

Memories of Hafiz Rizwan Sidyot, London



I am in no position to write on the life of Muhaddithul Asr Shaykh Yunus (RA). As Shaykh has many qualified scholars, who have studied and served him for many years, I am a layman and the worst from among the blessed people who had acquaintance with Shaykh (RA). The only reason for writing a few incidents is the importance of visiting such scholars as their existence is a means of hidayah (guidance) for thousands of people in conforming to deen and implementing the blessed Sunnah into our everyday lives.

I was not thinking of writing any incidents, stories, anecdotes of Shaykh Yunus (RA). As the whatsapp message came from my brother Mawlana Irfan, that Mawlana Yusuf Shabbir is collating peoples experiences incidents, stories, anecdotes of Shaykh Yunus (RA), I started writing my experiences.

First Time seeing Shaykh

I was learning hifz of the Quran at home with my father Mawlana Ismail Sidyot Sahib when Mawlana Yusuf Mangera (RA) rang and spoke with my father. My father said a big scholar, Muhaddith is here, and we must go and meet him. I noticed a lot of shoes outside Mawlana's flat. Mufti Shabbir Sahib (DB) and Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib (DB) were introducing my father to Shaykh. I sat in the corner. When Shaykh was getting up to leave, my father took me to Shaykh and said, 'He is becoming hafiz of the Quran, please make duaa for him'. Shaykh gave me duaa and then left, walking with the aid of his stick.

First time speaking with Shaykh (RA) During Hajj

By the grace of Allah between 1999 and 2004, my father had taken me for Hajj on three occasions. I was only 13 during my first visit to the blessed lands. During two of these visits, I was fortunate enough to meet Shaykh (RA) and stay with him in Mecca along with visiting him in Mina. As I and my brother Mawlana Irfan were walking through the Masjidul Haram in Mecca, my brother Mawlana Irfan noticed Shaykh and said, there is Hadhrat's (Mawlana Yusuf Motala's) teacher. We went to meet Shaykh. Shaykh on seeing my brother Mawlana Irfan, was very happy as the previous year, his teachers from Darul Uloom Bury put him in Shaykh's khidmah during Ramadhan including during Iitikaf of the last ten days in Masjid Nabawi.

My brother then introduced me to Shaykh. He asked, 'What is your name?' I replied, 'Rizwan'. Shaykh then said, 'You two stay with me.' During Shaykh's stay in the Haram, he used to pray Quran for many hours on end crying at times covering his face with the Quran. My brother was teaching me how to bring tea for Shaykh along with food into the Haram and how to do his khidmah. We used to sit with Shaykh also reciting the Quran. After Esha, Shaykh would go out into the mataf and look at the Kabah with great love and reverence. There would be lines of people queuing up to meet with Shaykh near Babul Umrah. En route home, Shaykh would always be looking for maktabahs (bookshops) to find books and searching for books all the time. Shaykh was always affectionate towards us giving us mithai (Indian sweets) and asking us regarding our welfare.

Visiting Mawlana Shah Abrarul Haq Hardowi in Mecca (RA)

Once as per routine Shaykh was praying in the Haram and then all of a sudden he got up and started walking. I, Mawlana Irfan and Mawlana Saleh started walking with Shaykh. He left the Haram and started walking through the alleyways. We came to an old, small building. Shaykh knocked on the door and upon entering the room, Mawlana Abrar Sahib (RA), who was the last Khalifa of Hazrat Thanwi (RA) asked all the people to move aside. Shaykh went forward and said 'Hazrat Dua kee darkhast' (request for supplications) and left the room. Hazrat Mawlana Abrar Hardowi (RA) was very old at the time and was lying on the bed. As soon as Shaykh walked in, Hazrat asked all the people to move and allow Shaykh to come forward. We all, through the blessing of Shaykh, met Hazrat Hardowi. This was the only time I saw and met Hazrat Hardowi (RA).

Last Hajj With Shaykh

During my last visit of Hajj, I travelled with my older brother Haji Imran Sidyot. My father's visa was delayed so he came via Jordan after a few days. During this visit, our father's teacher and elder of our family, Hazrat Mawlana Suleiman Jhanji (RA) was also in Mecca. Mawlana Suleiman Sahib was related to us as he is my grandfather's sister's son. Also my father's sister was married to Mawlana Suleiman and my brother Bhai Imran is married to Mawlana's daughter. Mawlana Suleiman was the attendant of Hazratji Mawlana Inamul Hasan for thirty years. Mawlana passed away in Mecca in the state of Ihram, reciting the kalimah some years later, and is buried in the graveyard of Mu'alla. Mawlana Suleman RA made my father hafiz of the Quran and my father made his son Mawlana Abdullah hafiz of the Quran in Jamia Sirajul Uloom Matwar, India.

