

**SHAYKH ABŪ AL-ṬAYYIB SHAMS AL-ḤAQQ
AL-‘AZĪMABĀDĪ & HIS SCHOLARLY
CONTRIBUTION IN SERVING THE ḤADĪTH
LEGACY**

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Abstract

Shaykh Abū al-Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq al-‘Azīmabādī is one of the greatest scholars of 19th century, and one of the brilliant authors in his field being an author of several books, such as *‘Awn al-Ma‘būd Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Besides his interest in teaching Ḥadīth and writing books, he was known for his contribution in reviving the legacy of Ḥadīth. This paper studies the traits of this great scholar from his personal and scholarly aspects, and then it introduces his distinguished contribution in serving the legacy of Ḥadīth. The research has applied the inductive method as well as a descriptive one. According to the inductive method, the research gathered important information related to the life of ‘Azīmabādī and his scholarly work in the field of Ḥadīth. As per the descriptive method, the research highlighted the important aspects of his personal and scholarly identity and his pioneering contribution in this field. The researcher has arrived through this research to some important conclusions such as that ‘Azīmabādī has performed a significant role in spreading the legacy of Ḥadīth and made crucial contributions in reviving and spreading it. Further, he made commendable efforts in defending Sunnah in India and made scholarly contributions in serving the cause of Ḥadīth by writing some valuable books and references which are relied upon by researchers all around the Islamic world. The most important feature of his writings is that they call for implementing the Holy Qur’ān and Sunnah.

Keyword: Abū al-Ṭayyib, Shams al-Ḥaqq, Al-‘Azīmabādī, Prophetic legacy, Ḥadīth, Contribution, *‘Awn al-Ma‘būd*

1. Introduction

In 19th century, the overall scholarly condition of Muslims in many countries of the world reached an extremely low level. This was due to various reasons, one of the most important of which was the weakness of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, which used to be a great support for Muslims in different parts of the world. Upon the weakening of the empire, Muslims, in many parts of the world, felt weakened and looked upon the western scholarship as a source of knowledge in all branches and fields.

On the contrary, the scholarly condition of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent was different from their counterparts of the Arab countries. Muslim leadership established various institutions and universities offering modern education, like Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh) and Jamia Millia Islamia (Delhi) in north India, and Osmania University in south India.

Moreover, Muslim scholars in India established various religious schools and universities in different parts of the country to protect the religious identity of Muslims in India and not to be adversely impacted by non-Muslim ruling after the fall of the Mughal Empire in 1857, which was the end of Muslim rule in India after an era that lasted for more than eight centuries. Among famous schools and universities which were established by Muslim scholars are Dār al-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyah (Deoband), Mazahir al ‘Ulūm (Saharanpur), Dār al-‘Ulūm Nadwatul ‘Ulamā’ (Lucknow), Dār al-Ḥadīth Raḥmāniya (Delhi). These schools and universities contributed to a strong renaissance in religious education and especially in the field of Ḥadīth, and its effects are still felt up to this date. Various Muslim scholars serving different fields of knowledge like Ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence, Quranic exegeses, Islamic preaching, Islamic thought, and literature were graduates of these schools and universities. They have contributed to creating a religious awakening among Muslims through their writings. Among these great achievers was Sh. Abū Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq ‘Azīmabādī who exerted a sincere effort and spent most of his life in keeping the legacy of Ḥadīth alive and spreading it among the masses. Hence, the present paper considers the study of his contribution to be a valuable academic contribution. The paper divides the contents into two sections, firstly giving a short introduction about the scholar, and secondly analysing the scholarly efforts made by him in serving the legacy of the Ḥadīth.

2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to shed light on the biography and scholarly contributions of Shaykh al-‘Azīmabādī and to introduce his efforts in the knowledge fields of Ḥadīth, which were distinguished by originality, seriousness, and innovation. It is, however, not known to many researchers in this field since many of his efforts are not printed yet.

3. Literature Review

The researcher was not able to find any previous study in the English language on the most important aspects of the biography and scholarly contributions of Shaykh al-‘Azīmabādī, especially his efforts in the scholarly fields of Ḥadīth, which motivated the researcher to prepare this research in the English language.

