

## Ma'ruf al-Rusafi: His life and works

\*Md. Joynul Hoque

Ma'ruf bin Abdul Ghani al Rusafi was born of Kurdish and Arab parentage in Al-Rusafa district of Baghdad in 1875. Poor and brought up singlehandedly by his mother Fatima, al-Rusafi was deeply moved by the neglect and poverty of the masses, which he later depicted and rebelled against. His early education was confined to the traditional Kuttab (Quranic School). He later joined al-Rushdiyya Military School in Baghdad, but left after three years. He then studied (religion and linguistics) under the scholar Shaikh Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, an authority in Arabic, as his guide for twelve years, who introduced him Islamic Principles, Sciences, Sufism and Linguistics.

Ma'ruf al-Rusafi began his career as a school- teacher of Arabic. Following the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution of 1908 he went to Istanbul, where he delivered lecture in Arabic and edited the newspaper "Sabil al-Rashad". In 1912, he represented the al-Muthanna district of Iraq in Turkish Chamber of Deputies. He left Turkey for Damasus in 1919, but after a brief and unhappy period there went to Jerusalem, Where he taught Arabic literature and enjoyed attention and respect. In 1921 he returned to Iraq, where he unwillingly accepted the post of vice chairman of a committee on translation and Arabization and edited the short-lived daily newspaper "Al-Amal".

Al-Rusafi later held several posts as a teacher and inspector of Arabic. He became a member of Parliament in 1930. After 1937 he lived in self-imposed isolation, abandoning poetry and was later forced to sell tobacco in a small shop in Baghdad. Although he died a poor man, his fame never diminished and he is now honoured by a bronze statue in al-Amin Square in Baghdad.



Like al-Zahawi, al-Rusafi had no direct knowledge of European languages or literature, but his fluency in Turkish enabled him to read widely on Western literature and civilization. He began his career by publishing article on social and political issues in Syrian and Egyptian journals such as “al-Muqtataf” and “al-Mua’yyad”. His first collection of poetry was published in 1910 and a second larger collection in 1932; the best edition appeared in Cairo in 1958.

Al-Rusafi’s reputation in the Arab world is linked with the historical, political and social development of Iraq from the late nineteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century. His poetry aimed to educate, reform and awaken Iraq and indeed, the whole Arab nation by acting as its spokesman. At times, he showed anger and frustration, as he reminded his people of their past glory and he often clashed with the authorities, criticizing and rebuking them for their prejudice and tyranny. At times, however, his poetry shows undercurrents of appeasement.

As a progressive poet, al-Rusafi paved the way for the development of modern Iraqi poetry by introducing new values and ideas in his writing. He wrote much on Arabic prosody and criticizing the chronological classification of poets, suggesting an alternative classification scheme based on innovation of ideas of the time. He showed a special interest in education, believing that a good poet should comprehend scientific thought and incorporate this in his poetry.

Although influenced by Turkish literature, al-Rusafi generally adhered to the conventional forms of Arabic poetry, rejecting innovations such as blank verse. He tried to keep his poetry free from stylistic devices, attaching great importance to the unity of the poem. The nationalist sentiment of his poetry is coached in a language characterized by a simplicity that is readily comprehensive by the ordinary Iraqis.

Discussion on major works of al-Rusafi in brief:



Al-Rusafi's main works include the composition and compilation of various books on different themes of which some are published while some are in manuscript form.

A. His published works:

1. His *Diwan* (collection of poetry) was published in 1910 A.D (1328 A.H) in Beirut. *Al-Khayyat* the preface writer of his *Diwan* divided it into 4 chapters viz.

- a) *Al- Kawniyat*
- b) *Al-Ijtema'iyat*
- c) *Al-Tarikhiyat*
- d) *Al- wasfiyat*

The chapter '*Kawniyat*' contains seven poems viz. (1) *Min Aian Ila Aina* (2) *Kalimat Mu'tabar* (3) *Bani al-Ard* (4) *Al-'Aalamu Shi'run* (5) *Nahnu 'Ala Mintad* (6) *Al-Kani Ya Diya* (7) *Al-Ard*.

The chapter *Al-Ijtema'iyat* contains 19 poems, viz. (1) *Al-Tarbiyat wa al-Ummahat* (2) *Al-Mutallaqah* (3) *Al-Sijnu fi Baghdad* (4) *Al-Faqr wa Suqam* (5) *Aiqad al-Ruqood* (6) *Maiyetul Ahyaa wa Hai ul-Amwat* (7) *Tambih al-Niam* (8) *Al-Yatim al-Makhdu* (9) *Al-'Aadat Qahirat* (10) *Al-Yatim fi al-'Eid* (11) *Umm al-Yatim* (12) *Ummatu al-Sharq au Nahnu fi Baghdad* (13) *Siyasatun la Hamasah* (14) *Soo al-Munqalib* (15) *Ba'da al-Dastoor Suqoot Kamil Basha* (16) *Al-Sadeeq al-Mudaa* (17) *Muthanniaat Shi'riyah* (18) *Ruqyah al-Saree* (19) *Ba'da al-Baiyen*.