We went to visit Mawlana Suleiman RA and he notified us that Shaykh is in the same hotel on the floor above. I went to visit Shaykh. His room had 5-6 normal hajis inside the room from India. As Mawlana Yunus Randeria, Shaykh's very close khadim, was busy taking care of his family, I was told to stay with Shaykh at all times and see to his needs. Shaykh would ask me for a prayer mat or tea. I would run down and get tea from the shops. Shaykh once asked me for a tasbih, I went down to Mawlana Suleiman and said, Shaykh wants a tasbih. Mawlana gave the one he was holding. I came up and Shaykh asked, were did you get it from and so quickly? I said, 'I asked Mawlana Suleiman.' He said, 'Give it back.' I went down and said, Shaykh said to give the tasbih back. Mawlana replied, 'Say it is a hadya (gift) from me.' Thus, Shaykh kept the tasbih.

Wrist watch incident

Shaykh had a gold watch, which stopped working. He notified me that the watch is not working. I informed Shaykh that I will take care of it. I went to my father who was with my elder brother Haji Imran and informed them. Bhai Imran said I will sort it out and bought Shaykh a new one of the same type. Shaykh was very happy and said I did not ask for a new one, I said to fix the old one. He gave the old one to Bhai Imran to keep.

Mawlana Ghulam Vastanvi Sahib would visit Shaykh daily and also sent a student for khidmah. Shaykh told the student to go and requested me to stay. Mawlana Ghulam asked me, 'Who is your father?' I told him who my father is and that my father is also here. He had known my father for many years and was really happy. He then told Shaykh that his brother completed the full Quran hifz by my father in Matwar. Shaykh was pleased and was asking my father some questions regarding this. As per the previous Hajj, we would take Shaykh to the Haram, find him a place to sit to recite Quran from before Zohar until after Esha. Shaykh was in the state of Ihram during both visits.

Mina

I went to visit Shaykh in Mina. He shouted at me and said go and do wudhu, pray two rakah prayer of tawbah and come back. When I went back, Shaykh gave me fruit to eat. I then accompanied Shaykh in Mecca after Hajj. The day I was leaving to come home, I went and requested Shaykh for duas. He supplicated for me in an audible voice and told me to stand in front of him in the hotel lobby area. This was the last hajj I spent with Shaykh. I was not fortunate enough to visit Madina Tayyibah with Shaykh RA.

Visits to England, Darul Uloom London

During this period, Shaykh would visit Darul Uloom London to complete the final lesson of Sahih al-Bukhari. Scholars from all over the country would come. There were always so many people there and getting into Shaykh's room was difficult. As soon as Shaykh saw me he recognised me and called me and asked: What are you doing now. I said: I go to university. The next day after Fajr, Shaykh called me and said, 'Why do you cut your beard?' He was very angry. Shaykh said, 'As from today you do not talk to me. You do not come to meet me. Is that understood?' Later that evening with remorse I was very upset and said, 'Inshallah, I will keep the Sunnah of the Prophet peace be upon him.' Shaykh said, 'How do I know that.' I remained seated in the corner of the room. During the hadith lesson, Shaykh mentioned this incident of cutting the beard and asked my brother Mawlana Irfan and others for me. I was hiding in the audience as there were hundreds of people. My heart was beating. I was reciting, O Allah cover my faults, and crying.

Following this incident, Shaykh called me and said, eat with me and informed me that keeping the Sunnah will not decrease your sustenance. We must keep it because our Prophet peace be upon him kept it as is described in the hadiths. When Shaykh was leaving, I was crying uncontrollably. Mawlana Umarjee RA also had tears in his eyes and gave me tea to drink. During Shaykh's subsequent visits, Alhamdulillah, through the grace of Allah, I had grown a beard. Shaykh often remembered this incident during his lessons at various institutes and also mentioned it during the speech in 2011 at Darul Uloom London (audio available on www.attablig.com). In this talk, Shaykh highlighted the efforts of the muhaddithin in the search of hadiths. They travelled miles, collapsed out of hunger just to learn the sayings of the Prophet peace be upon him. He also mentioned that nowadays a man will spend everything to acquire a woman. Shaykh then said that we should spend our time, health, wealth and our existence only for Allah and his messenger peace be upon him. Being the greatest one, do you think He will desert you? Never! At least, try it and see for yourself.