While there is a book in Urdu language written by Muhammad Zubayr Al-Dayānwī, entitled: “*Yādgār Ghughari*” which has been published by Al Maṭba‘ Aḥmadī, Patna (India) 1312 H. The author talks in this book about the details of ‘Azīmabādī’s life. There is also another book in Arabic language written by Muhammad ‘Uzayr Shams, entitled: *Ḥayāt Al Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaq wa A ‘māluh*, published by Jamia Al Salafiyyah, Banaras (India) 1991, in this book the author talked about the life of ‘Azīmabādī and his contributions in the field of Ḥadīth and in other Islamic fields¹.

4. Discussion

The researcher has organized the research into two sections:

Section 1 study the biography of Shaykh al-‘Azīmabādī in five subsections as follows

1. His Name and Place of Birth
2. His Education and Teaching
3. His Death
4. His Traits

Section 2 studies his efforts in the knowledge fields of Ḥadīth in four subheadings as follows:

1. Collection of Prophetic Traditions
2. His Role in Reviving the Legacy of Ḥadīth
3. His Role in Reviving Prophetic Traditions and defending them

4. His Contribution in Writing Books in Ḥadīth
5. The research then was concluded with few findings.

4.1. Biographical Introduction

This section focuses on the personal biography of Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq, by highlighting his name, place of birth, progress in his learning and education, involvement in teaching, his personal creed, and finally, his death.

4.1.1. His Name and Place of Birth

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī’s name was Shams al-Ḥaqq s/o Amīr ‘Alī. His teknonymy was Abū al-Ṭayyib. He is known as ‘Azīmabādī in connection with ‘Azīmabād (anglicized Azimabad), which was the 19th Century name of modern-day Patna, the capital city of the state of Bihar (India). He was born in Patna on 27th Dūl al-Qa‘dah 1273 H, which corresponds to 1857. In some instances, Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq describes himself as Dayānawī in connection with Diyawan near Patana².

4.1.2. His Education and Teaching

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī started learning the Holy Qur’ān, and then learned the Persian language, which was a common practice in India, then he received Islamic knowledge from the scholars of his city. In 1292H, he travelled to Lucknow and studied under the tutelage of scholars of logic and philosophy. Then, he moved to Moradabad and studied some of the books on logic under the guidance of Sh. Bashīr al-Dīn Qanūjī (d. 1296 H). After that, he travelled to Delhi, and accompanied Sh. Nazīr Ḥusayn al-Dihlawī (d. 1320 H) and read upon him most of the collections of Ḥadīth. Then, he moved to the state of Bhopal and read some books from Ḥusayn b. Muḥsin al-Anṣārī (d. 1327 H). These three scholars were the prominent teachers of Ḥadīth for Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq³.

In 1311 H, he travelled to perform the pilgrimage of Ḥajj. He read some books of Islamic knowledge, specially Ḥadīth, from the scholars of Ḥijāz region like Sh. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Maghribī (d. 1314 H), Sh. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abdullah al-Ṭā’ifī (d. 1315 H), Sh. Nu‘mān b. Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī (d. 1317 H), Sh. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Marsī (d. 1324 H), Sh. Fāliḥ al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1328 H), Sh. Aḥmad b. ‘Īsā al-Makkī (d. 1329 H), Sh. Muḥammad Ḥasb Allah al-Makkī (d. 1335 H), Sh. Ibrāhīm b. Sulaymān al-Maghribī, etc. He sought permission to narrate various

collections of Ḥadīth (*ijāzah*) from these scholars and documented in a *thabt* with the title *Nihāyat al-rusūkh fī mu'jam al-shuyūkh*. However, the book is currently still missing⁴.

After receiving the traditional Islamic knowledge and logic, he dedicated his time to teaching and benefiting others. He focused more on teaching Ḥadīth than other branches of *Sharī'ah*. Hence, many of his students became scholars of high reputation with their contribution by writing and teaching in the field of Ḥadīth. His most famous student was Sh. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Mubārakpūrī (d. 1353 H), the author of *Tuḥfat al-aḥwadhī sharḥ jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī*⁵.

4.1.3. His Death

Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq passed away on 19th Rabī‘ al-Awal 1329 H (corresponding 21st March 1911), after spending 55 years in serving the cause of Ḥadīth and Sunnah.

4.1.4. His Traits

Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq was extremely modest, humble, and pious. He even did not put his name on some of his writings. Some of his writings were published, for the first time, without the original author’s name. He was highly respectful towards the scholars of *salaf* and the four *imām*, despite being a follower of Aḥl Ḥadīth who do not follow any particular *imām*⁶.

