

With the Name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful

**IN MEMORIAM – SHAYKH ‘ABDUL GHAFFAR HASAN
(1330-1427 / 1913-2007)**

“Whoever biographs a believer, it is as though he has brought him or her back to life.”

(Man arrakha mu’minan fa ka’annama ahyahu.) - Imam Sakhawi¹

This biography is in three parts:

1. A brief autobiography in the Shaykh’s own words: a summarised translation of the interview conducted in Arabic by Shaykh Kehlan ‘Abdullah of *al-Hady al-Nabawy* (Manchester), published Ramadan 1418 (1988).
2. An edited version of the brief biography by Shaykh Suhaib b. ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hasan, dictated to Irtiza Hasan² of the USA/Pakistan in Islamabad soon after the Shaykh’s departure from this world.
3. Miscellaneous tributes, comments and references to the Shaykh’s life from students and relatives, etc.

Translation and editing:

Usama b. Suhaib b. ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hasan,
London,
25th Rabi’ al-Awwal 1427 / 14th April 2007.

Completed on the morning after the burial in London of Shaykh Mohar ‘Ali, also a former teacher at the Islamic University of Madinah. Within the space of two weeks in Rabi’ al-Awwal 1427 / April 2007, we have lost two great ‘alims, teachers and servants of God. Two of my greatest teachers, my father and Abu Muntasir have seen their own fathers depart from this world. May Allah bless Shaykh ‘Abdul Ghaffar and Shaykh Mohar ‘Ali and grant them the highest stations in Paradise!

¹ as quoted by Shaykh ‘Atiyyah Salim *rahimahullah* in his biography of Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin al-Shanqiti, *rahimahullah*

² Coincidentally with the same surname despite not being a relative, although the bonds of faith are stronger than those of blood!

AN ISNAD (CHAIN OF TRANSMISSION) OF HADITH

The Most Noble Messenger and Honourable Presence

MUHAMMAD

may Allah bless him and grant him peace

1. Anas b. Malik (d. 93 H)
2. Humayd al-Tawil b. Abi Humayd (68-143 H)
3. Muhammad b. 'Abdullah al-Ansari (118-215 H)
4. Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari (194-256 H)
5. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Firabri (231-320 H)
6. 'Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Sarkhasi (d. 381 H)
7. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muzaffar al-Dawudi (374-467 H)
8. 'Abd al-Awwal b. 'Isa al-Sijizzi (458-553 H)
9. Husayn b. Mubarak al-Zubaydi (546-631 H)
10. Ahmad b. Abi Talib al-Hajjar (d. 730 H)
11. Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Tanukhi (d. 800 H)
12. Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Hajar al-'Asqalani,
Commentator on *Sahih al-Bukhari* (774-852 H)
13. Ahmad Zakariyya al-Ansari (d. 925 H)
14. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Ramli (d. 1004 H)
15. Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Quddus al-Shinawi (d. 1028 H)
16. Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Qashashi (d. 1071 H)
17. Ibrahim b. Hasan al-Kurdi al-Madani (1045-1101 H)
18. Muhammad b. Ibrahim Abu Tahir al-Madani (d. 1145 H)
19. Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1114-1176 H)
20. Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz of Delhi (1159-1239 H)
21. Shah Ishaq of Delhi (d. 1262 H)
22. Sayyid Nadr Husayn of Delhi (1225-1320 H)
23. Mawlana Ahmadullah, Shaykh-ul-Hadith, Madrasah Rahmaniyyah,
Delhi (d. 1362 H, aged approx. 65 years)
24. 'Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan, 1330-1427 H
(*sanad* granted on 20th Sha'ban 1354 H / c. 1937)

**PART ONE – A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY FROM THE INTERVIEW
CONDUCTED IN ARABIC BY SHAYKH KEHLAN ‘ABDULLAH OF AL-HADY
AL-NABA WY (MANCHESTER, U.K.), PUBLISHED RAMADAN 1418 (1988).**

Shaykh Kehlan: The respected shaykh ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hasan is one of the people of knowledge of the Ahl al-Hadith in Pakistan. Despite being in his eighties, he continues to teach and give fatwa. Because of his lengthy journeys with Hadith and its experts, his experience of major events, his studying with and accompanying great people of knowledge, he has precious experiences and opinions which we wished to explore in this meeting.

Respected shaykh, we would like some basic insight into your life – when and where were you born, what was your household like, which shaykhs did you study from and which places of learning did you graduate from?

Shaykh ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hasan:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon His Trustworthy Messenger, and upon his family and all his companions.

I was born in July 1913 near Delhi, presently the capital of India. My father, ‘Abdul Sattar Hasan, was a great person of knowledge, a muhaddith, khatib and mujahid, for he had helped secretly helped the surviving families and colleagues of the mujahidin who were martyred at Balakot³. The British did not like this, but the rich people around him were full of respect and love for him so when he said that they must help, they responded.

My father died young at the age of 34 when I was three years old. He had written one book in response to those who reject Hadith. My mother passed away before him in the same year, so my paternal grandmother took care of me.

