

Author's Biography

Only a few names of men, who were distinguished for their gifts and genius which lifted them to the highest peaks of recognition, are etched upon the horizons of our Islamic world. Such names, like bright stars, have kept glittering in the depth of the skies.

As for those whose names are portrayed in every horizon of the Islamic world, these, indeed, are even fewer. They are a minority. They are none other than those whom nature has elevated, achieving such rare genius that made them unique throughout all Islamic lands. Among such people is our master-author, may Allah rest his soul in peace.

The Supreme Will has decreed to bless his knowledge and pen, producing from them the best intellectual output. I may not exaggerate if I allow my pen to record this: the master-author is advanced through what he produced to the very front row of Shi'a scholars. The latter dedicated their entire lives to the service of their religion and school of thought. He, therefore, deservedly occupies the front seat among the Muslim world's contemporary elite.

Within such a limited undertaking, I do not find myself inclined to elaborate on what Sayyid 'Abdul-Husayn Sharafuddin had accomplished in life's spheres and undertakings. The task may have been easier had the author being discussed been someone else. It would have been easier had the author been among those men whose lives and works were limited.

But a man whose calibre is as vast as this author makes it very difficult for any writer to describe and be fair to. When the writer stands for such an undertaking, he will surely feel as though he is facing an entire generation reverberating with hues of life, overflowing from all sides and directions. He can hardly refer each hue to its source except through research with full responsibilities of logic and knowledge. This may even be beyond the capacity of trustworthy historians to tackle.

[The Author's Birth and Upbringing](#)

Sayyid 'AbdulHusayn Shrafuddin, may Allah expand his shade, was born in Kazimiyya (north Baghdad, Iraq) in 1290 A.H. for good parents linked to one another by kinship and united through a familytree of

good roots. His father is noble Yousuf son of noble Jawad son of noble Isma'il. His mother is the virtuous Zahra daughter of Sayyid Hadi son of Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali, ending in a short kinship to Sharafuddin, one of the renowned dignitaries of this good family.

He grew up in a house for which the avenues of scholarly mastership had been paved, whose pillars were erected upon renowned dignitaries of good reputation, whose favour and services are acclaimed and appreciated throughout the Islamic world.

He grew up in that lofty house, nurtured in the gardens of knowledge and ethics, ascending the heights of dignity. When he reached tender adolescence, he became fully acquainted with the causes of goodness, the following of which made him the embodiment of virtue. Upon making his first stride in the scholarly life, he was distinguished by notable accomplishments and achievements. His students and admirers kept him company. He had a reverberating voice in the learning centers of Samarra and al-Najaf alAshraf where he achieved distinction.

Ever since that day, his star had always been shining amidst the circles of knowledge, its light extending far and wide as his knowledge expanded. He advanced his stages until the scholarly life was cultivated for him at the hands of many a genius among the pillars of knowledge in al-Najaf alAshraf and Samarra such as Tabataba'i, Khurasani, FathAllah alAsfahani, Shaykh Hasan al-Karbala'i, and many other renowned pillars of religion and imams of knowledge.

At 'Amila

When his maturity received recognition, his star in the circles of research and meetings of debate and learning started shining, he, at thirtytwo, went back to the mountain of 'Amil, south Lebanon, dignified, renowned, selfsatisfied, promising, articulate, glowing in brilliance. The day of his arrival was memorable. 'Amila sent her sons to welcome his arrival, so luminous in lands and skies, welcoming him in demonstrations containing men of scholarship and public leadership, up to the borders of the mountain from Syria's highway, celebrating as though it was 'Id.

His Reforms

A new life started in 'Amila aiming at strict implementation of religion, improvement of manners, the strengthening of right with might, kindness to the weak, the enjoining of right and the forbidding of wrong, comfort with the masters of religion and humbleness towards the men of knowledge.

His Eloquence

His eloquent lectures and terse methods of directives had the largest share in producing the much desired reform. This comes as no surprise when we know that the Sayyid possessed such an eloquence of speech which made him the envy of Arabia's orators. Religion, scholarship and ethics are all proud of

him.

He was great, besides his eloquence, in choosing the jewels of his thoughts, the garbs of his opinions which he masterly fitted and organized, breathing life into whatever he desired of arguments, explanations, logic, expositions, additions, and into all his works which are organized through harmony and equilibrium.

His Services

As regarding his contributions to the struggle against foreign colonialism, you may elaborate on these as you please. This undertaking does not allow us to go into such struggle in detail; however, I may summarize it in one statement: His great services during the Turkish regime, then the French occupation, then the postindependence, were simply extensions of the movements of liberation.