4.2. Contribution to the Prophetic Legacy

This section deals with the contribution of Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq in serving the cause of Ḥadīth either through re-presenting it or through spreading it, defending it and writing commentaries on the collections of Ḥadīth.

4.2.1. Collection of Prophetic Traditions

Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq had a passion, from the early days of his learning, to collect rare scriptures and sophisticated books. He used to buy the manuscripts and order the publications with heavy price from Egypt, Beirut, Lydon, Germany, Paris, London, and book suppliers in the West and East. This was despite the limitation in resources in those times. Also, he used to request copying rare manuscripts regardless of how much money it might cost him. All these efforts, over a number of years,

resulted in a collection of print and manuscript books that were not available in many libraries in the country. After his death, his collection was transferred to Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna and can be a source of benefit for the seekers of knowledge.⁷ It would be apt to list down some of the rare items in his collection of books and manuscripts of Ḥadīth, for example: *al-Musnad* by al-Humaydī (d. 219 H), *Al-Muṣannaḥ* by Abū Shayba Al Kūfī (d. 235 H), *Al-Musnad* by ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd Al Kashī (d. 249 H), *Al-Musnad* by Abū ‘Awāna al-Isfīrā’īnī (d. 316 H), *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Al-Thiqāt* by Ibn Ḥibbān Al Bustī (d. 354 H), *Ma‘ālim al-sunan* by Abū Sulymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 H), *Ma‘rifat al-sunan wa al-athār* by Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 H), *Al-Tamhīd* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr al-Qurṭubī (d. 463 H), *Ṭaqyīd al-muḥmal wa tamīz al-mushkil* by Abū Ḥusayn al-Jayānī (d. 498 H), *Shurūṭ al-‘imah al-khamsa* by Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥāzimī (d. 584 H), *Tahdhīb Sunan Abū Dāwūd* by Ibn al-Qayyām al-Jawazīyyah (d. 751 H), *Al-Ilīmām* by Ibn Daqīq Al ‘Īd (d. 702 H), *Tuḥfat al-ashrāf bi ma‘rifat al-aṭrāf* by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742 H), *Tārīkh al-Islām* by Shams al-Dīn al-Dahbī (d. 784 H), *Kashf al-astār ‘an zawā‘id musnad al-Bazzār* by Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807 H), *Al-Nukat al-zirāf ‘alā al-aṭrāf* by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852 H), *Is‘āf al-mubattā‘ bi rijāl al-muwṭṭā‘* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 H), *Sharḥ shamā‘il al-Ṭirmidhī* by Muḥammad ‘Ashiq ‘Umar al-Ḥanafī (d. 1032 H), and *Al-Nafs al-yamānī wa al-ruḥ al-rayḥānī fī ijāzat al-qaḍā banī al-Shawkānī* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sulymān al-Ahdal (d. 1250 H). Besides these, there were a lot of valuable and rare manuscripts in Ḥadīth, its knowledge fields and its scholars, that were owned by Sh. ‘Azīmabādī. There were many more manuscripts related to Quranic exegesis, history, biographies, language, literature, philosophy, logic, and Islamic theology.

4.2.2. Reviving the Legacy of Ḥadīth

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī had a major role in reviving the legacy of Ḥadīth in the Indian region since he spread many writings of Ḥadīth and was the first one to introduce the scholars of this region to writings of stalwarts of Ḥadīth like Ibn Tayyīyah, Ibn al-Qayyām al-Jawazīyah, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhabī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Mundhrī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, to name a few. Before him, scholars of Indian origin had rare chances to go through the writings of these scholars⁸. Also, he was a special advisor to Dairatul Ma‘arifil Osmania in Hyderabad (India). Upon the advice of Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī, various books on Ḥadīth and its scholars, e.g., *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* by Al-Dahabī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, and *Lisān al-mizān* by Ibn

Ḥajar, *Al-Ansāb* by Al-Sam‘ānī and other books were published. Further, some printing houses in Egypt used to take his advice for printing valuable books in Ḥadīth and its scholars.⁹

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī was a reference point for many scholars of India about the knowledge of manuscripts and knowing their whereabouts. He used to lend them handwritten manuscripts of books available in his personal collection despite theological or juristic differences that may exist with the borrower.¹⁰

4.2.3. Reviving Prophetic Traditions and Defending Them

Besides Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī’s scholarly involvement, he did not overlook the duties of preaching good deeds and warning against bad ones. He used to dedicate a considerable part of his time to calling Muslims to follow the right path of monotheism and acting upon the directives of the Holy Qur’ān and Sunnah. He was instrumental in stopping many heresies, superstitions, and *shirk*-based traditions, which were widespread especially in places where Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī used to live. As a result, the effects of Sunnah were seen in places where he lived, and many people repented on his hands and decided to leave the false beliefs, traditions, and customs which were against pure Islamic creed and opted to live their lives in accordance with the right creed.¹¹

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī, also had considerable contribution in defending Sunnah in his region, and under his guidance, one of his students Sh. Abū al-Qāsim Sayf al-Banārasī (d. 1369 H) wrote various books in refuting claims of those who denied the authenticity of Sunnah. Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī even assisted him financially in addition to the scholarly assistance. All these efforts were instrumental in correcting the views of many intellectual Muslims who were getting influenced by those suspecting the authenticity of Ḥadīth. Also, Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī responded to those who opposed authenticity of the Prophetic traditions in various writings especially in his book *‘Awn al-ma’būd ‘alā sharḥ sunan Abī Dāwūd*. It could be a stand-alone book if a researcher decided to gather all these points from the given.¹²

4.2.4. Writing Books on Ḥadīth

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī excelled in Ḥadīth and had a vast knowledge about its *matn* (the narrated text) and *sanad* (the line of narrators). He was also capable of differentiating between *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍa‘īf sanad*, had knowledge of the intended meaning of the reported Ḥadīth and its juristic rulings,

and was brilliant in extracting rulings out of it. He had a high calibre in commenting on the Ḥadīth and solving its complex matters. He was known among his contemporaries for his vast knowledge of narrators of Ḥadīth and knowing their status of discreditation (*jarḥ*) and accreditation (*ta'dīl*) and his deep knowledge of levels of Ḥadīth scholars (*tabaqāt*). All these factors have helped him to a large extent in writing about various topics. He started writing in 1302 H and continued doing so till his death. In a short span of time, not more than 27 years, he was able to write a large number of books on Ḥadīth, Fiqh and biosketches (*tarājim*) in three different languages (i.e., Arabic, Persian and Urdu). Some of these books were published in India and abroad, some of them are still manuscripts to date, and some of them are missing and were never found.

Following is a brief introduction about his writings including the printed, the manuscripts, and the missing ones:

4.2.4.1. Writings and Notes on Additional Remarks on Ḥadīth Collections and its Narrators

Sh. al-'Azīmabādī wrote a lengthy commentary on Al-Sunan by Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. Ash'ath al-Sijistānī (d. 275 H) entitled *Ghāyat al-maqsūd fī sharḥ sunan Abī Dāwūd*. The commentary contained several points in solving *mushkil al-Ḥadīth* and explaining *gharīb al-Ḥadīth*. Also, it highlights juristic points which can be extracted from the Ḥadīths of a particular chapter. It discusses matters related to the knowledge fields of Ḥadīth and accurately refers to the names of the narrators and their biosketches. Also, it mentions the views of authoritative scholars on matters which are subject to agreement or disagreement and presents the supporting view of each side. It was evident that Sh. al-'Azīmabādī was free from the sectarian prejudice while writing this commentary. Hence, he chose those views and opinions which he found to be correct and supported by the proof. In this approach, he relied on books of well-grounded scholars both published and manuscripts. While discussing a matter, Sh. al-'Azīmabādī might mention his own conclusions and what he heard from his teacher scholars.¹³ Unfortunately, he was not able to complete this commentary beyond the chapter on Praying for the Deceased once Placing him in his Grave in the Book of Funerals (*kitāb al-janā'iz*). This book is printed and in circulation.

Sh. al-'Azīmabādī wrote an abridgment of *Ghāyat al-maqsūd* entitled '*Awn al-ma'būd 'alā sunan Abī Dāwūd*. The book was printed for the first time under the name of Sh. Muḥammad Ashraf known as Sharf al-Ḥaqq 'Azīmabādī (d. 1326 H) who was the younger brother of Sh. Shams al-

Ḥaqq. The reason for attributing the book to his name was in consideration of assistance provided by Sh. Sharf al-Ḥaqq to Sh. Shams Al Ḥaqq. Some researchers have mistakenly thought that the author of *‘Awn al-ma‘būd* is different from *Ghāyat al-maqsūd*. One of such mistakes is committed by ‘Umar Riḍā Kaḥāla (d. 1408 H) who referred to *‘Awn al-ma‘būd* as one of the writings of Sh. Sharf al-Ḥaqq¹⁴.