When did your education begin?

My education began in a mosque near our house in Delhi, then I joined the Dar al-Hadith al-Rahmaniyyah in Delhi at the age of 13. This was a large school for the people of Hadith established in 1339/1921 by a leading merchant called Shaykh ‘Abdurrahman and by his brother Shaykh ‘Ataurrahman. They were encouraged and directed by Shaykh Ibrahim of Sialkot and also by Shaykh ‘Abdul ‘Aziz of Rahimabad. The latter was a great ‘alim and muhaddith, and a student of Shaykh Nadir Husain of Delhi, and wrote a

³ The battle in 1836 between Muslims led by Sayyid Ahmad Brelwi and the muhaddith Shah Isma’il, grandson of Shah Waliullah of Delhi, and Sikh forces led by Ranjit Singh. The Sikhs won the battle and the two mujahidin leaders were martyred. Balakot was still a thriving little market town around the River Kunhar in the beautiful Kaghan valley when I visited it in 2003 on the way to Naran and the majestic glacial lake called Saif-ul-Muluk. I visited the tomb of Shah Isma’il and one of the alleged burial spots of Sayyid Ahmad, and saw some of the battlefield around the Kunhar. Balakot was near the epicentre and was therefore utterly devastated by the great earthquake of Ramadan 1425 / October 2005. – U.H.

book in response to Shaykh Shibli's book preferring the people of Fiqh over those of Hadith. I studied there for eight years, completing the Dars Nizami.

Who financed the school, students' food and drink, teachers' salaries, etc.?

Shaykh 'Abdurrahman and his brothers would generously finance all the school's expenses and would present great prizes for the students who topped in hadith, tafsir, hifz, calligraphy, etc. The top student overall would receive an even greater prize. I topped overall once and received as a prize the book, "Hidayat al-Nahw (A Guide to Arabic Grammar)." This was worth just under a rupee⁴, whilst the student who came second received five rupees. Someone complained to the shaykh about this, so he admitted that he had made a mistake and gave me five rupees along with the book. He was extremely generous but would be severely angry if anyone lied to him or broke school rules. He passed away soon after the establishment of the school, and his brother Shaykh 'Ataurrahman took over.

The latter was an old, bearded man, revered and respected by the people. The rickshaw drivers would give him lifts in the morning, saying that his fare would open the door of barakah for them each day. He was not an 'alim but loved knowledge and its people. He would leave his sons in charge of his trade and come to the Dar al-Hadith at dawn every day, bringing Shaykh Muhammad Tinauri with him. The latter lived in a splendid building near the school. Shaykh 'Ata would knock on the doors of the 25 students and wake them up for the dawn prayer and pray with them behind the imam, and then meet all the students and teachers. He was also very generous and of excellent character, merciful towards the students. He also hated lying so any student who lied or broke school rules would be expelled. He would sometimes take the students out for relaxation by the river. He would himself bring food, drink, fruit and sweets for the students and sit and watch us playing. He died, may Allah have mercy upon him, in 1938, five years after I graduated from the school. He had three sons, all of whom have now departed to the protection of their Lord.

Which shaykhs (teachers) did you have in the school?

One of the most famous was Shaykh Ahmadullah of Delhi, a student of Shaykh Nadir Husain of Delhi and Bihar. I studied the whole of Sahihs Bukhari and Muslim with him, plus Sunan Abu Dawud and the first half of Jami' Tirmidhi. I also studied the whole of Sharh Nukhbat al-Fikr of Ibn Hajar with him, as well as the Siraji text on inheritance. The shaykh was a good man with excellent character. He was merciful, kind and caring towards us and would always encourage the students and teachers to hold to the Sunnah and translate the Ahadith into action.

Another teacher was Shaykh Muhammad of Surat, a great 'alim and expert in literature (adab) and Arabic. He wrote a textbook about the Arabic language called "Azhar al-'Arab (Flowers of Arabia)." We studied the second half of Jami' Tirmidhi, some of

⁴ This was a real silver coin and currency, before the days of modern usury-based banking and paper money.

Sahih Muslim and Nukhbat al-Fikr and some books of adab with him. He only stayed six months with us due to differences between him and the management of the school.

Another teacher was Shaykh 'Ubaydullah of Mubarakpur, author of the commentary on Mishkat al-Masabih called Mir'at al-Mafatih. With him I studied the whole of Bulugh al-Maram and Muwatta' Imam Malik during my final year plus some grammar. His habit was to write notes on the margin of Bulugh al-Maram in tiny handwriting, mentioning differing opinions with analysis, hadith references and analysis of the narrators. He was an expert in such matters. He was also devoted to teaching, putting much effort into it. He certainly satisfied the students and would mention numerous interesting and beneficial points, but unfortunately we did not commit these to writing.

What was his way of teaching?

The student read the text. He would mention the takhrij of the hadith and analyse the isnad. Then he would explain the hadith, mention the different legal opinions and conclude with the view he preferred.

From his memory or from a book?

From memory, although he would sometimes refer to his notes in the margin.