He raised their level of effectiveness and directed them towards the noble objectives of securing justice and stability, thus bringing fresh hope to the masses. All authorities during these regimes, however, spared no effort to oppose him and undermine his plans through the implementation of whatever plots, persecution and harmful means they could improvise.

The calamities from which this great imam suffered while trying to make his people happy may not have been endured except by the most outstanding Arab chiefs and leaders, those who struggled heroically and suffered a great deal in the process.

I do not need to elaborate on the surprise the occupying French authorities had in store for him when they felt sick and tired of him. They instructed some of their hoodlum hardliners to assassinate him. Ibn alHallaj suddenly broke into his house when he, together with members of his family and kin, had none of his supporters around.

Allah the Glorious and Sublime willed for him the opposite of their will. He kept their evil away from him, and they retreated in humiliation, stumbling in their failure and shame. As soon as the news of this surprise attack was broadcast in 'Amila, crowds rushed to Sur from each and every direction in order to be under the command of their master as to what to do about that incident. Yet the Sayyid dispersed them after thanking them, advising them to simply overlook it.

This incident was succeeded by many, many other similar ones. The gap became wider, and dissension exploded until, eventually, the Sayyid, together with his kith and kin among the chiefs of 'Amila, had to seek refuge in Damascus which he reached despite the French army's attempt to close the highway in his face.

The aggressive authority was chasing him with some of its armed troops in order to forbid him from reaching Damascus. When it lost hope of capturing him, it went back to set his house in Shahur on fire, leaving it in ashes strewn in the air; then it set its hands on his big house in Sur after allowing the sinful

hands to plunder and loot it until they left nothing valuable or otherwise in it. The most damaging in that tragedy was the burning of the Sayyid's library with all its precious books and most distinguished works including nineteen of his own which were still handwritten manuscripts.

Then he travelled to Egypt during the climax of upheavals which inflicted the region. When he arrived there, the Egyptians warmly welcomed him and recognized him in spite of his disguise behind a kaffiyya and iqal, outfits common to the bedouins of the desert. He took in Egypt certain stands which attracted the attention of the elite among the scholars of knowledge, the pillars of literature, and the men of politics, according to the demands of his revered personality.

That was not his first visit to Egypt. Egypt knew him eight years earlier when he visited it at the close of 1329 A.H., staying in it till the year 1330 A.H. during a trip in pursuit of knowledge. He met then with the researchers and masterminds of learned Egyptians. After that, he and Shaykh Salim alBishri, the then rector of alAzhar, met quite often and exchanged discussions dealing with the significant matters of *Kalam* (logic) and *Usul* (basics of jurisprudence). Among the results of those meetings are the *Muraja'at* with which we are dealing here.

His Quest for Knowledge

Noting the preface above, you may first get the impression that the social problems surrounding him have diverted his attention from pursuing knowledge and kept him away from literary work. In fact, anyone who is afflicted as our Sayyid was is normally diverted from attainable knowledge and authorship. The problems surrounding him would have indeed limited his chances to look into the library, or to write. But the fact is that his time is blessed, his heart is spacious, and his mind is powerful.

While dealing satisfactorily with the problems which he encountered, he also quenched his thirst for knowledge. He obtained from his library the portion of knowledge his practical life demanded. Ever since leaving alNajaf alAshraf, he continuously kept researching, reading, writing and debating. During his leisure hours, he daily went to his library in order to find his peace of mind in its subjects and forget whatever busy and exhausting life lay beyond its precincts.

His Works

1) *AlMuraja'at* is but a true specimen of his writing, and I cannot tell you enough about it here. His own tongue is indeed much more eloquent and outspoken than mine. It was printed at al'Irfan Press, Saida (Lebanon), in 1355 A.H., and all its copies were immediately sold out. It was translated into Persian, and I have heard that it has been translated into English by Dr. Zayd, an Indian, and also into Urdu.

2) *Al Fusul Al Muhimmah fi Tal'if Al Ummah* ["The Important Chapters in Unifying the Nation"] is one of the best Islamic books which deal with controversial matters regarding which Sunnis and Shi'as dispute in the light of *Kalam*, reason, deduction and analysis. It was finished in 1327 A.H. and was twice printed

in Saida, 'Amil mountain. The text of its second edition (1347 A.H.) was increased. In its own subject-matter, *Al Fusul Al-Muhimmah fi Ta'lif Al-Ummah* suffices for an entire library. It contains 192 small size pages.