The Chapter *Al-Tarikhiyat* contains 9 poems, viz, (1) *Halaku wa al-Musta'sam* (2) *Jalinoos al-'Arab au Abu Bakr al-Razi* (3) *Al-Harb fi al-Bahr au Waqiy'atu Tushima byna al-Roos al-Yaban* (4) *Abu Dulamah wa al-Mustaqbil* (5) *Fi Salanik* (6) *Al-Majlis al-Umumi* (7) *Waqfatun 'Inda Yaldiz* (8) *Atlal al-'Ilm au al-Madrasah al-Nizamiyah fi Baghdad* (9) *Tammuz al-Hurriyah*.

The chapter *Al- wasfiyat* has 56 poems, viz, (1) *Al-Sa'ah* (2) *Zikra Lubnan* (3) *Al-Saddu fi Baghdad* (4) *Mahasin al-Tabi'ah* (5) *Ma Raitu fi Bek au Ghali* (6) *Al-*



*Ghuroob* (7) *Fi al-Qitar* (8) *Lailatun fi Malha* (9) *Qasr al-Bahr* (10) *Lailatun fi Dimashq* (11) *Wasf al-Badr 'ind al-Afrinj* (12) *Al-Jaraid wa ma Kanat 'Alaihi fi al-Astana* (13) *Waqfatun fi al-Raud* (14) *Daq al-Khanaq* (15) *Fi 'Audin Taksiru* (16) *Hawla al-Busfur* (17) *Isma'ye Li Kalama* (18) *Yatlubu Jalnar* (19) *Ayatuha al-Ki'ab* (20) *Al-Basarah* (21) *Al-Hurru fi Aghastas* (22) *Al-Bardu fi Kanun* (23) *Hija Ba'd al-Marain min al-Mashaikh* (24) *Jahilun Mutakabbirun* (25) *Fasiqun Marau au Jahilun Yud'a al-'Ilm* (26) *Shukrun 'Ala Daiye'* (27) *Al-Tifl al-Multahi* (28) *Ayuha al-Mashnuq* (29) *Al-Ard 'Baitan'* (30) *Jawabun 'Ala Kitab'* (31) *Al-Ghina Ghina al-Nafs* (32) *Wa Qala : "Shawqi Ilaika Qaribun la Yanaini* (33) *Wa Qala : 'Liman al-Diyar Yalhanu fi al-Sihah'* (34) *Layali al-Uns* (35) *Al-Shams* (36) *Rais al-Dainiyah* (37) *Raqim wa ma Adraka ma Raqim* (38) *Tathir al-Tarbiyah* (39) *Byna al-Yas wa al-Rija* (40) *Naqshun 'ala Ma* (41) *Hawt al-Mawt* (42) *Wa Qala : 'Raqat be Wasfi Jamalika al-Aqwal'* (43) *Aqbalat fi Ghalail* (44) *Al-Nafs al-Ammarah* (45) *Kullu Imrin wa Sadiqih* (46) *Wa Qala : "Qamat Tamisu be A'taf wa Awraq* (47) *Al-Maktab* (48) *Al-Uns fi Ghairi Mawda'yih* (49) *Wa Qala : "Ila Kam Tasubbu al-Dam'a 'Aini wa Taskub* (50) *Mu'allaqah* (51) *Wa Qala min Qasidah : 'Qad Yatfahu al-Lawm Hatta an Sahibuhu* (52) *Fi Hija Ba'duhum* (53) *Wa min al-Hija Aydan ma Qala fi Ba'dihim* (54) *Shukr wa Wida'* (55) *Al-Nashid al-Watani* (56) *Fi al-Masrah*.

After 22 years of the first publication of the *Diwan*, the second and enlarged edition of the same was published in 1932 by *Matba'a Dar al-Ma'rad*, Beirut in one volume containing 524 pages. It is an improved version of the first edition, which is classified into 11 sections.

(1) *Al-Kawniyat* (2) *Al-wasfiyat* (3) *Al-Ijtema'iyat* (4) *Al-Tarikhayat* (5) *Al-Falsafiyat* (6) *Al-Hariqiyat* (7) *Al-Murathi* (8) *Al-Nisaiyat* (9) *Al-Siyasiyat* (10) *Al-Hurbiyat* (11) *Al-Muqatta'at*.



After the demise of Al-Rusafi 1945 AD, the third edition of his *Diwan* was published by *Maktaba al-'Asriya, Baghdad* and *Dar al-Kitab al-Arab, Cairo* in 1952 A.D in two volumes containing 588 pages. Later on, this *Diwan* was published six times.

2. *Al-Anashid al-Madrasiyah*: A collection of poems most of which he composed in Quds while he was a teacher in Dar al-Mu'allimin and was published there in 1920 AD.

3. *Al-Ru'ya* : Rusafi wrote this novel on a Turkish literature Namiq Kamal which was translated into Arabic after the declaration of Ottoman administration. It contains the awakening call from the destructive sleep.