Then Shaykh 'Abdurrahman of Mubarakpur, who had become blind or partially-sighted, requested the school principal to allow Shaykh 'Ubaydullah to go and help him compile Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, the commentary on Tirmidhi, since they were relatives and from the same village. So Shaykh 'Ubaydullah stayed with him for two years and increased his knowledge and became expert like the real muhaddithin. Thus, when he returned he taught us the Muwatta' really well and benefited us enormously.

Did Shaykh 'Abdurrahman ever teach you?

Yes. He used to come to Delhi for treatment of his eyes and stay at our school in a room reserved for him next to Shaykh 'Ubaydullah's room. We didn't study with him formally, but he would test us and discuss our answers with us. Once, whilst we were studying Jami' Tirmidhi, he took the mid-year exam. I still remember one of his questions – it was that it occurs in the hadith, "Squatting (iq'a') is a practice of your Prophet," but also that "He forbade squatting," so how can these two ahadith be reconciled?

He would only ask about the isnad and matn of the ahadith, unlike others who would also ask about linguistic aspects, etc. Thus, he was my examiner-shaykh not teacher-shaykh, and I benefited from him a lot.

I used to lead everyone in prayer because I was appointed imam of the school by the principal. Once, I recited Surahs Sajdah and Dahr in the dawn prayer but did not complete them. One of the students complained to him (he had prayed in his room

because of his poor eyesight) that ‘Abdul Ghaffar has gone against the Sunnah. He turned to me – and he was a soft and merciful man – and said, “Don’t do that. If you read that the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam used to recite a surah, it means that he would complete it.”

What was his Arabic like?

Expert. Amin Ahsan Islahi⁵ used to live near the Shaykh’s village. He studied tafsir with Shaykh Hamiduddin Farahi and Tirmidhi with the Shaykh. He was very happy about this and used to say that he had studied Tirmidhi with an expert on it. He would read in the presence of the Shaykh because he (Amin) had the best Arabic of all the students. Once he read a word which I don’t remember and the Shaykh corrected him but Islahi insisted. Upon referring to the lexicon, Islahi found that the Shaykh was indeed correct.

In those days, the muhaddith was also a faqih and expert in Arabic and other sciences. As for the knowledge taught in modern universities, it is superficial, having no core.

Shaykh Taqiuddin Hilali told me, while were both teaching at Madinah University, that “I once travelled to Mubarakpur to study Hadith with Shaykh ‘Abdurrahman and stayed with him for a year. He would bring me food from his own house. When I was finally departing, he put five or ten rupees (a large sum in those days) in my pocket. I protested that he should keep the money since he needed it. Tears came to his eyes and he cried from sorrow. When I saw that, I accepted his gift.”

Nowadays, the maulvis take money from people but never give, whilst the Shaykh would give and insist upon giving. He graduated from the Rahmaniyyah and became a teacher there.

Another of my teachers was Shaykh Nadhir Ahmad of Amla. I studied many texts with him, including Sullam al-‘Ulum (The Ladder of Sciences), the Rashidiyyah, and some of Tafsir al-Baydawi. He was learned in philosophy, logic, fiqh, etc. He passed away rahimahullah whilst I was in Madinah.

Shaykh ‘Abdurrahman of Bihar and the Nadwa was an ‘alim who knew only teaching. I studied many books with him, including the whole of Mishkat al-Masabih, Tarikh al-Khulafa’ (History of the Caliphs) of Suyuti, Tafsir al-Jalalayn, Maqamat al-Hariri, Diwan al-Hamasah, Sharh al-Mu’allaqat and Diwan al-Mutanabbi, all of which were in the curriculum. He had a powerful voice, rahimahullah.

Shaykh Hazari taught logic and philosophy. He was Hanafi and knew his subjects well.

⁵ A notable ‘alim of India who wrote the highly-influential and voluminous tafsir in Urdu, Tadabbur-e-Qur’ān and gave rise to what is called the Islahi school, usually described as modernist and rationalist.

Shaykh ‘Abdul Ghafur, father of ‘Abdul Wadud, was from Azamgarh and taught at the Nadwat al-‘Ulama. I studied the Rashidiyyah text with him – this is about the principles and etiquettes of debate. I also studied some tafsir and adab with him.

Shaykh ‘Abdul Ghafur of Nepal was a graduate of Nadwat-ul-‘Ulama. He trained us in translating from Urdu to Arabic.

Shaykh ‘Abdullah Nadwi of Bengal was from Dhaka and taught me in my final year.

We also had a Pathan (Pashtun) teacher who was Hanafi but not partisan and had memorised all the important texts. He would never read from a book but teach from memory. He taught us for a whole year but we never saw his face because he always kept it covered and we never asked him about the reason for that.

Shaykh ‘Abdussalam the Afghan was Mu’tazili. His character was impeccable. He wrote a commentary on the text on logic called Hamdullah (Praise of God). He taught us for a year but then fell extremely ill so his ‘*adil*⁶’ Shaykh Muhammad Sharif of Swat, also one of Mawlana Mawdudi’s teachers, replaced him. After partition, he taught in the Jami’ah Salafiyyah in Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The way of the Ahl al-Hadith was that they would leave the teaching of logic and philosophy to the Hanafis, but only Salafis would teach Hadith.