3) *Ajwibat Masa'il Musa JarAllah* ["Answers to Musa JarAllah's Questions"]. Although small in size, this is a magnificent book of tremendous knowledge. As the title suggests, it contains answers to twenty questions put forth by Musa JarAllah to Shi'a scholars.

He thinks they include some embarrassing questions such as why Shi'as consider some Companions *kafir* and denounce them, and the allegation that Shi'as altered the text of the Qur'an and made *Jihad* unlawful, and also matters like *Bada'* (change of destiny by Allah), *mut'a* (temporary marriage), *bara'a* (dissociation from the enemies of Allah), *'awl* (a law of inheritance adopted by the Sunnis), etc.

His answers were most authentic, derived from abundant knowledge and based upon proofs and logic, leaving no room for doubt. It has an Introduction about the call for unity and a Conclusion regarding the ignorance of those who raise such issues and propagate such allegations about Shi'a literature, and also of the confusion which exists in some Sunni books. It is in 152 small pages, printed at al'Irfan Press, Saida, in 1355 A.H./1936 A.D.

4) *Al Kalimah Al Gharra' fi Tafdil alZahra'* ["The Convincing Statement in Preferring alZahra'"]. Its 40 half-size pages have combined with the text of the second edition of *Al Fusul alMuhimmah*. It contains the deepest studies. It is most authentic in style and derivation. It testifies to the overflow of the writer's pen, his fountainhead.

5) *Al Majalis Al Fakhirah fi Ma'atim al'Itrah Al Tahirah* ["The Magnificent Commemorative Speeches in Honour of the Purified Progeny"]. The Introduction to this book has already been printed. The total number of its halfsize pages is 72. The author explains in it the philosophy of conducting commemorative Husayni ceremonies, and the secrets of the Taff martyrdom are very nicely and precisely explained.

6) *Abu Hurairah*, printed in 1365 A.H. at Al-'Irfan Press, Saida. It is a new method in authorship and a victory in the world of biographies because of its absorbant analytical style. In its depth and style, it may well be compared with the most respectable works of its category. It deals in the light of knowledge and reason with the life of Abu Hurairah, his time, circumstances, friends, traditions, and the special attention meted to him by the six *sahih* books which quote his traditions.

7) *Bughyat Al-Raghibin* ["Quest of the Willing"] is a unique family manuscript tracing the Sharafuddin family tree and close relatives. It stands as a grand, magnificent and excellent work among the literature of diaries in its own accomplished method of classification. He narrates in it the biographies of some renowned masterauthors, as well as their times and circumstances. You will, therefore, find it an excellent and interesting literary book, nay, an entire history of generations and dignitaries.

8) *Thabt Al Athbat fi Silsilat Al Ruwat* ["The Ultimate Proof in the Chain of Narrators"]. In this book, the author lists his mentors among renowned Muslim sects in a sequence which goes back to the Prophet (S) and Imams (as), to works and their authors traced through various Umarous avenues. He narrates some of them by way of reading or hearing, or depending on the authority of renowned men belonging to the Shi'a IthnaAsheri or Zaydi creeds, as well as from renowned Sunnis. To elaborate on all his methods here will require lengthy details; therefore, I content myself with referring to the contents of *alThabt* which was twice printed in Saida.

He has authored other books not mentioned above such as *Masa'il Khilafiyya* ["Caliphate-Related Issues"] and *Risaleh Kalamiyya* [Dissertation in Theological Philosophy (i.e. derived from 'ilm alKalam).

His Lost Works

Besides all these immortal jewels, he has written other precious works. Had they not been burnt or shredded during the 1920 raid, they could have been included among the few distinguished treasures of reason and thought. But alas; these were lost during such painful events; therefore, the institute of knowledge has suffered a severe loss. I wish our master's time will extend in order to compensate by bringing them back to life anew. Here we list them as the author does at the end of his commentary on *AlKalemah AlGharra'* (The Precious Word):

