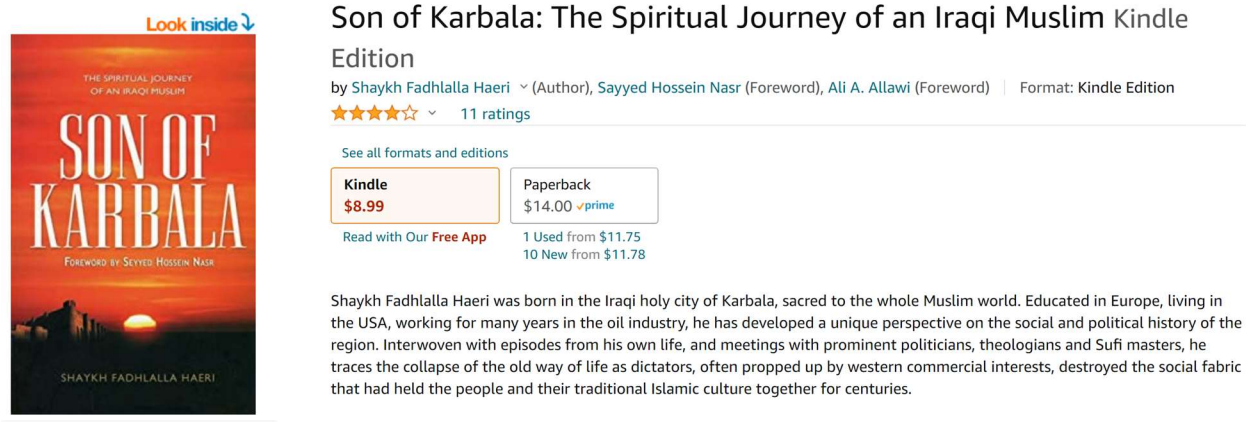


Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri - The Spiritual Journey of an Iraqi Muslim, Son of Karbala.

Truly a spiritual auto-biography, and is very relevant for the times we live in. The richness of his life experience in the land that is so near and dear to our hearts, the dusty yet spiritually fulfilling land of Karbala, the challenges and the sense of spiritual and cultural dis-location he faces, when he leaves the place of his birth and longing, for studies in a foreign land, i.e UK.

It is the dialectic between the sacred and profane, between the east and the west that touches the initial aspect of the book.

He writes eloquently, yet acutely of the spiritual tradition that binds him, with the plethora of spiritual sayings from the Prophet, the imams of the ahl al-bayt, and the mystics in Islam: in the mirror of the dislocation and disfigurement of traditional values, and the opulence that comes with the over abundance of wealth not earned, and that of modernity.

He also shares of his sojourn to many Countries, in search of his sustenance, and this is where his spiritual journey also begins. He meets spiritual masters from other traditions: non Islamic, and is able to sense the innate Spirituality that is common among seekers on the path. What he finds striking is how these spiritual masters encourage him to proceed with his journey within the realm of his own spiritual up-bringing. At times, they are able to speak a language that transcends cultural barriers.

Now he seeks to resolve the dialectic between the sacred and the profane in a different context and world

There is a sense that he imparts to his readers: to seek a spiritual master in the quest of seeking the Face of the Divine. He is associated with the Shadhili Tariqa, along with other spiritual orders, and speaks of his countenance with them as well. His journeys take him from continent

to continent, from the Middle East, to the archipelagos of Malaysia, and then India. Not to forget the spiritual retreat in the United States

Those who have have had the fortuity of growing in the bossom of a Husaniyyah, or those who grew in the bossom of the shrine of the Imams, will gather the sense of and importance that is aligned to his familys name. He writes of very personal matters: of those woman who tended to him, who were part and parcel of the spiritual up-bringing, and who served him and his family. An extended family, in blood and spirituality. He writes of their daily routine, yet more importantly, how these men and women lives revolved around the cognizance of and the presence of the spiritual beings in their midst. Karbala, signifying what it is, he also shares the joys of his child-hood: as ordinary as any other child would do so. it is life with its vibrancy, filled to the brim with a sense of a fulfillment, yet he looks back with a sense of nostalgia

The book reminds us that one has to create this sense of spirituality that is transcendent of place and even time: values that are universal and also wishes to impart the reader on how to solve the apparent contradiction between living a life with the Cognizance of the Divine in the river of Modernity

He closes this with a saying from our Master, 'Ali

Your remedy is within you - but you do not sense it
Your sickness is from you - but you do not perceive it
You presume that you are a small entity
Whereas within you is concealed the vast world
You are indeed that magnificent book
By whose alphabet the hidden becomes evident.
Therefore, you have no needs beyond yourself
Your essence and secrets are in you - if you can reflect

It is truly a call to Self Recognition, of marifah