This commentary has certain unique features and characteristics which cannot be found mostly in other commentaries on the books of Sunnah, and they can be summarized here. There is a high level of accuracy of the main text of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* because the commenter relied on the narration of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Lu‘lu‘ī (d. 331H). He compared the version with various other narrations and several copies. Further, he mentioned that he was able to secure eleven copies of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and all of them were narration of al-Lu‘lu‘ī except one which by Ibn Dāsa Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Bakr al-Baṣrī (d. 346 H). He compared all these versions and referred to dozens of books written by earlier scholars and was able to make the narration of al-Lu‘lu‘ī stand out by referring to it in all the narrations. He even mentioned that the presented text of Ḥadīth and its commentary are a composition of the narrations of Ibn Dāsa, Ibn al-‘Abd al-Warrāq Abū Ḥusayn ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī (d. 328 H), Ibn al-A‘rābī Abū Sa‘īd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Baṣrī (d. 340 H). Further, the book contained some inputs from the narrations of al-Ramlī Abū ‘Īsā Ishāq b. Musā al-Warrāq, although these inputs were small in numbers. Overall, these were the most famous narrators and scribes of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.¹⁵ This is the first complete commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* as the commentaries written before this one was incomplete, e.g., the commentary of al-‘Aynī and al-Subkī. However, there were some commentaries written after it, e.g., *Badhl al-Majhūd* written by one of his contemporary scholars Sh. Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranpūrī (d. 1346 H) which is a complete and comprehensive one. *‘Awn al-ma‘būd*, as a commentary, is of an appropriate length when it comes to solving ambiguities of the subject book whether it was in the text of Ḥadīth or in its *sanad*. The discussion is brief but covers all the aspects so that the reader is not distracted by the lengthy details. The commentary also contained refutations and answers to sects that falsely claim to be Muslims by following non-Islamic creed, (like Qādyānī) and followers of heresies. Also, the commenter refuted the controversial theories which were propagated at the times of the author such as the trend of naturalism headed by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), the founder of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College that was later known as Aligarh Muslim University, who followed the naturalist

approach in explaining the Holy Qur'ān and tried to find his own explanations for things that did not suit his naturalist approach in a manner which was not in line with Arabic and its grammatical usage. This approach by Khan resulted in rejecting the reported miracles and Ḥadīth *Ṣaḥīḥ* which were against his naturalist approach. Sh. al-'Azīmabādī refuted all such claims and theories in this commentary. This commentary was published several times in India and places in Arabia.

In the book of *Ṣaḥīḥ Al Bukhārī* there are 23 Ḥadīths that are classified as *thulāthiyāt* which are a form of narratives where there are only 3 narrators between the compiler (e.g., al-Bukhārī) and the end of *sanad* [(mostly, the Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-'alaihe wa sallam*)]. Many scholars have written commentaries on *thulāthiyāt* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and so did Sh. al-'Azīmabādī who wrote a detailed commentary entitled *Faḍl al-bārī sharḥ thulāthiyāt al-Bukhārī*. In this commentary, he covered discussions related to *sanad* and *matn*. He even focused on the status of the subject Ḥadīth and mentioned rulings that can be extracted from it. He was not able to complete the commentary and the written part is missing¹⁶.

Sh. al-'Azīmabādī wrote a commentary on the prolegomenon of Imām Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj Al Qushyūrī (d. 261 H) entitled *Al-Najam al-wahhāj fī sharḥ muqaddimah al-Ṣaḥīḥ li Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj*. His commentary covered all discussions made in the mentioned prolegomenon. He explained what was intended by Imām Muslim and explained the uncommon and difficult words.¹⁷ To date, the book is still a manuscript at Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna.

