Editor’s Foreword

In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Benevolent

Here is a brief text comprising ḥadīthst related to the virtues of sending blessing and salutations to Allāh’s most beloved, Muḥammed. The last Messenger and Seal of Prophethood, Allāh had sent him as a mercy for the worlds. It is from his hands we wish to receive a pail from the pool of Kawthar and for whom we pray that he be awarded with the al-Maqām al-Maḥmūd (lit. the Praised Station) in the Hereafter. O Allah, confer upon him his due reward on our behalf.

Two monographs are bound within this book. The first is by the Moroccan ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn aṣ-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī and which consists of a total of three chapters. Chapter one records various merits of sending blessing to the Prophet which can be found within ḥadīth texts. Chapter two presents selected visions that Scholars of the past have experienced as a result of their tremendous devotion to sending blessing(s). The last chapter is a small selection of litany. The second monograph is authored by Ḥakīm al-Summā (lit. the spiritual Doctor of the Islamic Community), Moulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānvī (d. 1943) and is a 40 ḥadīth collection of litany.

The ḥadīths which appear in chapter one of al-Ghumārī’s text can be conveniently classified into two categories. One which carries particular reward for sending blessing in general, whilst the other stipulates specific rewards for conferring blessing(s) at an appointed time. The latter category is sometimes accompanied by a prescribed set of litany as found in ḥadīth nos. 17, 21, 35.

The ḥadīths from chapter one, despite the above subtle difference, are united in affirming reward for the reciter. However, what is striking about the ḥadīths is that variants give additional pieces of information that help arrange together an otherwise scattered set of variants into a more coherent whole. Special mention has been made to these additions by placing commentary points at the end of variants.

The distinction of each variant is so central to this collection that had the author described it as ‘a collection enlisting the variety of reward [in conferring prayer]’ it would have been
a more apt title from a technical literary perspective but perhaps this is the nature of ḥadīth literature in general, also explaining why collation (at-Tatabbu’ wa al-tibār) is so essential to Ḥadīth criticism. Instead, it seems the author intends to assert the divine relation in the institution of sending blessing with his title. Allah first and His Angels second send blessing to the Prophet and He obligates believers to follow suit. Allah and His angels send blessing to the Prophet. O you who believe, send blessing and salutations to him﴾ (33:56). A point to bear in mind when dealing with variants is that in as much as distinct variants of reward may be accepted on grounds of them belonging to the fadhā’il genre, which are acceptable if they meet certain conditions, the theological and eschatological narratives must be dealt with caution.

It is immediately apparent the ḥadīths bear no chains of transmission (isnāds). This reflects the standard practice of latter-day scholars, where it is understood to suffice if the author merely references back the ḥadīth to the original text. It may also point towards the author’s primary intention to place emphasis on the content. That stated, the author has not necessarily confined himself to all of the strictures of the latter-day scholars. He does not, for example, intend to flesh out the whole discourse of the text by prioritising its content from the Ṣaḥīḥayn first. Instead, the author has made generous recourse to non-canonical texts. Further evidence to indicate the author’s emphasis is on the content can be seen in his endeavour to include as many distinct variants as possible combined with the subsequent section of the book which accounts for [several] incidents of devotees encountering visions of glad-tidings. None of these incidents are ḥadīths and give the book the striking feature of a Sufi text as opposed to a strict ḥadīth one. Also, chapter three, which is dedicated to enlisting select formulae of conferring blessing, indicates the author has the general public and students of knowledge in mind as his audience.

It is hoped that by al-Ghumārī’s text and especially chapter three, readers are inspired to send as much salutations and blessing to the Prophet as possible. With this in mind Moulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī’s collection was selected, largely because it is a collection of forty ḥadīths which corresponds to Turath’s interest in publishing a series of 40 Ḥadīth collections and because all of its variants are from ḥadīth texts exclusively, unlike for example al-Jazūli’s lengthy Dalā’il al-Khayrāt compendium. This makes it the ideal text to annexe to al-Ghumārī’s inspiring collection.
The ḥadīth variants in Thānvī’s collection are elevated (Marfūʿ) as he himself recalls, at least implicitly (ḥukman) if not explicitly. The method of referencing during Thānvī’s time was to simply place the title of the text or the name of the author as an abbreviation. Another component of this convention was the tendency to cite ḥadīthic and non-ḥadīthic secondary texts that cited from primary ones. For example, one commonly reads ‘X ḥadīth is in Bukhārī, this is what is mentioned in the footnotes of Dalā’il al-Khayrāt’, or ‘this narration reported in Muslim Kadhā Fi al-Mishkāt (lit. this is how it appears in Mishkāt [al-Maṣābīḥ])’. This method, although commonly used during the latter eras, is not particularly endorsed by ḥadīth scholars especially for Takhrīj purposes as it most often obscures exacting accuracy and makes identifying lapses all the more difficult.