During one visit I was walking in my area near Osbaldeston Road, London and noticed a car pull up near the park. The car stopped, the window came down, it was Mufti Shabbir Sahib's son, Mawlana Mohammad (Shaykh's driver). Shaykh gave me his hands, I kissed his blessed hands. He notified me to come to Darul Uloom and said, 'You live here in London? I thought you live in the countryside.' On another visit, I was unaware that Shaykh had come and thought what is the point in me going, I am nobody compared to Shaykh's students and Khadims. I went Leicester a few days late. Shaykh said, 'I have been here for couple of days

and you come now.’ Following this incident, I always ensured I booked off work and arrive when Shaykh arrives and stay with him throughout his journey.

Shaykh’s plane was also cancelled once. Mashwarah was done by the organisers of Shaykh’s stay in England. My respected father, Mawlana Ismail Sahib suggested it will be our pleasure to host Shaykh and all his guests in Stamford Hill. Mufti Shabbir Sahib agreed and Shaykh along with all the guests went to Stamford Hill Masjid, our local mosque. We prepared food for Shaykh and the guests. He stayed in our local mosque and halfway through the speech called me out again.

Kashf (insight/intuition)

During this stay, I experienced Shaykh’s kashf personally for the first time. I was feeding the guests and my eyes fell upon a cup of tea which was placed in front of Mufti Farooq Sahib Luharvi (DB). This was the only time in my life when I thought I want somebody else’s tea. Straight away Shaykh called me and said, ‘You are going to make everybody sick with your nazar (glance). Here, have some tea.’ Allah forgive me. When going to sit in front of Shaykh, I would pray, ‘Allah, cover my faults’ and would pray two rakah Salah of Tawbah before visiting Shaykh.

Visit to Mazahirul Uloom Saharanpur and Shaykh’s Kashf

In 2010, I went to visit my grandmother in India Gujarat. During this visit, I also went to my cousin’s house in Delhi Nizamuddin, Mawlana Abdullah. From Delhi, I requested my cousin’s son Tamim that I want to visit Shaykh. He hired a car and driver. We set off from Delhi on route to Saharanpur. Zulfiqar the driver was telling me en route that he wanted to drive Shaykh and made dua once. He then managed to drive Shaykh and told him of his dua. Shaykh said you should have asked for something better. It was Holi, a Hindu festival and they were throwing colour near the car. The driver got out from the car and was about to hit the man. I and my cousin pulled him back and told him to stop fighting.

When I got to Mazahirul Uloom and went up to Shaykh’s room, Shaykh was pleased to see me. He said while laughing, ‘O jinn of London, when did you come?’ I told him I just came. He said, ‘How long are you going to stay for?’ I said, ‘I am going back to Delhi today.’ Shaykh said, ‘You must stay one or two days.’ I informed Shaykh that I am here with Tamim and the driver needs to return to take his son to the doctor tomorrow. Shaykh said next time come

on train, it is cheaper and said I must stay at least one day. I told Shaykh straight away that I will come back on the train.

Shaykh then turned to the driver and said angrily, 'Why are you fighting with people?' The driver said to Tamim how is Shaykh aware of this. I said I do not know. I went to Deoband and then back to Nizamuddin and came back via train to stay for two days. Recently, I was notified that the driver Zulfiqar went missing whilst taking people to Ajmer and his car was found burnt out in Gujarat and his body has still not been found. We pray that Allah give him the highest abode in Jannah.

During my second visit to Saharanpur via local train as instructed, I took a local chef with me and told Shaykh he will cook for him whilst here. Shaykh refused and said are you going to sleep in the Mehman Khana today? I said no I will sleep here i.e. in Shaykh's room. Shaykh said, 'So you going to die where I die then?' That night I was very sick, feeling cold on the inside and sweating on the outside. I used three blankets but was still shivering. In the morning, I was awoken by Shaykh for Fajr. After Fajr, Shaykh asked for tea to be bought for me. During meals, he would ask students to bring the food and tell me to eat in front of him. Shaykh also mentioned that if I had a family (i.e. wife) I would have asked them to cook for you. I said, 'Hazrat, no, do not worry about us. We will get food from the shop. We are just here to see you.' Shaykh spent most of his time researching, reading and writing during the day. He spoke to my father several times on the phone.