Another of our shaykhs was Mawlana Muhammad Khayr ‘Alam – he was an ‘alim and faqih.

Could you mention some of your fellow students?

Those whom I loved have all departed;
There only remain the useless ones! [ancient poetry quoted by the Shaykh]

Please mention some of the loved ones?

Shaykh ‘Abdur-Ra’uf Jandkalwi of Nepal remains. He has become a muhaddith and teaches at the Siraj al-‘Ulum (Lamp of Sciences) school of the Ahl al-Hadith in Nepal.

Waliullah al-Tanki and Luqman, a poet and man of literature, were also my colleagues. Once, the two shaykhs Thana’ullah of Amritsar and Ibrahim of Sialkot visited the Rahmaniyyah. Luqman stood up and praised them with a qasidah that included the line:

Two lions today have visited our garden ...

Shaykh Thana’ullah jokingly replied, “Can two lions coexist in the same plain?”

⁶ ‘*Adil* (*hamzulf* in Persian or Urdu) is a wife’s sister’s husband. Men who are married to sisters are ‘*adils*’ of each other.

Shaykh ‘Abdul Hakim of Qasur and Anis al-Rahman of Bengal went on to graduate from the Nadwa and returned to teach Hadith at the Rahmaniyyah. There was also ‘Abdul Wajid of Madras and Hakam ‘Ali, a shaykh of Hadith who passed away in Karachi.

Were there any other ‘ulama who graduated from the Rahmaniyyah?

There were many. I wrote a history of the Rahmaniyyah school upon the request of Shaykh ‘Ata. I listed its graduates, teachers and visiting lecturers; I also mentioned what they said about it.

There was Shaykh Ibrahim of Sialkot. There were the examiners, the Shaykhs ‘Abdullah and Muhammad Husain of Ropar. The former was a strict examiner. The school rules were that the usual teachers took the mid-year exams but would not come near the examination hall for the end-of-year exams. We would all sit on mats in the large examination hall and people with sticks would roam around to make sure no student even looked at another one. Shaykh Thana’ullah of Amritsar would also visit the Rahmaniyyah.

We heard that he wasn’t salafi ...

He wasn’t salafi in his tafsir⁷ but he was so in his fiqh. He wrote a tafsir of the Qur’an in Arabic and another in Urdu. Shaykh ‘Abdul Jabbar of Ghazna wrote a harsh refutation of him but Shaykh Thana’ullah was an expert debater with people of many schools of thought and religions and would not become angry whilst debating.

Once he debated a Hindu who said to him, “You do not have the right to defend Islam because you are not a Muslim – the Muslims say you are not one of them. Read this announcement from the Bareilwis!” The Shaykh replied without losing his calm, “And how do I become a Muslim, is it not by pronouncing the shahadatayn?” He then pronounced the shahadatayn and overcame his opponent in debate.

On another occasion, he debated a Christian for three days and won the debate. Once, a lady came to debate with him but the Ahl al-Hadith said to him, “How can you debate with her? You would have to look at her, so this is not allowed!” He replied, “Wait and see ...” The lady spoke whilst the Shaykh listened in silence. When she had finished, he began to sing some ghazal poetry so the lady became embarrassed and left!

Were any of those debates recorded in writing?

The daughter of Shaykh Muhammad Bashir of Sialkot wrote a Master’s thesis about them and translated them into Arabic.

Were there any other shaykhs?

⁷ ... but had Mu’tazilite leanings.

Shaykh Ibrahim of Sialkot used to visit the Rahmaniyyah. He was the one who had encouraged the two brothers and leading traders of Delhi, Shaykhs ‘Abdurrahman and ‘Ataurrahman, to establish the school in the first place. He had many great qualities, one of which was that he had great knowledge of tafsir. He wrote an incomplete tafsir in Arabic and another in Urdu. He would explain the Qur’ān in the mosques. He would do tafsir of Qur’ān initially, with an amazing knack for recalling ayat and he had a phenomenal memory. He would then mention ahadith related to the ayah and then narrations from the Salaf. He wrote refutations of the Khawarij, Shi’ā and Qadianis; regarding the latter, he wrote a two-volume book explaining that Christ would descend from the sky upon his return (and not be born of a woman, as Mirza Ghulam Qadiani was). He refuted the position of Abul Kalam Azad when the latter joined the All-India Congress Party and also refuted Ghulam Parvaiz (the hadith-rejecter). He held that the basmalah was to be recited loudly in salat. Once he was late for salat so I led the prayer without reciting the basmalah loudly and he criticised me for that. He also held that Fatihah was to be recited behind the Imam in loud and quiet prayers and that Amin was to be said loudly. He explained all these matters in great detail with evidence in his tafsir of Fatihah, where he also refuted the view of the Qadiani that “those whom Thou has favoured” means that the favours of God never end and therefore Prophethood would continue. Shaykh Ibrahim was a pure salafi in tafsir, unlike Shaykh Thana’ullah who inclined towards Mu’tazilism. He was wealthy and visited us annually.