Sh. al-'Azīmabādī gathered all the informative points and notes which uncover matters difficult to understand in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and presented them in his book entitled *Hadiyah Al Lawdha'ī bi Nukāt Al Tirmidhī*. He even spoke about Imām Tirmidhī and the characteristics of his compendium and mentioned many informative points related to it. However, this book was not completed, and its manuscript is available at Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna.¹⁸

Sh. al-'Azīmabādī wrote additional remarks (*ta'liqāt*) on the original texts of Ḥadīth collections. One such writing is his remarks on *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, wherein he intended to explain all the ambiguous words of the compendium and highlight the places they were mentioned. A manuscript is available at Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna. Sh. 'Abd al-Salām al-Mubārakpūrī mentioned in his book *Sīrat Al Imām Al Bukhārī* that Sh. al-'Azīmabādī wrote additional remarks on *Sunan al-Nisā'ī*¹⁹, but it was not found.

Further, Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote additional remarks on *Sunan al-Dārquṭnī* which was published as *Al-Ta‘līq al-mughnī ‘alā sunan al-Dārquṭnī*. One of the important characteristics of this book is that it was based on a comparison by Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī between two old versions. One of these versions is of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Bishrān Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Malik Al Baghdādī (d. 430 H) who narrated the book from Imām al-Dārquṭnī, the compiler of the compendium himself. This version was corrected by corrections of Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Sa‘īd al-Azdī (d. 409 H). The other version was narrated by Imām Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Aṣbahānī (d. 445 H) who narrated it from Imām al-Dārquṭnī. Both these versions were secured by Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī who compared them with the master version and clarified the differences in the footnote by giving additional useful remarks so that it turned out as a brief commentary on *Sunan Dārquṭnī*. The book was printed at Al Anṣārī Printing in Delhi in 1310 H, and reprinted by Dār al-Maḥāsin in Cairo in 1386 H. It is worth noting that Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī’s additional remarks were included in the version of *Sunan al-Dārquṭnī*, which was edited by Sh. Shu‘ayb al-Arnāwu’ṭ (d. 1438 H) by Mu’assasat al-risāla in Beirut in 1424 H.²⁰

Further, Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī made additional remarks on books dealing with narrators of Ḥadīth. He wrote additional remarks on *Al-Tārīkh al-Ṣaghīr* and *Kitāb al-du‘afā’ al-kabīr*, both by Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256 H), and the book of *Al-Ḍu‘afā’ al-matrūkīn* by al-Nisā’ī (d. 303 H). These books were published early in Delhi and Lahore.²¹

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī’s additional remarks on *Is‘āf al-mubattā’ bi Rijāl al-muwattā’* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 H) wherein he gathered biosketches of narrators mentioned in *Al-Muwattā’ Imām Mālik*. However, it seems that the author was confused about some places and may have left the names of many narrators. This encouraged Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī to rectify names of the narrators and clarify their teknonymy and agnomen. Also, Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī corrected the main text by comparing it with a number of manuscripts and made his remarks in the footnotes. These additional remarks along with the main text were published by Al Maṭba‘ al-anṣārī (Delhi) in 1320 H.²²

4.2.4.2. Writings on Ṭhabt and Tarājim (biosketches)

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote a treatise entitled *Al-Maktūb al-laṭīf ilā al-muḥaddith al-sharīf*. It contains information as given in such types of certification booklets. Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī discussed the types of *ijāzah* (certificating the person to narrate Ḥadīth) especially the general one

(*ijāzah āmma*) and mentioned the disagreement of the Ḥadīth scholars regarding the validity of such a certification, and even presented views of those who considered its validity. Also, he stated names of scholars and Ḥadīth experts who had no objection to granting general *ijāzah*. He even gave biosketches of these scholars but in brief. This treatise was published long ago by al-Maṭba‘ al-anṣārī (Delhi) in 1314 H.²³

Sh. ‘Azīmabādī wrote a *thabt*, entitled *Al-Wajāza fī al-ijāzah*, wherein he compiled names of his *shaykhs* to whom he read upon Ḥadīth or heard from them. At the start of the book, he listed the names of all his *shaykhs* in narrating Ḥadīth. The book was published by al-Majma‘ al-‘ilmī (Karachi), and Ḥadīth Academy in Faisalabad (Pakistan) in 1408 H. Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote another *thabt* entitled *Nihāyat al-rusūkh fī mu‘jam al-shuyūkh* wherein he mentioned their biosketches and even biosketches of those who were mentioned in the chain of narrators. As of now, this *thabt* is missing.²⁴

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote *Sīrat al-muḥaddith shaykh Abdullah Jahā’u Ilāhbādī* which is a biography in Urdu of Sh. Abdullah al-Ṣiddīqī Muḥammadī Jahā’u Ilāhbādī (d. 1300 H) who was one of the great scholars of Ḥadīth in India during the 13th century. This book is missing.²⁵