- 1) *Sharh Al-Tabsirah* ["Explicating the *Tabsirah* Book], i.e. Proofs in *Fiqh* Concerning Enlightening Deductions: They are three bound volumes containing chapters on cleanliness, justice, witness and inheritance.
- 2) His commentary, in one volume, on the topic of *Istishab* from Shaykh alAnsari's letters deals with the principles of jurisprudence (*Usul alFiqh*).
- 3) *Risalah fi Munjazat Al-Marid* ["Dissertation on A Sick Person's Road to Recovery"] written in a rationalizing approach.
- 4) *Sabil Al-Muminin*, in three volumes, deals with the topic of Imamate.
- 5) *Al-Nusus Al-Jaliyyah* ["The Obvious Texts"] also deals with Imamate, and it contains forty texts unanimously agreed upon by Muslims in addition to forty others narrated through Shi'a ways polished by analysis and philosophy.
- 6) *Tanzil Al-Ayat Al-Bahira* ["Revelation of the Dazzling Verses"] also deals with the topic of Imamate. It is written in one volume based upon one hundred Qur'anic verses revealed in praise of the holy Imams (as) according to *sahih* books.
- 7) *Tuhfatul Muhaddithin fima Akhraja 'anhu Al-Sittah minal Muda'afin* ["Ornament of the Entertainers from the hadith Regarded by the Authors of the Six (*sahihs*) as 'Weak'"]. This is a book totally new in its

subjectmatter, one the like of which has never been written before.

8) *Tuhfatul Ashab fi Hukm AhlelKitab* ["The Companions' Ornament in Judging the People of the Book"].

9) *Al-Thari'a* ("The Pretext") is a book rebutting alNabahani's *Badi'a*.

10) *Al-Majalis Al-Fakhira* ["The Excellent Sessions"] is a four-volume book. Its first volume deals with the Prophet's biography, the second with the biographies of AmirulMuminin, alZahra and alHasan (as), the third with the biographies of Imam Husayn (as), and the fourth with the biographies of the nine Imams, Allah's peace be upon all of them.

11) *Mu'allifu Al-Shi'a fi Sadr Al-Islam* ["Shi'a authors at the Dawn of Islam"]. Some of this book's chapters were published in Al-'Irfan magazine of Saida (see Al-'Irfan, Vols. 1 & 2).

12) *Bughyatul Fa'iz fi Naql Al-Jana'iz* ["The Winner's Quest in Coffin Bearing"]. Most of this book's text was published in Al-'Irfan.

13) *Bughyatul Sa'il 'an Lathm Al-Aydi wal Anamil* ["Quest of the Inquirer about Hand and Finger Kissing"]. This is a scholarly thesis in literary and intelligent humour containing eighty traditions from our way and the way of others.

14) *Zakat al-Akhlaq* ["Behavioural Purification"]. Al-'Irfan published some of its chapters.

15) *Al-Fawa'id wal Fara'id* ["The Benefits and the Rareties"] is a useful inclusive book.

16) His commentary on Bukhari's *Sahih*.

17) His commentary on Muslim's *Sahih*.

18) *Al-Asalib Al-Badi'ah fi Rujhan Ma'atim Al-Shi'a*: ["The Witty Methods in the Propriety of Shi'as' Commemorations"] is a book based on logical and traditional proofs, and it is, in its subjectmatter, a new production.

He has written Introductions, besides these, dealing with different topics some of which were lost while others were resurrected and are yet to be finished.

His books are characterized by keen observation, vast investigation, inclusive research, authentic conclusion, good finish, honest quotations and interrelation of chapters in qualities which wear the critic out and challenge the mischievous.

His Manners and Gifts

He is very patient, dignified, openminded, gentle, brave, and highlyrespected. He inspires an awe which forces you to respect and love him even if you do not know him.

He does not compromise justice, nor does he admit relaxation or leniency when an effort is exerted to counter injustice or wrongdoing, yet he remains humble, generous, maintaining a pleasant countenance.

Evenhandedness has such a position within him that he is fair to both strangers and kin; doing right is his motive and motto.

He is a model of piety, selfease, clarity of conscience, and the speaking of what is right. Besides, he is wise in his views, far-sighted. He sifts people's temper and reaches the reality and depth of affairs. He cannot be deceived by appearances, nor can he be cheated outrightly. He does not deviate from accuracy nor be tempted into hypocrisy.

These good manners may have contributed to his accomplishments, influence, and true qualifications. He is, then, counted among the most eloquent Arabs when he talks, the most outspoken when he lectures, the most hearttouching when he preaches, the most efficient in implementing the law, the most fair in judgment and clarity of argument, and he is the most deep in philosophy of life.

His Travels

In 1329/1330, he undertook a scholarly visit of Egypt, as we mentioned above. During that visit he met with the most distinguished intellectuals in Egypt headed by Shaykh Salim alBishri alMaliki, the then rector of Al-Azhar Mosque. The outcome of meeting him and corresponding with him is this book which suffices to be the sweet fruit of that visit.

By 1338, he made his religiopolitical migration about which you have learned a short while ago. In it he visited Damascus, Egypt, and Palestine. In all these countries, he reaped the fruits of knowledge and delivered invaluable lectures.

