

Sayyid Razi: Who Collected Nahj al-Balagha

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The Young Scholar Of Great Fame Who Had Just Entered Youth

Doubtlessly, Sayyid Razi is the most famed Shia scholar and he possessed an enlightened disposition and was a high caliber intellectual. He is the luminous star that shone on the skies of Baghdad, which had always been the center of the world of knowledge in every age. This

brilliant scholar was born in 359 A.H. in the city of Baghdad.

He belonged to a family, every member of which, whether male or female possessed a sound mind, was accomplished in every aspect and faithful to religious laws. All of them were appointed to rear and train this child. During his childhood itself he was endowed with all the good qualities and fine traits of character and intellect. His fame began to spread while he was just a young boy and people prophesied that one day he would become a distinguished scholar.

When Sayyid Razi joined the school he astonished his teacher and classmates by his exceptional abilities. Therefore as he scaled the steps of progress his retractors and enemies also increased. But there also was no dearth of intellectuals who accorded him due respect and honor.

Thus among the strange anecdotes connected with his life is also the mention about the fact that his classmates and teachers used to be perplexed at his accomplishments. Sayyid Razi and his brother Sayyid Murtada became famous scholars in their adolescence when they obtained knowledge of religious jurisprudence and other sciences from their teacher Shaykh Mufid. Sayyid Razi studied Sharh Usul-e-Khamsa and Al-Umdah under Qadi Abdul Jabbar the renowned Mutazalite scholar of Sunni faith. In the same way he studied traditions under Muhammad ibn Imran Murzabani and Abu Musa Talakbar, both of whom were great Shia scholars.

According to the report of Abu Hafs ibn Umar Kattani, his teacher in jurisprudence was Abu Wabi and in recitation it was Muhammad ibn Amwani Khwarezmi and it is said that he studied Tahani under Muhammad Asadi Ikfani and Syntax and Arabic grammar from Ali Ibn Isa Rumani. He was trained in prosody under Abu Ishaq Zajjaj, who was considered the father of prosody. He obtained knowledge of rhyming from Akhfash, who is considered a master of Arabic grammar. He also studied some Arabic under Ibn Haba and eloquence and literature under Ibn Nabaya. Sayyid Razi had obtained expertise in all the above-mentioned sciences even before he reached the age of maturity, and he began to be considered an expert of Arabic

language and literature.

This young lad, whose fame spread among the common people as well as the nobles regarding his intellectual capacities and his insight, began to compose verse while he was yet ten years old. When he was twelve he composed a panegyric in the honor of his chaste and accomplished mother, which reflected the extent of his literary merits. A collection of the panegyrics he composed at that age is present and people with literary taste read it and are perplexed at his deep insight, control over the language and God-given intellectual capabilities. He began to write and teach from the age of eighteen. By the time he was twenty he had mastered all the sciences of his age.

Sayyid Razi was very much obsessed about acquiring knowledge. If he had any opportunity to learn something from anybody he did not hesitate to disregard his self-esteem and went ahead to learn it. In this matter he did not discriminate between Shia or Sunni, Muslim or non-Muslim. By the time he was twenty he had become a master of jurisprudence, traditions, exegesis of Quran and other religious sciences in Arabic. According to Thalabi who was his contemporary: Sayyid Razi was the inheritor of his ancestor Abu Talib as regards his literary arts. This was so because great luminaries of the literary world have appeared in the progeny of Abu Talib. Though many great men of letters lived during the Buwayhid period there was none who could surpass the eloquence and literary merits of Sayyid Razi either in prose or poetry.

Sahib ibn Abbad was a scholar and a litterateur of the Buwayhid dynasty. He served the royalty as a vizier. He had collected the couplets of Mutanabbi, a renowned poet of Arabia that he used to quote now and then. When he heard the verses of Sayyid Razi, he sent a messenger to him with instructions that he should compile the verses of Sayyid Razi for him. At that time Sayyid Razi was twenty-six years old.

