of gathering religious scholars. Once again, he joined the circle of scholars who later on, had a profound impact on his life.

After returning to Iran, Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi began teaching the intermediate and higher level of studies (Kharij) in Usul al-Fiqh and Fiqh. He has been teaching these classes for several decades in the theological seminary, classes which have been warmly accepted and appreciated by a large number of students. In addition, after teaching a large number of the important books of Fiqh, he went on to write summaries and notes of these great works. At present the classes of Kharij of Usul of this great personality are one of the most popular classes in the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of the Shi'a; close to 2,000 of the most dedicated and dynamic students who take part and benefit from his lectures!

From the beginning of his studies, he developed the habit of writing books in various fields of Islamic studies such as Theology, Islamic Awareness and the issue of *Wilayah* (of the Ahlul Bait). Moving

ahead, he started to write on the Exegesis of the Qur'an, *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* and is currently known and recognized as one of the greatest writers in the Muslim world.

Political Activities

His Eminence was also very active in the early days that culminated in the Islamic Revolution of Iran and it is because of this fact that he was thrown in the despotic ruler's jail many times. In addition, he was even exiled on three separate occasions to three different cities – Chanharat, Mahabad and Anarak. However after the Revolution, he was appointed to the first Council of Representatives and played a pivotal role in writing the first constitution.

The Religious Help and Support

Ayatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi has been quite active in various fields of teaching and guiding the up-and-coming scholars in the Theological Seminary of Qum, and has embarked on various projects and endeavors, of which we mention just a few:

1. Religious Publications Centre for the Shi`a

From some time back, His Eminence felt the need for the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of Qum to have a general publication organization which would be able to defend the Shi`a from the works that were being published by those wishing to mislead the people, unfortunately whose number is great.

In addition, this is also something that the Muslims expected from such a great Islamic University such as the Hawza `Ilmiyyah, and thus people from different strata of the community starting from the great Mara`ja Taqlid of the Hawza and others also put forward this request that without doubt, a magazine should be published that would be able to answer the religious enquiries of the youth and give them the answers that they were looking for. In addition, such a publication would be able to fight against the books and magazines that were coming out aiming to mislead the people.

Due to the fact that at that time, there were some minds (within the Theological Seminary) that were not ready to accept such a publication, thus, His Eminence sought out serious and original-writing scholars capable of writing original articles to place the heavy responsibility on their shoulders of producing such a publication. In this regard, His Eminence, along with a group of other scholars and the assistance of the leaders of the Hawza `Ilmiyyah of Qum and the financial support of well wishers, launched the magazine, "Maktab-e-Islam".

This magazine was definitely something which was unparalleled in the Shi`a world and maybe, compared to the various religious magazines being published at that time, from the point of view of its range of circulation was the number one magazine across the entire Muslim world. This magazine brought a fresh new path of direction to the great students and thinkers of the Hawzah.

At present, this publication has been going on strong for over 39 years, offering its valuable services to the Muslim world and the Shi`a communities. The magazine has found a special spot within the hearts of the youth, university students, teachers and other noble personalities and it is through this publication that the light of Islam and Tashayya` has been spread from its focal point (Qum) to the entire world.

2. Organizing Gatherings to Offer Lessons in Theology and other Religious Teachings

His Eminence felt that the books that had been written in the field of Islamic Theology were not sufficient, nor were they, with the passing of time, able to answer the questions that were being raised. In addition, these books were also not adequate in addressing the needs of the current era. The traditional books of theology were written centuries ago where the questions that the materialists of today bring up were not mentioned. Also, the traditional books written in the past did not discuss the various world religions who were hoping to impose their values on the world. In addition, the older books brought up issues which were timely in their own day, like those in relation to the Asha`ris and Mu`tazili, but which may not be pertinent or applicable at the current time. .

Thus His Eminence, relying upon his literary talent and exceptional abilities, was able to present the Theological Islamic beliefs and the five Principles of Religion in an unparalleled way! I through organizing theological discussions with hundreds of people in attendance who were being made aware of these issues, a compact and concise book was compiled and published.

3. Islamic Council to Protect the Youth

His Eminence gave unparalleled lessons on Theology. He also taught other lessons and led discussions, educating his students in eight different subjects from amongst the different schools of thought throughout the world. Through these classes those being trained would be able to discuss and have debates with others, who are busy propagating other beliefs and schools of thought. They would be able to write books concerning their beliefs, and to be able to answer any questions or issues that they put forth.