He was the first learned Shi'a to lead the thronged stampeding masses which assembled at the Haram mosque (the Sacred Mosque) in the holy precincts of Mecca for prayers. It was the first time that people in thousands openly prayed behind a Shi'a Imam without resorting to *taqiyya*.

This is why the news of his performing the pilgrimage earned such a great fame that people kept talking about it in all Muslim lands. King Husayn son of 'Ali offered him the best welcome, and they met more than once and together washed the Ka'ba.

By the close of 1355 A.H., he visited the Imams' shrines in Iraq and had a reunion with his family and kinfolk. On the day of his arrival, the Iraqi cabinet ministers, dignitaries, and chiefs, headed by his holiness Sayyid Muhammad Baqir alSadr, welcomed him and escorted him the entire distance from Baghdad to Falluja's bridge in motorcades. At Kerbala and Najaf, he was met with a magnificent welcome from learned men as well as the general public. The similitude of that fantastic welcome is indeed rare.

I imagine him saying, when he reached the playgrounds of his childhood and youth:

Tears overcame me when the Tawbad did I see;

And it glorified the Merciful upon seeing me...

It was only natural that he would burst into eager tears because of his anxiety to see such heart-comforting institutes, and the latter would glorify Allah while welcoming him, ecstatic at his arrival after an absence which lasted for many long years.

Had he not left them satisfied? Had they not acclaimed him when he was filling their halls with the best that fills an institute thronged with outstanding students?

Yes, indeed. They both exchanged passion, eagerness, anxiety and greetings. Such a purely spiritual exchange was reciprocated by all elements of goodness and sincerity at Najaf, Kerbala, Kazimiyya and Samarra'. There were many merry and colourful celebrations from which time had kept him away and obstructed him from seeing them and their distinguished dignitaries.

His meetings with the distinguished pioneers of knowledge and research were full of benefits in the different scholarly branches of knowledge.

He proceeded travelling from Iraq to Iran. In the latter country, he was blessed by visiting the mausoleum of Imam Rida, peace be upon him. While he was en route, he passed by Qum and Tehran and other Iranian cities. In all of those cities, he was met with all sorts of welcome his beloved personality deserved.

His Legacies and Construction Projects

1) He inaugurated his construction projects with a *waqf* Husayniyya which he built so that people might meet there on different occasions and circumstances to uphold the tenets and receive religious education and spiritual guidance, and also to offer their prayers. Shi'as, when he visited Sur, did not have a mosque there.

2) He erected, in the first stages, six stores at the city's entrance. He had a spacious house built on their rooftops wherein he planned that it would hopefully be converted into the desired school. Unfortunately, the completion of the project was not possible then because of the ruling authority's opposition as well as that of seekers of selfinterest who followed its line; therefore, he had to content himself with that portion, waiting for the opportune chance.

3) Over the other side of the building he had a unique club erected which he named Imam Jafar alSadiq Club, 22.5 meters long and 15.5 meters wide, which he reserved for celebrations, learning, religious, social and academic occasions. Then he established in 1361 A.H. a school for girls. Like the one for

boys, this school implemented a curriculum which promoted the education of useful topics that would secure a more ideal norm of life.

The location of the school and the club is the best in beauty, landscape and spacious openness. The view is the beautiful water, extending endlessly, and if you are tired of the sea and its waves, look in another direction: towards the plains and mountains embracing the villages as far as your eyes can see. Your sight will wander from here to there, active, dazzled, dreaming of that captivating and enchanting beauty of natural scenery, extending in felicity, roaming unobstructed in pleasure and joy.

If you stand by the row of all these huge adjacent buildings, you will see in them a great structure very well put together, strongly erected, inspiring an awe within you because of their engineered beauty and magnificent design. Then your awe will increasingly intensify when you come to know its fertile output which combines both abundance of quantity with goodness of quality.

All of this, in its completion and perfection, is but a seed, considering the ambition of our masterauthor who purchased to the south of its location a vast tract of land and linked it to the institution in order to complement through it his charitable projects and achieve his Islamic objectives. He hoped that in the end he might lay the foundation of a university that would teach its students the best principles in the widest fields of knowledge.

He saw that that way was the best to deal with any imminent danger, to protect the new generation descending from our own to generations which might force it to be an enemy to ours. May Allah take his hands and lead him to whatever brings forth the wellbeing of this life and religion and the welfare of Islam and Muslims; praise be to Allah, Lord of the Universe.

Murtada AlYasin,

Kazimiyya, Iraq

1365 A.H./1946 A.D.

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