4.2.4.3. Other writings on various other matters of Ḥadīth and Fiqh

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote a valuable and unique book entitled *I‘lām ahl al-‘aṣr bi aḥkām rak‘atai al-fajr* wherein he explained the etiquettes of performing Sunnah prayers of Fajr. The book consists of 10 chapters. The approach followed in the book is to mention all Ḥadīths and *athār* related to the chapter. Then, he comments on them in light of what is mentioned by thorough and stalwart scholars. He then looks at their opinions and adopts the strongest and most suitable view as per the proof. Also, he mentions Ḥadīths referred by those who defended different opinions but examines them in a critical manner in a way similar to Ḥadīth scholars, so it is evident whether the presented Ḥadīth is *Ṣaḥīḥ* or *Ḍa‘īf* by closely studying its *sanads*. In case any of the narrators is impeachable (*muttāham*), liar (*kādhīb*) or weak (*da‘īf*), so Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī names him and refers to the opinions of authorities in the field of discreditation (*jarḥ*) and accreditation (*ta‘dīl*) as mentioned in the authoritative books of this field. Further, he refers to the opinions of scholars of *salaf* and *mujtahid* by mentioning their supporting proof and conducting a discussion on it, and prefers the opinion which has more supportive proof. The book was published by Al-Maṭba‘ al-Anṣārī

(Delhi) in 1306 H. It was then reprinted by Idāra al-‘Ulūm al-Athariyah (Lyallpur, Pakistan).

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote *Ghanyat al-alma’ī* wherein he addressed matters related to Ḥadīth and its sciences such as the difference between the statement “*hādhā al-ḥadīth lā yaṣiḥḥu*” and the statement “*lā yathbut*”. Also, discussed rulings such as placing the hand on the chest while performing the prayer and scarifying on behalf of dead people. Even other matters related to Ḥadīth were presented and discussed in the treatise. It was printed by Al-Maṭba‘ al-Anṣārī (Delhi) in 1311 H, and then it was reprinted by Maktaba al-Salafiyyah (Madinah) in 1388 H.

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote *Raf‘ al-iltibās ‘an ba‘ḍ al-nās* in response to a book entitled *Ba‘ḍ al-nās fī daf‘ al-waswās* that is attributed to Sh. Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Sahāranpūrī (d. 1297 H) where the latter, allegedly, responded to criticism of Imām al-Bukhārī on some matters of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa by saying “some people saying”. Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī responded to these responses and verified the matters mentioned by Imām al-Bukhārī in his collection of *Ṣaḥīḥ* and supported them from the standpoint of Ḥadīth scholars and identified potential weakness of the stand adopted by the Ḥanafī scholars in these matters.²⁶ It was printed by Al-Maṭba‘ al-Muṣṭafā’ī (Delhi) in 1311 H and then by Maṭba‘ al-Shamsiya (Multan) in 1358 H. Also, it was published by Dār al-Tarjuma wa Ta’līf wa al-Nashr at Al Jamia Tus Salafiah (Varanasi) in 1396 H.

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote *Tuḥfat al-mujtahidīn fī akhbār ṣalāt al-witr wa qiyām ramaḍān ‘an al-nabī al-mukhtār* wherein he compiled several Ḥadīths and *āthār* which are related to *witr* and *qiyām* during the nights of Ramaḍān. As of date, it is missing.²⁷

Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī wrote *Al-Nūr al-lāmi‘ fī akhbār ṣalāt al-jumu‘ah ‘an al-nabī al-shāfi‘* which is a collection of Ḥadīths reported from the Prophet (*Ṣal Allah-u-‘alaihe wa sallam*) in relation to Friday prayers. The author has critically examined them and highlighted their level of soundness and weakness. However, he was not able to complete the book, and the portion completed is missing as of date²⁸.

5. Conclusion

The paper presented some of the personal and scholarly aspects of Sh. Shams al-Ḥaqq ‘Azīmabādī’s life and briefly studied his contributions in serving the legacy of Ḥadīth. The study reached some conclusions and recommendations; the most important of them are as follows.

1) Muslim scholars in India have given extra importance to religious education after the fall of Mughal Empire. For this purpose, they established various Islamic universities and Islamic seminaries (*madāris*). These institutions produced great scholars who had valuable contributions in religious upliftment of Muslim society and maintaining its religious identity.

2) Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī was one of the great Muslim scholars of India during the 19th century. He studied Islamic knowledges, especially Ḥadīth, upon the stalwarts of his time and even mastered the same. Many of his students became prominent scholars of this field.

3) Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī was among the very few scholars of his time who took care of collecting rare manuscripts and antique books on Ḥadīth from major libraries in the West and the East. As a result, his personal library housed a collection of manuscripts and books which was rarely seen in any library of Muslim scholars in India.

4) Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī was among the Pioneer scholars of India who introduced Ḥadīth scholars of his lands to many collections and references of Ḥadīth which were never heard before to them. Due to his vast knowledge about Ḥadīth manuscripts, he was appointed as an advisor to some research centres in India and abroad. Also, he was a reference for many scholars in India on this matter.

5) Despite Sh. al-‘Azīmabādī’s continuous involvement in teaching Ḥadīth and writing books, he didn’t neglect preaching monotheism (*tawḥīd*) and spreading Sunnah among the Muslims and making them beware of heresies and superstitions which were spreading due to long co-inhabitancy with non-Muslims. Further, he contributed to defending Sunnah and refuting attacks and criticism by enemies of Islam.

6) One of the significant aspects of Sh. ‘Azīmabādī’s scholarly inclination is her balanced approach while dealing with juristic schools different from the one which he used to follow. Hence, he maintained a good relationship with followers of other schools and his books were reflective of that.

7) The research highlighted the contribution of Sh. ‘Azīmabādī and it is evident that some of his writings are still unpublished and future research efforts might be undertaken to publish them by Ḥadīth researchers. Most of these manuscripts are situated at Khuda Baksh Library, Patna in India.

Towards the end of the study, it is recommended to the researchers in the field of Ḥadīth to expand the research in the most important and significant aspects of personal and scholarly life of Sh. Shams Al Ḥaqq ‘Azīmabādī. More research should also examine his

writings in this field, especially studying the approach followed in his book *'Awn al-ma'būd 'alā sharḥ sunan Abī Dāwūd* which is one of the unique commentaries on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.

Notes and Bibliography

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³ 'Abd al-Ḥaī Al-Ḥasnī, *Al-I'lām bi mann fī Tārīkh al-Hind min A'lām* (Beirut: Dār Ibn al-Hazm, 1999), 8: 1243; Shams, *Ḥayāt Al Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaqq wa A'māluh*, 23-26.

⁴ Shams, *Ḥayāt Al Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaqq wa A'māluh*, 23-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 214, 316, 317.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73, 77.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43,44.

¹⁰ Al-Ḥasnī, *I'lām bi mann fī Tārīkh al-Hind min A'lām*, 8:1243.

¹¹ Ghourī, *Al-Muḥaddithūn min Jamā'at Ahl al-Ḥadīth fī al-Hind wa Juhūdahum fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī Dirāsah Isqirā'īya*, 333- 334.

¹² *Ibid.*, 335, 336.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 197-207; Al-'Azīmabādī, *Ghāyat al-Maqṣūd fī Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 13-14.

¹⁴ 'Umar Ridā Kaḥāla, *Mu'jam al-Mu'alifīn* (Beirut: Resalah, 1993), 3:136.

¹⁵ Al-'Azīmabādī, *'Awn al-Ma'būd Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 3:304

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¹⁸ Shams, *Ḥayāt al-Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaqq wa A'māluh*, 248.

¹⁹ Al-Mubārakpūrī, *Sīrat al-Imām al-Bukhārī*, 437.

²⁰ Ghourī, *Al-Muḥaddithūn min Jamā'at Ahl al-Ḥadīth fī al-Hind*, 380, 381.

²¹ Shams, *Ḥayāt al-Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaqq wa A'māluh*, 254-255.

²² Ghourī, *Al-Muḥaddithūn min Jamā'at Ahl al-Ḥadīth fī al-Hind*, 382.

²³ *Ibid.*, 369, 370.

²⁴ Shams, *Ḥayāt al-Muḥaddith Shams al-Ḥaqq wa A'māluh*, 254-255.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

²⁶ Al-Mubārakpūrī, *Sīrat al-Imām al-Bukhārī*, 229.

²⁷ Al-Ḥasnī, *Al-I'lām bi mann fī Tārīkh al-Hind min al-A'lām*, 8: 1244

²⁸ *Ibid.*