When he was twenty-three, he composed an ode about Abu Tahir Nasirud Dawla. Such were the beautiful words and expressions of this composition that the teacher of Sayyid Razi, "Janna" wrote a commentary on the verses. Thus at such a young age he earned great accolades from his teacher. Such a relationship between a teacher and a student is rare. Sayyid Razi was a man of self-respect, honor, chastity, generosity and all the perfect qualities. There was none who could equal him during his time. He was very particular in performing religious duties. He did not like flattery and false praise.

He never accepted any recompense for the verses he composed in honor of the rulers. He refused many times the gifts sent by Bahaud Dawla Dailami. Even when he composed verses in praise of his own father and the father tried to make a present to him in return he refused to accept it saying: Is gift a recompense of a couplet? But Sayed Razi himself was very generous

and charitable.

Sayyid Razi had a friend named Abu Ishaq. For years they communicated through letters. This person was a Sabian and a man of letters of his time. He also had mystic tendencies. When he died Sayyid Razi composed a dirge in his favor while the Ahle Sunnat people made fun of him. Upon this Sayyid Razi justified, "I have expressed sorrow at the passing away of a man of letters and the loss incurred to the literary world. I am not concerned about the way he looked or what type of body he had."

Before Sayyid Razi, his father was the Amir of Hajj for the Shia pilgrims and also an ambassador between different Islamic kingdoms. He was responsible for working out treaties and agreements between various principalities. After his demise the exalted post came to Sayyid Razi when he was just twenty-one years old. This proves the extraordinary merits and excellence of this young scholar.

The duty of the Amir of Hajj was to make arrangements for the Hajj pilgrims and provide them with all the facilities on the way to and from Mecca and Medina. The curatorship of the two holy sanctuaries were also included in this.

Though previously this duty was discharged by his father and brother jointly, now the responsibility was solely his at the age of twenty-one.

Sayyid Razi was only 47 years old when he passed away from this world in 406 A.H. leaving behind a legacy for those in quest of knowledge. The voice of his writings still echoes in the world of knowledge.

The news of the untimely and sudden demise of Sayyid Razi spread in the city like forest fire. People rushed barefoot to his residence. All the scholars, intellectuals and jurists whether Shia or Sunni rushed to participate in his funeral. His elder brother, Sayyid Murtada was so shocked that he saw the bier once and went to the shrine of the seventh Imam and sat there in grief. He did not even have the strength to accompany the funeral procession.

The Shia vizier, Fakhru'l Mulk performed the funeral prayer and buried the late scholar. Then he came to the shrine of the seventh Imam and took Sayyid Murtada back to his residence from there. We should remember that Sayyid Razi is the compiler of Nahjul Balagha, which is a book second in importance only to the Holy Quran. Shias and Sunnis both accept that it is a priceless gift for the world of Islam.

Nahjul Balagha is such a book that since the time it was compiled till today, that is, even after a thousand years, it remains an object of attention for the litterateurs, scholars and intellectuals of the world. Not only this, it also shows the high merits of the compiler and his enlightened thinking.

Sayyid Razi collected the sermons, letters, advices and sayings of his ancestor Amirul Momineen (a.s) and arranged them in a beautiful way. The book contains the secrets of a successful life and a prosperous hereafter. Treasures of wisdom are found in this book of the sayings and writings of the Master of the Faithful. The arrangement is very convenient and presentable. Sayyid Razi labored a great deal sifting through the multitudes of books and manuscripts to make the collection. In addition to this he wrote an eloquent and meaningful introduction where he mentioned subtle points and delicate matters of the expressions of Ali (a.s).

Sayyid Razi has performed such a magnificent service by compiling this book that it would continue to provide enlightenment to all those who are in search of knowledge and research. This is so because the personality of Ali (a.s) is only next to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that provides directions for salvation to mankind. Thus such a comprehensive, authoritative and a perfect book is a great service to mankind in general and the Shias in particular.

Thus the influences of Sayyid Razi would endure as long as Nahjul Balagha survives.[1]

Reference

[1] Yatimatud Dahr, Thalabi Vol. 3 pg. 116, Lisanul Mizan, Ibn Hajar Vol. 5 Pg. 141, Ad-DarajatulRafia Pg. 268, Rawdatul Jannat etc