

The Life of ‘Allamah Abul Wafa al-Afghani ﷺ

Summarized from Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah’s ﷺ *al-Ulama al-Uzzab* pgs. 270 – 273

The well-learned research scholar, the jurist, the *usuli*, the critical Hadith master, the *Qari*, Sayyid Mahmud Shah al-Qadiri al-Hanafi ibn Sayyid Mubarak Shah al-Qadiri al-Hanafi, famously known as Abul Wafa al-Afghani ﷺ. He left behind a gargantuan legacy and was a man of many traits.

Born on the day of Eid al-Adha in the year 1310 AH in Qandahar, Afghanistan, he grew up under the watchful care of his father, the noble shaikh Sayyid Mubarak Shah al-Qadiri, and then traveled to India at young age, seeking to embark on the path for sacred knowledge. He acquired the Islamic sciences from the great scholars of Rampur and Gujarat.

He then arrived in the city of Hyderabad Dakkan in 1330 AH, wherein he enrolled in the *Madrasah Nizamiyyah*, completing his memorization of Qur’an and Islamic studies therein, acquiring *ijazat* in the sciences of Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, Qira’at. His distinguished teachers included the likes of Shaikh Anwarullah ﷺ, the rector of *Madrasah Nizamiyyah* as well as *Dairah al-Ma’arif al-Uthmaniyyah* (دائرة المعارف العثمانية), Shaikh Abdus Samad ﷺ, Shaikh Abdul Karim ﷺ, Shaikh Mahmud Ya’qub ﷺ, Shaikh Qari Muhammad Ayyub ﷺ, Shaikh Rukn al-Din ﷺ, and many others.

Immediately upon the completion of his studies, he was assigned to teach the sciences of Hadith, fiqh, Arabic literature in the *Madrasah Nizamiyyah* for many long years. It was here that he decided to establish the famous *Lajnah Ihya al-Ma’arif al-Nu’maniyyah* (لجنة الإحياء المعارف النعمانية) in order to publish the literary works of the jurists and Hadith masters from the pious predecessors of this Ummah. Allamah Abul Wafa al-Afghani ﷺ went to work, painstakingly and critically editing and overseeing the publication of the works of the scholars of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries. He was a one-man army, exhausting his time, wealth, and knowledge for this work, seeking nothing but the countenance of Allah ﷻ.

The works he had published included:

- *Kitab al-Athar* of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150) ﷺ through the recension of Imam Abu Yusuf (d. 182) ﷺ.
- *Kitab al-Radd ‘ala Siyar al-Awzai* by Imam Abu Yusuf ﷺ.
- *Kitab Ikhtilaf Abi Hanifah wa ibn Abi Layla* by Imam Abu Yusuf ﷺ.
- *Kitab al-Asl* by Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibani (d. 189) ﷺ.
- *Al-Jami’ al-Kabir* by Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibani ﷺ.
- *Mukhtasar al-Tahawi* by Imam al-Tahawi (d. 321) ﷺ.
- *Kitab al-Nafaqat* by Imam Abu Bakr al-Jassas al-Razi (d. 370) ﷺ.

- *Usul al-Sarakhsi* by Imam al-Sarakhsi (d. 482) ﷺ.
- The third volume of Imam al-Bukhari (d. 256)'s ﷺ *al-Tarikh al-Kabir*.
- *Sharh al-Ziyadat* by Imam al-Sarakhsi ﷺ.
- *Manaqib al-Imam Abi Hanifah wa Sahibyahi* by Hafiz al-Dhahabi (d. 748) ﷺ.
- He also wrote a commentary on Imam Muhammad's recension of *Kitab al-Athar* but passed away before completing it. He had reached up to the chapters of Janazah.

He also oversaw the publication of the following works as well:

- *Kitab al-Hujjah 'ala Ahl al-Madinah* by Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibani ﷺ. The work was critically edited and annotated by the shaikh of our mashaikh, Mufti Mahdi Hasan al-Shahjahanpuri (d. 1396) ﷺ. A brief biography on his life can be found on the Darul Uloom NJ journal.
- *Akhbar Abi Hanifah wa Ashabihi* by Imam al-Saimari (d. 436) ﷺ
- *'Uqud al-Jumman fi Manaqib Abi Hanifah al-Nu'man* by Hafiz Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Salihi al-Shafi (d. 942) ﷺ.

There are many other books that 'Allamah Abul Wafa al-Afghani either directly worked on or oversaw. Most of his works centered around Hanafi literature, and thus the scholars of the Hanafi school are greatly indebted to his efforts. Even the Vice Shaikhul Islam of the Ottoman Empire, Imam Zahid al-Kawthari (d. 1371) ﷺ, held him in very high regard as can be seen in his letters to 'Allamah Yusuf al-Binnori (d. 1397) ﷺ.

He dedicated his life to fulfilling the commands of Allah ﷻ, engaging in worship, abstaining from sin, and remaining steadfast upon the Prophetic sunnahs. He was engrossed in study, research, annotation, teaching, and speaking the truth while not fearing any repercussions.

Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah (d. 1417) ﷺ writes, "I once entered his house in Hyderabad Dakkan in India, and I found his humble home filled with nothing but books, manuscripts, photocopies and prints. He was surrounded by books."

He would eat little and spent his nights in dua and worship. He was content with whatever Allah ﷻ had given him, preferring to live a simple and straightforward lifestyle over that of a lavish and superfluous one. His entire life gravitated around increasing in knowledge, while striving to practice, spread and propagate it.

His devoted his entire life to the knowledge of Islam until he left this temporal world to meet his Creator, Whose pleasure was his sole objective on the 13th of Rajab, 1395. May Allah have mercy on him, and allow us to continuously benefit from his efforts.

A more detailed account of his life written by his close student, Abu Bakr al-Hashimi, can be found at the end of the second volume of his commentary on *Kitab al-Athar*.