4. *Daf'u al-Hajarah fi Irtidah al-Luknah*: It is the collection of words and phrases from Ottoman language. Out of these, any words are of Arabic language, which the Ottoman did use. But these words have no any meaning in Arabic language. Some words are not in Arabic language though the Arabs get these words as Arabic. It was published by Sada-e-Millat, Istanbul in 1331 AH.

5. *Naf'u al-Taiyb fi al-Khitaba wa al-Khatib*: It is the collection of his speeches delivered to the students when he was a teacher in Madrassa al-Wa'izin, Istanbul. This book was published by al-Awqaf al-Isalmiya publication, Istanbul in 1336AH (1917 AD)

6. *Durus fi Tarikh al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*: It is a collection of his lectures, which he delivered in Dar al-Mu'allimin al-'Aliah, Baghdad in 1928 AD while he was the inspector of Arabic language in the Ministry of Education.

7. *Tamaim al-Tarbiyah wa al-Ta'lim*: It is a poetical works of Rusafi most of which he composed in Istanbul. After his exasperated regression there form Ira in 1922 AD. The theme of this work was to arise discussion amongst the students, so that they could bring them to the upliftment by creating deep zeal in their heart. It



contains also some educational realities, its phenomenae and some stories for interesting children. It was published in 1924 in Beirut.

8. *Muhadarat al-Adab al-Arabi*: it is a collection of Al-Rusafi's speeches those he delivered to the teachers of Govt. aided Madrasas in 1921 AD while he was the Vice-President of the Board of Translation and Compilation in the Ministry of Education. This collection was published in 1921 AD (1339 AH) in Baghdad entitled as *Muhadarat al-Adab al-'Arabi*.

9. *'Alam al-Dhubab*: It is a contradictory writing of Al-Rusafi against *Riasalatu 'alam al-Dhubab* of Dr. Faiq Shakir. In fact, this book is a part of Rusafi's book *Rasail al-Ta'leeqat*.

10. A lecture he delivered to a group of teachers in Basra while he was the inspector of the Arabic language in the Ministry of Education. He delivered this lecture for the development of teaching in Arabic language and he mentioned that it was obligatory for the teachers to teach in the Arabic language. It was published in 1926 AD by Matba'at al-Furat in Baghdad.

11. *'Ala Babi Sijni Abi al-'Ala*: This book consists of Rusafi's writings on the book of Dr. Taha Husain *Ma'a Abil 'Alaa' fi Sijnihi*. It was published in 1947 AD by Matb'a al-Rashid in Baghdad.

12. *Rasail al-Ta'liqat*: This book is divided into three booklets. These are (1) *Ta'leeqaat al-Rusafi 'Ala kitab al-Tasawuf al-Islami li al-Daktoor Zaki Mubarak* (2) *Ta'leeqatuhu 'Ala Ba'di Fusuli Kitab al-Nathr al-Fanni li al-Daktoor Zaki Mubarak* (3) *Ta'leeqatuhu 'Ala Kitab al-Tarikh al-Islami al-Mustashriq al-Talyani li Una Kaitani*. This book was published in 1944 AD by Matba'atu al-Ma'arif in Baghdad

B. His Manuscripts:

1) *Al-Risalah al-Iraqiyah*: It is a comprehensive writings of Rusafi in politics, Religion and society that he wrote in 1940 A.D in Faluza



2) *Khawatir wa Nawadir*: It is the booklet composed of his different thoughts on language and literature and society, education and Religion wrote in Faluza in 1940 A.D.

3) *Kitab al-Aalah wa al-Idarah...wa ma Yattibi'uhuma min al-Malabis wa al-Marafiq wa al-Hanat*: This book is most similar to the non-Arabian ones. The main objective of this book is to Arabicize those words of foreign language having general usage.

4) *Al-Shakhsiyat al-Muhammadiyah au Hallu al-Laghj al-Muqaddas*: This book is the book Rusafi's wrote the life of Muhammad(MPUH). He started the compilation of this book in 1929 AD and was continued in writing the same during his stay in Faluza from 1933 to 1941 .The educational association of Iraq preserved the copy of this book as manuscripts and it is considered one of the major works of his life.

5) *Daf' al-Maraq fi Kalami Ahli al-'Iraq*: Al-Rusafi discussed about the general Iraqi language with special reference to morphology (Sarf) and Philology (Nahw).

6. *Al-Adab Al-Rafi' fi Mizan al-Shi'r*: It is the collection of his lectures delivered to the student of Dar al-Mu'allimin on Rhetoric and Meter in Baghdad .

(Aarau Abi al-'Ala): In this book Al-Rusafi gathered those poems of Abul 'Ala which he separated in "Al-Luzumiyat" and categorized in 1938 A.D. Al-Rusafi compiled this book twice firstly in 1924 A.D. and later on it was lost. Secondly, he compiled this book in 1938 A.D.

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\*Ph.D Research Scholar, Dept. of Arabic, Assam University, Silchar