There was another great ‘alim called Abul-Qasim of Banaras who was a brilliant muhaddith. His father, Shaykh Muhammad Sa’eed, had converted to Islam from Sikhism. Shaykh Abul-Qasim completed Sahih al-Bukhari seventy times, teaching it to students. He would give sermons refuting the polytheists, Christians and Qadianis. He had a powerful voice and was tall and well-built. Although he inclined to the path of Abul-Kalam Azad in politics, he was a vigorous defender of the Sunnah in general and of Sahih al-Bukhari in particular. He wrote many works, including refutations of ‘Umar Karim of Patna who had written treatises in which he declared some of the ahadith of Bukhari to be weak. Two of these refutations were called al-Rih al-‘Aqim ‘ala ‘Umar Karim (“The Barren Wind blowing against ‘Umar Karim”) and al-Ma’ al-Hamim ‘ala ‘Umar Karim (“Boiling Water poured on ‘Umar Karim”).

Another visitor to the Rahmaniyyah was Hasan Jalal Fawri whose father was a great ‘alim and muhaddith, a student of Shaykh Nadir Husayn of Delhi. Jalal Fawri was originally of the Ahl al-Sunnah but whilst we were in our final year he defected to the camp of Ghulam Parvaiz, the rejecter of Sunnah. He became one of their shaykhs and wrote articles denying the Sunnah so we did not invite him again! However, I later saw him in the Islamic Millia University in Delhi. The rector of this university was Zakir Husain who later became president of India. The lecturers and staff at this university inclined to the All-India Congress Party, towards Gandhi and Abul-Kalam Azad.

There was another great shaykh called Khwaja ‘Abdul Hayy Faruqi who had amazing insights in tafsir. I studied with him a little. Other visitors to the Rahmaniyyah included Shaykh ‘Abdul Aziz Memoni of Aligarh University and Mawlana Ijaz Ali, adab teacher from Deoband.

How were you selected to teach in the Islamic University of Madinah?

A very important question. After graduating from the Rahmaniyyah, I taught in a seminary for a while in 1935. Later, my friends in Banaras invited me to teach at the Rahmaniyyah school there, the one established by a leading cloth-trader called ‘Abdurrahman. I taught there for seven years. There I met Shaykh ‘Abdul Majid Hariri who used to speak Arabic like a native and knew seven languages, including Arabic, English, Urdu, Persian, Turkish and Russian. He later became Indian ambassador in Jeddah and was a great ‘alim, although he inclined towards Abul-Kalam Azad in politics.

Coming back to my going to Madinah: Whilst based in Karachi, I applied to go for the Hajj in 1960 but my application was refused twice and again in 1963, upon which I returned home full of grief. At home, there was the walimah (wedding banquet) of my two eldest sons, Shu’ain and Suhaib. Whilst I was talking to the guests, there was a knock on the door. I went outside and found one of my students from the Rahmaniyyah, which had by now moved to Karachi, standing outside. The Rahmaniyyah was now managed by ‘Abdul Wahhab b. Shaykh ‘Ataurrahman, who had built the big mosque known as the Sufaid Masjid or “White Mosque.” With my student was a man in Arab dress: Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir b. Shaybah al-Hamid of Madinah Islamic University. They entered and after we had spoken for a long time, he said he had come to select two teachers for the university and they had selected me because some of the Pakistanis settled in Madinah had recommended me. I said that this was not possible because I had an agreement with the Rahmaniyyah that would not expire until the month of Rajab, but that I would ask Shaykh ‘Abdul Wahhab and then decide.

Shaykh ‘Abdul Wahhab said, “How can you leave us and the Rahmaniyyah? This is a very sad thing. If you were invited to any another school we would refuse, but you have been invited to Madinah and how can we refuse that? This is a matter of great pride for us!”

My visa arrived without my writing anything or submitting an application. I travelled there with my son Suhaib⁸ who had been a student at Madinah for two years. I remained there for sixteen years: I performed the Hajj thirteen times and the ‘Umrah nearly fifty times.

When we arrived in Madinah the Director of the University, Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-‘Abudi came with me to find a house to rent. One of the merchants asked him, “A Pakistani teaching the Arabs? How can that be?” He replied, “This is our stock in trade that has been returned to us!”⁹

I then went to see the Shaykh Ibn Baz. Shaykh Ibn Baz was a great ‘alim with excellent character – I have not seen anyone like him in the excellence of his character and the generosity of his heart. He was extremely forbearing and humble, and would not get fed

⁸ And their wives, of course.

⁹ A quotation from the Qur’ān, Surah Yusuf (Joseph), 12:65

up of the numerous people seeking knowledge, asking for help and wishing to speak to him. He stayed in Madinah for ten years and then moved to Riyadh as Grand Mufti after the death of Shaykh Muhammad b. Ibrahim. When I went to say farewell to him, I cried because he was so merciful to the teachers, and in his time the teachers preserved their practice of the Sunnah.

