

# **Traditional Islamic Education and Its Relevance Today**

**By: Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi**

\* **Sumia Aziz**

(Following is a text of an esteemed talk by the late Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi on a very denoting topic of history and relevance of traditional Islamic education in the Sub continent)

Assalmo'alikum Warahmatullah: Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem. Nahmaduhu wa nussali al'a rasulihil kareem!

My drear brothers and sisters! First of all I must express my deep sense of gratitude to the organizers of this conference who have given me the honor of sharing some of my humble thoughts and ideas with them about the traditional Islamic education, imparted in, what is known now throughout the world as the *Madrasah* in the sub continent. *Madrasah* has become a subject of heated discussion throughout the Modern world, both in the East as well as in the West. It is discussed positively & negatively by the friend and the foe alike. The Western media is painting the *Madrasah* in a

---

\* *Lecturer, Department of Tafseer & Quranic Sciences, Faculty of Islamic Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad.*

Islamic education remained his real love and dearest vocation, his overriding passion throughout his life. It was for the sake of an intense academic struggle for exalting the word of Allah and establishing Allah's writ in human life that he lived and toiled to his utmost capacity till the last breath of his life. For rendering some worthwhile service to the cause of Muslim education and academia, he dedicated all his faculties, all his being, working day and night with endless zest and zeal.

May Allah forgive my brother's failings and lapses – something from which no human could be immune. May Allah forgive his younger brother too for all his mistakes and blunders. May He reward my dearest brother profusely, exalt his station in Paradise and admit him to the august company of those he loved most: the Prophets, the Truthful ones and the Pious elders of the community of the faithful. *Amin.*

matter of Divine grace that a talent ignored or nobility slighted in its own milieu, is often compensated by Allah by acclamation from distant quarters, indeed a true measure of acknowledgement.

However, his occupying such challenging offices as a Federal Minister, a Judge of the superior courts, a Member of the National Security Council and President of the International Islamic University did not least diminish his preoccupation with academics, his passion for reading and writing, teaching and preaching, guiding and supervising research by enthusiastic young students and promising scholars. He was perhaps the only sitting member of the Federal cabinet in this country who taught regular courses in various academic programmes of the International Islamic University, an institution he so sincerely and diligently served. He helped conceiving, and then untiringly working for its development and expansion, physical and academic for three decades. For IIU, my brother sacrificed prime of his youth since the age of 28 till the age of 59½. The University administration hastened to retire this highest scholar of the highest caliber of international recognition and easily abandoned the most dedicated professor also the most sincere servant of Islamic education relentlessly serving its cause even before its conception – much to his disappointment – without a moment's hesitation – upon his slight suggestion to leave service a few months before his due date of retirement. He, however, had little regrets afterwards. At least he never complained.

these unscrupulous practitioners of vanity and wickedness. I am sure he must be enjoying abundant reward from his Lord for his enduring patience. May Allah forgive them and forgive us all.

These were some of the rare moral qualities that earned him so much love and adoration, honour and respect in the scholarly and learned community of the world of Islam – indeed a special Divine Grace. At the young age of thirty, he was widely acclaimed as a first rate scholar in the farthest corners of the world. During his academic career, he was invited hundreds of times to address assemblies of learned and scholarly people in the country and abroad. He was invited to assume the highest offices that any ambitious man could ever dream of, though he never entertained any worldly ambition for any of these sought-after positions. In fact, he never demanded any favor for himself from any one all his life. At least, I do not remember a single instance of such pursuit of personal interest. However, his constant and rapid rise in the ladder of worldly positions of power misled many to ascribe motives erroneously to that virtuous and God-fearing soul. Honors and acclamations my brother did receive in his country and abroad, endlessly and in abundance, but all this without the slightest suggestion, initiative or effort on his part. