

Muhaddith ul Asr Yunus Jawnfuri [d. 2017]

By Suved Siddiqui

Shaykh Yunus was without dispute the most senior Deobandi Hadith scholar in his time. His teacher, Sh. Zakariyyah Kandahlawi wrote in a letter to him that “When you teach Hadith for the 47th year, you will be more knowledgeable than me.” Scholars and students around the world have testified that he has surpassed Sh. Zakariyyah and this was also Sh. Zakariyya’s du’a. Sh. Salimullah Khan frequently references Sh. Yunus in his duroos of Bukhari and says that he himself benefitted from Sh. Yunus’s cassettes profoundly. In fact, he references Sh. Yunus many times in his Kashf ul Baari and is actually a student of Sh. Yunus. He is described as being drowned in Bukhari and when someone asked him why he did not marry in his life he replied, “I have married Bukhari.” Akram al Nadwi said of him that “After Ibn Hajar, no one mastered Bukhari like Sh. Yunus has.” Authentic sources have confirmed that a Syrian taalib saw the Prophet sallallahu alayhi wa sallam in a dream and asked him who the Amir ul Mu’minin fil Hadith was in our time and the Prophet sallallahu alayhi wa sallam said “Yunus and you will find him in the Haram.” At the same time as this dream, the Saudi government invited Sh. Yunus to the opening of the ka’bah and after entering it, the Syrian taalib that found Sh. Yunus through this event and conveyed the glad tidings. He said on one occasion, “For the past 40 years, I have only read books in Arabic and there is no book on Hadith of the recognized scholars of any madhhab except that I have read it, Alhumdulillah.” He also said, “There is no primary text in any of the sciences of Hadith except that I have read it.” He said at another time, “There is no book in hadith, large or small, that I have not read.” Allaamah Fareed al Baaji said that “He is the erudite Muhadith and Mujtahid, the Bukhari of his time and the greatest scholar in the field of Hadith.” Shaykh ul Hadith Sa’eed Ahmad Palanpuri said that Yunus Jawnfuri is the Amirul Mu’minin fil Hadith in our times. Al Shaykh al Musnid Muhammad Daniyal said that he is the Imaam of Hadith in our times. Sh. Haneef Luharwi said that Sh. Yunus has been the Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wal Sallam) more than 80 times now. At the age of 7, he would walk 2.5 miles to the maktab and back daily.

To demonstrate his memory, when he became very sick, Sh. Zakariyyah said to him to go home arguing that, “How will you study here in this condition?” He replied, “I will certainly memorise just by listening.” His memory is such that he is able to instantly recognize and complete the quotation of any hadith as soon as a part of it is mentioned, particularly when these hadith are mentioned from the 9 hadith books. Shaykh Muhammad Daniyal informed

us that he would make mistakes in ahadith in Bukhari and Muslim deliberately when reading to him to see if he has really memorized all of these ahadith and Shaykh Yunus would detect the mistake instantly. His students describe him as a computer and Shaykh Ali Sayyaad informed me that when he quotes books, it is as if he has all of the books open before his eyes and he is reading from them from his memory as if the book is open before him. One of his students informed me that he confidently believes that Shaykh Yunus has memorized the majority of all of the books of Ibn Hajar and Ibn Taymiyyah and other important Hadith works as well books such as Fathul Qadir, Nasbul Rayah and others. Unfortunately, one of the people studying under him casted black magic upon him which has caused him a lot of pain over his life. Often where he is sitting, a small puddle of blood accumulates around him and often in class, he says that he feels the pain of being shot by an arrow. His knowledge of narrators is such that when he mentions a narrator, he produces what all of the ulama of Jarh and Ta'deel said about him and his rank from memory. When mentions a hadith, he is able to quote what every scholar said about that particular hadith verbatim from its source from memory. He has not memorized the Qur'an though due to how much of an effect it has on him. He is able to open references being discussed right to the page of the book knowing exactly where it is. His rank is such that Sh. Zakariyyah told Sh. Mahmud Hasan to consult Sh. Yunus in certain issues and Sh. Zakariyyah relied on Sh. Mahmud Hassan in Fiqh and Sh. Yunus in Hadith. In a gathering of ulama of Hadith in Madinah, Sh. Zakariyyah asked the audience for the reference and status of a hadith and the first was answered but the second not. He called for Sh. Yunus who came and answered it in detail and he said to Sh. Yunus, "I knew you were created for Hadith."

In another incident, Shaykh Ali Miya had written to many scholars in search of a hadith one of whom was Sh. Zakariyyah who then called Sh. Yunus and asked him about the hadith and Sh. Yunus replied to him instantly and this was before he had even grown a beard. He excelled so quickly in Hadith that before Sh. Yunus even began teaching Hadith, Sh. Zakariyyah would send questions to Sh. Yunus for answers and there are many letters proving this. In fact, Sh. Zakariyyah Kandahlawi even posits some opinions of Sh. Yunus in his *Awjaz al Masalik*. Mufti Yasir Nadeem said that he is the Imaam of Hadith in our era. The year that Sh. Zakariyyah stopped teaching Bukhari in Madhahir ul uloom, there was mayhem and uproar but when the students sat in only one dars of Bukhari by Sh. Yunus, calmness was fully restored. His personal research and critical notes form multiple volumes and when one of the great Muhaqqiqin of our times saw his critical notes on Fath ul Bari, he began crying. Sh. Taqi ul Din Nadwi said, "When Sh. Yunus says 'Qultu' (I say), then be prepared to read

what Ibn Taymiyah, Dhahabi, Ibn Hajar and others have not said. His 'Qultu' is the most prestigious gift a student can receive, I become ecstatic when hearing it." His research was such that he said he read the entire Musnad of Imam Ahmad 4 times to look for one word. At times, he would study for 20 hours in one stretch breaking only for prayers and would go for days without food. He would study resting on his elbows with his head almost inside the book starting after Isha' and he would remain in that pose so engrossed that his posture would not change until Fajr. He has seen Imam Shafi and Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) in a dream. When Mufti Kifayatullah passed away, he said "Now there is no one left that can correct my mistakes" and when Sh. Mahmud Hasan passed away he said, "Who am I going to discuss Hanafi Fiqh with now?" The recent count of his library maintained 12,000 books on the topic of Hadith which he has read many of which were extremely rare manuscripts. When he passed away, his Janazah was attended by over 1 million people and the procession for it extended beyond 8 kilometers.

From his advice is, "Do not let sectarianism blind you by believing that only your group has the greatest scholars that have contributed to the Ummah" (In a twitter quote on January the 14th), "No scholar, as great as he is, is beyond academic scrutiny and this is not disrespect in the least, if not encouraged" (Twitter/16th Jan), "Ilm is a greater Hujjah against oneself than Jahl is" (Twitter, 17th January), "Being hurt is natural but resistance when you are wrong is a sign of pride" (Twitter, 19th January) & "History cannot be obliterated, rather it repeats itself so be wise, reflect and avoid repeating the same mistake" and "If you are a Haafidh of Qur'an, recite 1 juz' in salah daily and if you are not, and I don't because I am not a haafidh, then what is the difference between us?"