

A Glimpse of Mufti Mahdi Hasan Shahjahanpuri ؒ

By Maulana Muaz Billoo

The commentator of *Kitab al-Hujjah*¹ and its editor is the scholar, the Hadith master, the jurisconsult Shaikh al-Sayyid **Mahdi Hasan** ibn al-Sayyid Kazim Hasan, ibn al-Sayyid Fadlullah the expert doctor, the distinguished jurisconsult, the scholar ibn ‘Arif billah al-Sayyid al-Shah Muhibbullah ibn al-Sayyid Qutbuddin, also known as Qutbi Miyan, the Shaikh of his time, ibn Shaikh al-Sayyid Darwesh ibn Shaikh al-Sayyid al-Shah Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Shahabadi ibn Shaikh Kamil al-Sayyid Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn al-Fadil al-Sayid al-Shah Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Jilani. His lineage goes up to the pious Imam, Shaikh Muhiuddin ‘Abdul Qadir al-Jilani al-Hasan al-Husaini by twenty links.

His ancestor, Sayyid Abu Ishaq Ibrahim came to Delhi from Baghdad during the era of Sultan Shahjahan, but eventually returned to Baghdad after 9 years, and thereafter came back to India, where he passed away in Awrankabad, from the cities of Dakkan. Then his son, Sayyid Ahmad, came to Delhi, India from Baghdad in the year 1090 AH during the era of Sulta ‘Alamghir. He lived in the city of Shahabad and passed therein.

Mufti Mahdi Hasan Shahjahanpuri ؒ was born in Rajab in the year 1300 AH in the city of Shahjahanpur in the area of Mulla Khayl. Initially, he was named Khwajah Hasan, but his name was ultimately changed to Mahdi Hasan upon the advice of a pious man, as such a name would serve as a good omen for guidance.

He learned to recite the Qur’an under the tutelage of his father and memorized a large portion of it under him, but would go on to complete his memorization with someone else at the age of 12. Similarly, he began to study Farsi texts under the guidance of his father and elder brother. He would go on to lead Tarawih prayers and would complete the Qur’an for the first time at the age of 15. Thereafter he enrolled into the Madrasah ‘*Ayn al-‘Ilm* in his own city wherein he studied the introductory books of Arabic morphology and syntax. The most famous his teachers there was Shaikh ‘Abdul Haq ؒ, the founder of the institution, who was from the disciples of Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi ؒ.

He would go on to study Arabic syntax and Fiqh under Mufti Kifayatullah al-Dehlawi ؒ. When Mufti Kifayatullah ؒ moved to Madrasah Aminiyyah in Delhi, Mufti Mahdi Hasan Shahjanhanpuri’s ؒ father also sent him there. Therein, he studied the books of Fiqh, Farsi and Arabic literature, the rational sciences including logic, philosophy, and the books of Usul al-

¹ *Kitab al-Hujjah ‘Ala Ahl al-Madinah* by Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani ؒ (d. 189 AH) is considered to be one of the earliest extant works on comparative fiqh wherein Imam Muhammad debates a number of legal issues with the scholars of Madinah, including Imam Malik r. The work has been published in four volumes by *Lajnah Ihya al-Ma’arif al-Nu’maniyyah*, a publishing company that was founded by Shaikh Abul Wafa al-Afghani in Hyderabad Dakkan, India.

Fiqh as well as the books of Hadith. He studied under Mufti Kifayatullah رحمہ اللہ, and completed the syllabus in the year 1326 AH. He would go on to become a teacher at Aminiyyah.

He managed to study portions of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Jami' al-Tirmidhi* under the tutelage of the Shaikh of the era, Shaikh al-Hind Mawlana Mahmud Hasan al-Deobandi رحمہ اللہ, and would receive a certificate of completion from Darul 'Uloom Deoband in the year 1328 AH. He gave his spiritual allegiance (*bay'ah*) to Maulana Rashid Ahmad al-Gangohi رحمہ اللہ. He would go on to receive an authorization in Tasawwuf from one of Maulana Gangohi's disciples, Maulana Shafi'uddin al-Muhajir al-Makki رحمہ اللہ. He became the head instructor (*Sadr Mudarris*) of Madrasah Ashrafiyyah, wherein he taught Hadith, logic, the rational sciences, and rhetoric for seven years. He would later become the *Shaikh al-Asatizah* at Madrasah Muhammadiyyah for four years, wherein he would teach the six famous books of Hadith.

He would go on to engage in Ifta (answering Fatawa: Islamic legal verdicts) in Bombai for thirty years from 1338 to 1368. In 1368, he was appointed as the chief Mufti (*Sadr Mufti*) of Darul 'Uloom Deoband. He continued to pass Fatawa therein, serving Islamic knowledge and the deen; he was the highest authority of Ifta in those lands. He taught Imam Tahawi's *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar* twice in great detail.

He performed Hajj for the first time in 1337 AH/1919 CE and thereafter performed Hajj at least four more times. In the Haramain (Makkah/Madinah), he met many Mashaikh with whom he would discuss various topics and issues. They benefitted from him, and he benefitted from them, and he was able to acquire authorizations (*ijazat*) and certifications (*shahadat*) from them. He also acquired a written authorization from Shaikh Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari.

He left behind numerous literary works in Arabic and Urdu, including but not limited to:

- *Al-Laali al-Masnu'ah Fi al-Riwayat al-Marju'ah*, an invaluable work wherein the author discusses those positions that Imam Abu Hanifah رحمہ اللہ held earlier in his life, but would go on to retract from.
- *Sharh Kitab al-Athar*, a commentary of Imam Abu Hanifah's رحمہ اللہ compilation of Hadith.
- *Sharh Kitab al-Hujjah 'Ala Ahl al-Madinah*, a commentary of Imam Muhammad's رحمہ اللہ work on comparative fiqh between the Hanafi, Maliki, and Madani schools.
- *Rijal Kitab al-Athar*, a work on the narrators found in Imam Abu Hanifah's رحمہ اللہ compilation of Hadith.
- *Sharh Balaghat Muhammad Fi Kitab al-Athar*, a commentary of those narrations in *Kitab al-Athar* wherein there seem to be apparent breaks in Imam Muhammad's رحمہ اللہ chain of narrations.
- *Al-Ihtida Fi Radd al-Bid'at*
- *Al-Sayf al-Majalla 'ala al-Mahalla*, a rebuttal of many of Imam Ibn Hazm al-Zahiri's رحمہ اللہ (d. 458) isolated positions held in his *al-Mahalla*.

Allamah Yusuf Binnori describes his literary style as being easy and clear. He was especially distinguished for his knowledge of the narrators of Hadith, and he held a particular focus on the scholars of the Hanafi school. He did not fear the critiques and censorship of others when speaking the truth. He was abundant in worship in the month of Ramadan, performing I'tikaf every year, striving for completing the Qur'an multiple times over. He had special love for the poor, and would honor the 'Ulama, while himself living the life of one. He would go on to pass away in the year 1396, may Allah engulf him in His vast mercy, and allow us to continuously benefit from his legacy.