I suggested to him that *Subul al-Salam*¹⁰ should be replaced with appropriate chapters from the books of Hadith, but he did not accept this. However, they accepted some of my suggestions when settling on a curriculum for the College of Hadith at the university, and also in selecting *Muntaqa al-Akhbar*¹¹ as a text. It was also my opinion that manners should be taught before legal rulings, e.g. from *al-Adab al-Mufrad*¹² or other texts.

In Madinah, I found that they gave much attention to teaching the isnads of the hadith, something not found in the seminaries of India. I was entrusted with the task of teaching the subject of Isnads in the third and fourth years of study, a subject requiring research, effort and critical analysis; the students loved it. Shaykh Albani had taught this subject before me and it was he who initiated the desire to introduce the subject at the university.

I taught in Madinah for sixteen years¹³ and was then retired and left Madinah, although I had hoped never to leave it. Upon my return to Pakistan, I was selected as a member of the government's Islamic Ideological Council as a representative of the Ahl al-Hadith. There were many people unhappy about this and they wrote to General Zia-ul-Haqq¹⁴ about this but he rejected their complaint. I was selected again during the era of Nawaz Sharif. Later, when Benazir Bhutto was elected to power the chairman of the Council said to me that if I changed my view that a woman cannot be the ruler, I would be selected again. I replied that I would not change my stance on this.

How were your relations with the Jama'at-e-Islami ?

I was responsible for tarbiyah and education but then we¹⁵ disagreed with Mawlana Mawdudi about the matter of participating in elections and so we left the Jama'at.

Were relations ever re-established after that?

Yes. During the time of Zia-ul-Haqq we went to Mawlana Mawdudi with Dr. 'Abdurrahim Ashraf, a close friend and advisor to the President, to present to him the President's wish that four ministers be appointed from the Jama'at. Mawdudi agreed and the ministers were appointed but they resigned after six months, blaming this on the non-cooperation of ministry staff.

¹⁰ of Imam San'ani

¹¹ of Majd al-Din ibn Taymiyyah, the grandfather of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. Imam Shawkani's commentary on this text is the famous *Nayl al-Awtar*.

¹² Imam Bukhari's magnificent collection of hadith on etiquettes, manners and character.

¹³ Approximately 1963-1979, between the ages of 50 and 66.

¹⁴ The then President of Pakistan

¹⁵ Referring to others such as Dr. Israr Ahmad, Hakim Ashraf and Amin Ahsan Islahi.

Who is the greatest ‘alim you have seen in your life?

Shaykh ‘Abdurrahman of Mubarakpur, who was a great and humble ‘alim and also an expert physician. He would not accept payment for teaching sacred knowledge but would live on his earnings as a physician, and was not a wealthy man.

The Kashmir Issue – how may it be solved in your opinion?

We say that the government and its army are responsible for this: individuals cannot do this. Pakistan has to be strengthened in two ways: firstly, with faith and establishment of Islamic Law and removing of evils; secondly, by strengthening the army. The problem is that the Jihad is being performed by disparate militias: salafi, Jama’at-e-Islami, Deobandi, etc. whereas their enemy is a unified force so how can victory be achieved with disunity? If they are disunited before coming to power, what will happen if they achieve power? In Afghanistan, the mujahidin managed to defeat the Russians but not their own temptations. Faith and character must be reformed first and then unity achieved; victory will then follow, if Allah wills.¹⁶

What is your view about da’wah work being organised with managers, organisations, financial accounts, etc.?

There is no harm in that as long as there is no hizbiyyah (partisanship). Partisanship is when you remain silent about errors if they are from your organisation but you criticise when this happens in other organisations. This goes against justice. Allah says, “O you who have faith! Be steadfast in justice as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents and relatives ...” The Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said, “Even if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, were to steal, I would have her hand chopped off.” This is the justice that opposes partisanship.

There is an idea spreading nowadays that the rulers of Muslim countries are infidels and that their police and army can be targeted and killed. What is your opinion about this?

This is haram (prohibited), not allowed. We say that it is obligatory to call people to God even if they oppress us. Rather, we must forgive and overlook as the Prophet sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam did. At the Conquest of Mecca he said, “Go, for you are all free.” The Prophet Joseph ‘alayhis-salam said, “There is no reproach upon you today; may Allah forgive you, for He is the Most Merciful of those who show Mercy.”

The person who calls to God must show forgiveness, as He says, “Who is better in speech than the one who invites to God, works righteous deeds and says, ‘I am amongst those who submit to God.’ Good and evil are not equal: repel evil with what is better – lo! Your enemy will become a close, loving friend. But none are granted such goodness

¹⁶ This was stated in 1998. However, during the tense stand-off in 2002 between India and Pakistan that many feared would result in nuclear war, I visited the Shaykh and he said that the two countries should not go to war but strive for peace and reconciliation. “Reconciliation is good,” he said, “it says so in the Qur’an!” He was referring to Surah al-Nisa’ (Women), 4:128. – U.H.

except those who show patience and self-restraint; none are granted such goodness except people of great, good fortune.” God sent Moses to Pharaoh and ordered him to say a gentle word, that perhaps he may reflect or fear God. This was with Pharaoh, the denier of God, the oppressor, the murderer.