Within a short period of time, these religious gatherings were able to produce students – each one of whom was firmly grounded and specialized in a particular field of study. And even today, a group of active youth who are well known authors within the Hawza `Ilmiyyah, are busy with these studies... As well, in order to save our dear youth from the clutches of corruption, His Eminence formed an organization called the *Educational Assembly for Protection of the Younger Generation*. One of the outcomes of this assembly is the publication of material that would be attractive to the youth, and his office made them available to the youth very promptly.

4. Struggles Against Deviant Thoughts

On one of his trips to the city of Shiraz, His Eminence came face to face with one of the Sufi groups in this city. A group of people in Shiraz requested him to write a book that would outline the principles of these Sufis – one that would explain their beliefs in a polite and respectful manner. His Eminence, by making use of the resources available to him, sat down to write this book in the year 1953 CE which outlined their beliefs and thoughts, and he named it "*The Manifestation of Truth*".

The method in which he wrote this book caught the attention of the late Ayatullah al-`Uzma Burujerdi (may Allah be pleased with him) and after requesting His Eminence to see him, he congratulated the author for his valuable efforts. In relation to this book, Ayatullah al-`Uzma Burujerdi (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote the following commendation, "I have gone through this book in my spare time and did not find even the smallest of weak points in it. May Allah reward you for your troubles."

5. Establishing Organizations and Centres of Learning

In these regards, His Eminence had made the intention of establishing such organizations in the same number of Ma`sumin (peace be upon all of them) that we have (14) and with the praise of Allah up until now, he has been successful in establishing four such important schools within the Theological Seminary of Qum and two religious organizations for the welfare of the students who are living in the city of Mashad.

6. Writings

The number of publications of His Eminence currently lies at approximately 130 volumes of books which have all been printed – some of which have been reprinted more than 30 times! Some of these have even been translated into more than 10 living languages of the world and have been published in various parts of the world.

The commentary of the Qur'an authored by him, Tafsir-e-Namuna (The Ideal Commentary) has been translated into many languages, including `Arabic (al-Amthal Fi Tafsir al-Qur'an), and can be found in many homes. In addition to this commentary, he has also authored a thematic commentary of the Qur'an entitled Payam-e-Qur'an (The Message of the Qur'an) which has opened up a new chapter in the field of exegesis of the Noble Qur'an.

In addition, the books he has written on the theological beliefs have been a place where others can seek refuge from the assault of books written with false beliefs in them.

Of the books of Fiqh that he has written, we mention a few: Anwar al-Fuqahah, al-Qawa'idul Fiqhiyyah, Anwar al-Usul and the notes and commentaries on the complete text of `Urwatul Wuthqa which has been printed many times over.

His practical guide for Muslims (Tawdhihul Masail) has also been printed many times and has also been translated into `Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, Azari and English.

A complete list of other publications of this great scholar which have been translated into English and are available is as follows. Most of these can be read on his website at www.makaremshirazi.org [1].

1. Ethical Discourses [40 Lectures on Ethics and Morality] – volume 1, 2 & 3 translated by Saleem Bhimji –published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [2]]
2. Khums: The Islamic Tax translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service [www.al-haqq.com] [3]]
3. Lessons in Islamic Beliefs – Tawhid, 'Adalah, Nubuwwah, Imamah, and Ma'ad translated by Laleh Bakhtiyar – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [4]]
4. Life Under the Grace of Ethics translated by Monir Shafiei – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]
5. Message of the Qur'an – A Thematic Exegesis of the Noble Qur'an volume 1 of 10 translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [2]]
6. One Hundred and Eighty Questions – volumes 1, 2 & 3 translated by Shahnawaz Mahdawi – published by the World Federation of KSIMC [www.world-federation.org] [2]]
7. One Hundred and Fifty Lessons for Life translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [4]]
8. Our Beliefs translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]
9. Philosophy of Islamic Rulings written in co-operation with Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani Translated by Sayyid Athar Rizvi – published by Ansariyan Publications [www.ansariyan.org] [4]]
10. Summary of the Islamic Rulings translated by 'Ali Abdul Rasheed – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]
11. Tafsir of the Noble Qur'an – Suratul Jinn translated by Saleem Bhimji – published by the Islamic Humanitarian Service and the World Federation of KSIMC [www.al-haqq.com] [3]] & [www.world-federation.org] [2]]
12. The tradition of Ghadir – The Expressive Evidence for Imamate translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]

13. The Noble Qur'an – Translation and Commentary – volume 1 – 4 translated by Mansoor Amini – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]

14. The Islamic Laws translated by the office of Ayatullah al-'Uzma Shaykh Nasir Makarim Shirazi – published by the Office of Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi [www.makaremshirazi.org] [1]]

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Links

[1] <http://www.makaremshirazi.org>

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[3] <http://www.al-haqq.com>

[4] <http://www.ansariyan.org>