In the case of Thānvī’s monograph most of what he attributes to the primary sources is based on references given in secondary texts such as the Siʿāyah, Ḥirz al-Sāmānī and Ḥāshiya Dalā’il al-Khayrāt. Thānvī names the primary texts in which a given ḥadīth is said to have been transmitted and compounds it with an abbreviation at the end to indicate the secondary source he has read this in. Whatever the reasons for this type of referencing, its implication that the author has not gone back to the original text(s) to verify this is important to note.

Subsequent editions of the forty (Thānvī’s original Zād al-Saʿīd is quite rare to find but the forty have been published separately and incorporated in several pocket size litany texts), however, make the advancement of directly citing the primary sources without mentioning the secondary texts Moulānā Thānvī referenced them from. Their failure in not accounting for the abbreviations has resulted in inaccuracies, not to mention a methodological flaw, and the well-meant assumption that the advancements may have been made after thorough cross referencing should be dismissed. Ḥadīth no. 21 in later editions is referenced to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī whilst Thānvī’s text reads, ‘Bukhārī referenced this in al-Qawl al-Badī’’. This is undoubtedly a typo as al-Sakhāwī, and not al-Bukhārī, is the author of al-Qawl al-Badī’. Inconsistency within the advancements also indicates that cross referencing was not made, at least not properly. The later editions reference the first fifteen ḥadīths to the primary sources, thirteen out of which Thānvī narrates via a secondary source, the Siʿāya. Despite failing to mention the secondary source of al-Siʿāya, ḥadīth nos. 16 and 17
anomalously are, and thus demonstrate an inconsistency. Why the need was felt to incoherently reference via a secondary source and not a primary one, at least in these two instances, is unclear but my speculation is that it may be due to the arcane and obscure nature of the references. Ḥadīth no. 16 is referenced to Khayrūbarī’s Kitāb al-Ṣalāt, a text that has not been locatable, whilst ḥadīth no. 17 is referenced to a Majd al-A’immah [al-] Tarjumānī, a ḥanafī jurist who is not known to have written any works.

What is all the more interesting is that the later editions fail to name the individual who might have undertaken this noble task of referencing. Sufī Muḥammad Iqbāl’s edition simply adds that the ḥadīth formulae are taken from Sheikh Zakariyyā’s Fazā’il-e-Durād but then Sheikh Zakariyyā’s text does not contain references at all. Instead, he simply reiterates Thānvī’s opinion that all the ḥadīths are elevated and that Thānvī recorded the forty in his Zād al-Saʿīd and the Nashr al-Sib, in the former with references and in the latter without. Given that Sufī Iqbāl’s edition is the earliest one found with the advancements, the most widely circulated and relied on for incorporating into other subsequent redactions it is safe to place the onus on his edition unless someone is able to unearth a text prior to his sharing the same inconsistencies.

In fact, Sufī Iqbāl’s edition can be seen as furthering another misunderstanding. The cover maintains that the forty ḥadīths are taken from Sheikh Zakariyyā’s Fazā’il-e-Durād and only in passing, near the very end of his introduction, does it acknowledge Thānvī to be the author of the forty. This has left the overwhelming majority of the public under the impression that Sheikh Zakariyyā, and not Hazrat Thānvī, is the author of the forty. Even Sheikh Zakariyyā’s letter incorporated at the beginning of the booklet does not feel the need to acknowledge Thānvī’s authorship but simply mentions ‘the forty ḥadīths pertaining to blessing and salutations which are mentioned in the book of this unworthy one, titled Fazā’il-e-Durād…’, thus leaving space for the later misunderstanding.

In any case, all of the above called for a revised edition of Thānvī’s text with proper referencing that would bring it in greater conformity to the rigorous standards of the ḥadīth scholars. Muftī ‘Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Yūsuf al-Mangera has had the good fortune of filling this lacuna in his timely booklet titled ‘Ṣalāt & Salām in Praise of Allāh’s Most Beloved’, and which is reproduced here verbatim. The result was that many formulae showed
variations when compared to the original texts they were referenced to whilst the odd few, as demonstrated above, were incorrectly referenced altogether. Discrepancies of this nature are often lapses attributed to scribes, if not the authors, and an in-depth examination to identify exactly who is responsible for each and every one of them has been beyond the remit of the current project, with the task left on the shoulders of our contemporary students and scholars. Despite this void and the space for further developing Muftī ‘Abdur-Raḥmān’s work, readers are reassured that no variance, most of which has been accounted for in the references has altered the textual meaning, insofar as to cause concern.