A final word of advice, please.

I advise you to strive for sincerity and the purity of intention, to call to Allah with sincerity. Refrain from cursing and abusing and have patience through the harm that befalls you. Do not retaliate against those who curse and abuse. If we prefer God-consciousness, sincerity, justice and calling to God, the stray ones will be affected, and there are many of them.

May Allah reward you well for providing this opportunity. May He bless you and benefit others through you. We ask Allah that we may meet again in goodness.

PART TWO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SHAYKH 'ABDUL GHAFFAR BY HIS SECOND SON, SHAYKH SUHAIB, DICTATED TO IRTIZA HASAN

Bismillah was-salat was-salam 'ala Rasulillah wa ba'd:

Alhamdullillah I had the privilege of spending time today with Shaykh Suhaib Hasan b. 'Abdul-Ghaffar. He is currently visiting Islamabad, Pakistan and only some days back his father 'Allama 'Abdul-Ghaffar Hasan passed away, rahimahullah.

'Allama Abdul-Ghaffar Hasan's death marks the death of a great and unique scholar in our times – his life and accomplishments were remarkable and I had asked Shaykh Suhaib about him today after we prayed Zuhr in Masjid Tawhid¹⁷, where the Shaykh's brother, Shaykh Suhail Hasan b. 'Abdul-Ghaffar, is Imam and Khateeb.

Shaykh Suhaib said about his father:

His name was 'Abdul-Ghaffar ibn 'Abdus-Sattar ibn 'Abdul-Jabbar Hasan, Umarpuri – Umarpur is an area close to Dehli. He was born on the 10th of June 1913.

My father was educated in Dar ul-Hadith Rahmaniyyah in Dehli and his teachers included great scholars of Hadith and Sunnah such as Shaykh Ahmadullah Partabgari, Shaykh Ubaidullah Rahmani Mubarakpuri, Shaykh Nazeer Ahmed Dehlavi, Shaykh Muhammad bin Yusuf Soorati and Shaykh Abdur-Rahman Mubarakpuri the author of "Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi," the commentary on Sunan At-Tirmidhi.

His isnaad (chain) to Rasulillah, sallallahu alaihi wa sallam was through only 23 raawi (narrators) from him all the way back to Rasulillah, sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam. This chain started from his Shaykh (Ahmadullah) and included the great hadith scholar, Nadhi Husain, and Shah Abdul-'Aziz (the son of Shah Waliullah). The chain of narrators also included the great Imam from Yemen, Al-Shawkani and the Ameer ul-Mu'minin in Hadith – Muhammad ibn Isma'il Al-Bukhari.

Having such an isnaad through such a small chain is quite rare in our times and there were many students of knowledge and scholars seeking ijazah from the Shaykh.

After my father finished his studies he began teaching at Jaamiya' Rahmaniyya Banaras and he taught there for 6 years. He later moved in 1942 to Malair Kotla in East Punjab where I (Shaykh Suhaib) was born. My father remained there for some years and after Pakistan was created he moved there.

From 1941 to 1957 my father was very active in the affairs of 'Jamaat Islami' and he was once made "Ameer" briefly whilst Mawlana Mawdudi was in prison. In 1953 during the 'Khatm-e-Nubuwat Movement' he himself was imprisoned for 11 months in the scorching hot city of Multan. This movement was against the apostate Qadiyanis (also

¹⁷ This is the one in Islamabad, named after its "senior twin" mosque in London.

called Ahmadiyya). Mawdudi had written a treatise against them which resulted in many members of 'Jamaat Islami' being persecuted and arrested – they were later freed.

My father (Abdul-Ghaffar Hasan) was very involved with the 'Jamaat Tarbiya Programs' and for that purpose to benefit people he compiled and composed 'Intikhab-e-Hadith' (Selection of Hadith) related to all aspects of Muslim life. This has been translated into English by Usama (son of Shaykh Suhaib).¹⁸

He wrote many articles refuting the philosophy of denying the sunnah and hadith. This movement was initiated and propagated by Ghulam Ahmad Parvaiz (his followers are known as Parvaiziyoon or Qur'aniyyoon and they are a heretical group).

In 1957 my father resigned from 'Jamaat Islami' due to his differences with Mawdudi rahimahullah on certain issues. The main issue was: should 'Jamaat Islami' focus on trying to establish an Islamic state by winning elections or by educating and cultivating the masses, which would result in an upright society which would then choose good Muslim leaders to rule Islamically. My father favored teaching and cultivating.

In fact the year before in 1956 'Jamaat Islami' participated in elections and all the other members of 'Jamaat Islami' failed to win a single seat – they all lost. Only one man, from a town called Qasoor was elected and incidentally he was from the Ahl al-Hadith.

