

Obituary of Dr Syed Muhammad Husain Shah from *The Light*, Supplement to issue of 24 April 1939

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A Star Sets

It was perhaps Jesus who spoke of a man of Faith as the salt of life. That is an apt illustration in its own way. But for such men life would be a dull, drab and an insipid affair. The Prophet of Islam has, however another description of a man of Faith. He likens him to a twinkling star high up on the firmament of life shedding light and lustre on the world below, illuminating the path of a humanity wallowing in a dark and dismal life of the flesh. One such star set in our midst in Lahore on April 27. Those who ever came into contact with Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah will bear us out that he undoubtedly was a resplendent star. By the light of faith he walked and the light of faith he radiated all through his earthly sojourn and now that the hand of death has snatched him away within the twinkling of the eyes, as it were, it seems as if a brilliant Star of Faith has gone down the horizon.

Faith has been described as a thing that moves mountains. Iqbal meant the same when he said :

نگاہ مرد موسن سے بدل جاتی ہیں تقدیریں

—“The look of a man of Faith changes entire destinies”. It was Faith such as this that glowed in the heart of Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah, not the sort of empty pious talk that is confined to the lips. He faced life with it, he faced death with it.

Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah was no millionaire. He started life as a man of modest means. But he never grudged to spend of those God-given means in the path of God and for the advancement of His glory. In fact he took delight in it. The result was God blessed him with plenty. But abundance of wealth never interfered, as it so often does with the common run of men, with his instinctive reliance on God. On the other hand he felt more and more drawn towards God and more and more venturesome in staking his all on God which experience had taught him to be a paying business

At the last Silver Jubilee of this Anjuman when the call came to him to strengthen the funds for the promulgation of God's glory on earth, with his characteristic courage he responded with a big quota of Rs 50,000. This affords an insight into another of his traits. He had a big heart and took delight in big things. Littleness of any sort was foreign to his nature. Soon after, however, the Anjuman found itself in a fix. An Islamic mission had been launched in Holland and there was no money to meet this new liability. Shall God's cause in that land be abandoned? Shall the flag of Islam once unfurled be pulled down? This was the question before the Anjuman when this man with the big heart again came forward with a big jump. What is all his property for, which God has blessed me with?—he said. If He has given me without a measure, it is as well that I should give for Him without a measure. And another sum of Rs. 200 a month for two years was placed by him at the Anjuman's disposal. His Faith in God, however, was put to yet another test, shortly after. The German translation of the Quran which is in the press out-ran its estimated expenditure and another Rs. 2,500 was needed. To Shah Sahib this came only as another opportunity. “Why,” he said, “I have set aside a sum for the coming Haj. You can have Rs. 2,500 out of that to tide over your difficulty”. To him, money spent in God's way was an investment that was bound to come back with a hundred-fold dividend. That was his life-long experience. Whereas other people would invest their hoardings in some paying speculation, to Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah there was no safer, no more profitable speculation than spending of his wealth in the way of God.

A man of Faith alone is capable of true courage and so Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah was a man who was never found daunted by any circumstances, however adverse. He had the courage to call a spade a spade and tell the bitter truth unto the face of the biggest man. But his greatest courage lay in his turning the searchlight on himself and making a full and frank confession of his own human frailties. This is a great thing indeed. Few men are capable of such harsh self-examination. Self-esteem is the last weakness of a great man. Be it said to his credit that Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah rose above this last weakness of human nature. How often he was seen making a clean breast of all the mist of misunderstanding or estrangement that arose between him and others! He was an embodiment of the

Prophet's saying that rupture between two Muslims should never go beyond three days.

The Quran says that men who meet death in the path of God must not be called "dead". They are alive, says the Word of God. The meaning of this verse is borne home to us when we survey the life of Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah. By his ever-living faith in God he created, while alive, a current of life all around him and now that he is no more in the flesh with us, he is leaving behind that same current of life in the hearts of those that came into contact with him. Who can say that a man who was the cause of infusing life into so many bosoms is dead? He certainly is alive and his example of reckless staking his all in the name of God would energize the coming generations to deeds which only a living people are capable of accomplishing.

When the history of Ishaat Islam movement in this age of sordid materialism and Godlessness comes to be written, the name of Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah is destined to have a chapter unto itself. Names like Maulana Muhammad Ali, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, Maulana Sadr-ud-Din may be prominent in the public eye. But the main driving force behind these soldiers of Islam has been supplied by men like the late Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah.

People often ask: Where is the good of the Ahmadiya Movement and where lies its justification? If the Movement had done nothing beyond giving the world just one clean, honest, devout and devoted soul as the late Dr. Syed Muhammad Husain Shah, it would have done enough to justify its existence. An honest man is the noblest work of God. But a man of Faith as the late Shah Sahib was is nobler still. And a movement that has produced such men has certainly made no mean contribution to the advancement of humanity.

How we wish the youth of Islam would catch something of the spark of this devout soul that lived, moved and had his being in God and who never hesitated to take any leap in the dark in the name of God.

M. Y. K.