Shaykh asked regarding what I do for work. At the time I had just graduated and was looking for a job. I informed him and also told him that my father, Haji Imran and Mawlana Irfan are running an Islamic institute, Jamia Sirajul Uloom (Lantern of Knowledge). I help out there voluntarily but have no full time job. Following my return, Alhamdulillah, I found a job and have been working for the NHS, managing four health centres in Islington, London.

Visits to Darul Uloom Blackburn

Shaykh was coming to Blackburn every year for the Bukhari Khatm. I thank the organisers Mufti Abdussamad Sahib, Mufti Shabbir sahib, for allowing me to come and stay with Shaykh in khidmah during his tour year on year. All of Shaykh's students were always very welcoming, accommodating and loving. Shaykh would always ask: Has Rizwan eaten? Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib would be feeding Shaykh with his hands. I on many occasions would not have the courage to tell Shaykh certain things and would ask Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib to ask on my behalf.

Bayah

On one occasion Mawlana Ahmed Limbada suggested that I should take bayah with Shaykh. I refused saying I am scared regarding mamoolat (rituals), if I do I will do it just for the blessing of the chain and Shaykh's duas. That year I did not have the courage to ask Shaykh for bayah. The following year, I asked Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib to ask on my behalf. Shaykh said yes and told me to sit in front of him. As soon as Shaykh finished, I walked to the side. Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib asked Shaykh, you did not give Rizwan any wazaaf to read. Shaykh did not reply. Later in Darul Uloom Bury, Mawlana Abdurrahim Sahib asked Shaykh again, you did not give Rizwan any wazaaf to read. Shaykh said, I gave you ijazah, you tell him.

Taking Shaykh from Manchester to London in plane

Mufti Shabbir and Mawlana Abdurrahim booked umrah last minute with Shaykh and they needed to collect their passports from London. Mufti Shabbir Sahib asked me to go with Shaykh on a local flight and they will meet us in London. During this trip, I called all my family members and they all spoke with Shaykh requesting duas. My father in law Mawlana Rashid Ravat from Zambia also spoke with Shaykh during this Trip.

Shaykh's Final Visit to UK

During Shaykh's final visit, I would help out as usual. Mawlana Mohammed Patel, Shaykh's driver would ask me to lift Shaykh from the driver's side, bring him in and out of the car. Alhumdulillah, during the final visit as per usual we were doing Shaykh's Khidmat, the heavy lifting, wheelchairs etc. Shaykh then came to Mawlana Yunus's house in London. I went home and I asked the ladies to cook savouries etc for tea so we can serve it at Mawlana Yunus Rander's house after they finish. Alhamdulillah, Shaykh was happy and even had some Mojito which was made especially for him. Little was I to know that this was going to be one of the last times I will see him.

Shaykh during all these incidents would constantly be in the remembrance of Allah. During his old age, you could see his tongue moving remembering Allah Allah. How far we are from the lifestyle of our elders, their every second is with Allah, our every second is in Ghaflat. Allah give us the ability to follow our pious predecessors.

Passing Away

On hearing the news of Shaykh passing away, I was shocked and surprised. Who is going to look out for us now and ask of us? Call us? Without any worldly gain or benefit, just for the sake of Allah, sacrificing their entire existence truly for Allah and his Messenger, peace be upon him.

O Allah, grant Shaykh the highest abode in Jannah with the Prophets, martyrs, pious people and the muhadditheen, and count his every breath as an act of worship.

Please read a few lines below that I wrote on hearing the news of Shaykh passing into the next life:

“Words can’t explain how I am feeling inside. I just heard the news of Muhaddithul Asr’s demise. Wounded and hurt, what can I say except to Allah, his beloved was called this day. It took me four days to write these lines. The eyes have not seen such a sincere and divine person. A gaping hole has been left behind. I don’t think I will see another Shaykh Yunus in my lifetime. An ocean of Sunnah, a master of hadith, a breeze of coolness and a true inheritor of the gardens of peace. All brothers reading are requested to make isale thawab for Shaykh and remember the Ummah and this sinful soul in your duas.”

Rizwan ibn Mawlana Ismail Sidyot

London

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