Mawdudi himself used to favor educating people first and he wrote about that in a treatise while he was in India. Mawdudi wrote, "If the milk is good, the butter will be good." However, later in his life his position on this matter seems to have changed, rahimahullah.

Then in 1957 my father, along with Shaykh Hakeem Abdur-Raheem Ashraf, established the 'Jaamiya Taleemaat Islamiya' in Faisalabad. I was the first student at this school, which started from one room and is today a proper learning center with many teachers and students. At this institute my father taught hadith sciences and tafsir and he also taught in 'Jaamiya Salafiyya' and 'Dar al-Quran wal-Hadith' – both in Faisalabad.

Later my father moved to Karachi where he taught in the 'Madrassa Rahmaniyya' modeled after the 'Madrassa Rahmaniyya' in Dehli.

In 1962 I had started my studies at the Islamic University in Madinah and two years later in 1964 a delegation from Saudi Arabia came to Pakistan to recruit scholars. They selected Hafidh Muhammad Gundelavi (the father in law of Al-'Allama Ihsan Elahi Zaheer) and my father. My father then stayed in Madinah teaching Hadith sciences and other subjects for the next 18 years until he retired.

His classes in Madinah included principles of hadith, arguments related to isnad and other sciences of hadith. Through his time in Madinah he was able to benefit students from all

¹⁸ Finishing touches are currently being applied to this translation, and I pray that Allah grants us the capability to publish the text soon. – U.H.

over the world, thereby spreading his knowledge to different parts of the world as well and this was a blessing from Allah.

While living in Madinah my father conducted many speeches in Urdu to benefit people.

His contemporaries included some of the greatest scholars of the last century including the noble scholars Al-'Allama Abdul-'Aziz ibn Abdullah bin Baz, Al-'Allama Muhammad ibn Al-Ameen Al-Shinqeeti, Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Shaykh Abdul-Mohsin Al-'Abbaad and of course Shaykh Hammad Al-Ansari. These scholars and my father had a good relationship and mutual respect for one another.

His notable students were many including his own sons (Shaykh Suhaib and his brother Suhail), Ihsan Elahi Zaheer, Abdur-Rahman Madani, Masood 'Alam, Muhammad Basheer Sialkoti, Muhammad Abdullah Faisalabadi, Safar Al-Hawali and Muqbil ibn Hadi Al-Wadee'. (Many of these men went on to become scholars in their own right.)

After he retired from his post in Madinah he returned to Pakistan and was selected to the Council of Islamic Ideology in 1982 under the government of President Zia Ul-Haq. He served in the council for 3 terms. The council was responsible for analyzing and discussing various issues the Muslims were facing and giving the legal Islamic positions and advices on those matters.

My father authored numerous articles and periodicals. He also wrote the book 'Azmat Al-Hadith' (The Greatness of Hadith) and from the articles he wrote include 'Extremism in Matters of Religion', 'The Reality of Dua' and 'The Model Muslim Woman'.

He died on March 22, 2007 (2nd of Rabi Ul-Awwal) and his janazah was held the following morning and I led the prayer.

Rasulullah, salallahu 'alayhi wa salam was asked, "Who amongst people is the best?" and he replied: "The one who lives long and does good deeds."

My father ('Abdul-Ghaffar) lived for 93 years and 10 months and he dedicated his life to da'wah and teaching.¹⁹

My father left behind eight children (seven sons and one daughter), about 40 grandchildren and about 25 great-grandchildren. His children are:

1. The wife of 'Abdur-Rabb, an accountant in Karachi.
2. Shu'aib who is a retired aeronautical engineer who worked for Saudi Airlines for 30 years
3. Myself (Dr Suhaib— involved in da'wah in England)
4. Dr Khubayb, a medical doctor
5. Dr Suhail, Associate Professor in Hadith at the International Islamic University in Islamabad

¹⁹ He therefore lived to just under the age of 94 solar years / 97 lunar years. – U.H.

6. Raghib who works at the Muslim World League (Rabitah al-‘Alam al-Islami) in Islamabad
7. Ahmad who works with an Islamic NGO in Islamabad
8. Hamid who is an Assistant Professor in Economics at the International Islamic University in Islamabad

Alhamdullillah, my father's family served the Hadith for three generations before him and two generations now after him with his children and grandchildren. In fact in 1905 my great-grandfather, Shaykh ‘Abdul-Jabbar rahimahullah wrote a treatise refuting the Mawlid (celebration of the Prophet's birthday, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam). I edited it in 1992 and published it in 'Siraat-e-Mustaqeem' – an Urdu magazine published in Birmingham. The article can be translated as "Convincing Proofs in Refutation of the 'Illuminating Lights'" – 'Illuminating Lights' (Anwaar Sa'tiya') was a book someone had written to promote the practice of Mawlid.

Written By: Irtiza Hasan on behalf of Shaykh Suhaib Hasan
14th of Rabi Ul-Awwal 1427 (April 3rd, 2007)