Thānvī first published his forty ḥadīth compilation in his Zād as-Sa‘īd and then reproduced it in his Sīrah work titled, Nashr a-Dīb Fī Dhikr an-Nabiyy al-Ḥabīb, an English rendition of which White Thread Press has commissioned and will publish In Shā’ Allāh in collaboration with Turath Publishing sometime in the future. As can be understood from the above, Shaykh Zakariyyā Kândhelvī incorporated Thānvī’s forty in his Fazā’il-e-Durād, a text which was once part of the Fazā’il-e-A’māl, previously known as the Tablīghī Niṣāb. He thoroughly endorses its recitation by reproducing Thānvī’s remarks about it; an endorsement which has since then become ritual, especially at the Bury seminary (Lancashire, U.K.) which is headed by Moulānā Yūsuf Motālā, one of Sheikh Zakariyyā’s disciples, and is common amongst the former’s disciples. It is read at least weekly after sunset prayers (Maghrib) on Thursdays there.

In the words of Thānvī, as quoted by Sheikh Zakariyya:

“It is evident that since conferring blessing and salutations to the Prophet has been ordained by Allah it is a matter of religion. Therefore, two-fold reward is anticipated. [One for sending blessing and salutation and the other for propagating forty ḥadīths] ... If a person reads these daily, he shall receive all the virtues and blessing that are narrated for each of the formulae.”

Exactly when and how this endorsement becomes ritual amongst the Deobandi community, particularly in the UK, is a point of interest for historians and scholars alike as it is not practised in Saharanpur or Deoband. Most likely, it seems the result of a disciple’s fervent passion to follow the teachings of his Master to the absolute letter. It speaks of the disciple’s devotion, steadfastness, sincerity and most importantly, love - that profound bond that cements in a disciple-master relationship.
The text initially relied on for reproducing Moulānā Thānvī’s collection was the edition compiled and edited by Sufi Muḥammed Ḥusaynī. Sufi Ḥusaynī was a licensed disciple of Sheikh Zakariyyā Kāndhelvī and, as mentioned above, it is his edition that is most widely circulated within the masses and has been incorporated in many pocket size litany books. The forty ḥadīth of Madanī’s edition are scribed by Shāh Ṣafī al-Ḥusaynī who was the licensed disciple of Shāh ‘Abdul Qādir Rāi’pūrī. The latter, Sheikh Rāi’pūrī, was famously known as the spiritual guide of the Tablīgh Jamāʿat movement, having the likes of Ḥazratjī Moulānā Yūsuf Kandhelvī, Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Moulānā Zakariyyā Kāndhelvī, Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Ḥasanī an-Nadwī and Moulānā Manzūr Nu’mānī sitting at his feet. Other notable disciples of Shaykh Rāi’pūrī who are still alive are Moulānā Iftikhār al-Ḥasan al-Kāndhelvī who is one of the oldest and most senior members of the Kāndhelvī family and currently resides in Kāndhla, Ḥāji ‘Abdul Wahhāb of Rāi’wand Markaz (Pakistan) and Moulānā ‘Abd al-Jalīl Qādrī Rāipūrī who is Shaykh Rāi’pūrī’s nephew. Since Shāh Ṣafī has parted from us only recently, we thought it necessary to include a short biography of him. The acquired biographical material unfortunately did not do justice to the other more pertinent and important aspects of the Shāh. It was due to this insufficiency that a senior colleague, Moulānā Humza Choudry of Washington, America was asked to reproduce for us his somewhat reflective account which he had initially penned as an immediate obituary upon Shāh Ṣafī’s demise. Moulānā Humza, to whom Turath and the Editor in particular would like to extend their gratitude for kindly obliging to their request, has been fortunate enough to have spent time with Shāh Ṣafī at his Khānqāh. Also, due to the Shāh’s long-lasting fame in calligraphy, a sample of his calligraphy was deemed necessary to allow readers appreciate why he had won so many awards and appointed judge for numerous international handwriting/calligraphy competitions.

With regards to the translation, the direct second person speech of the beginning sermon has been adapted into the third person indirect to allow for a more idiomatic English read. The invocations have naturally been kept direct as it is required. Translating the phrase Ṣalāt ‘Alā al-Nabi has its fair share of complications but has been conveniently rendered as ‘sending’ or ‘conferring blessing’ throughout the book. Also, an effort has been made to supply the original Arabic term to each English equivalent in order to aid in better understanding variable translations suited for a more contextual reading.
Lastly, it is hoped that every scholar who scribes a ḥadīth, especially those who helped in publishing this text, are granted paradise as the Prophetic vision cited by al-Ghumārī herein suggests.

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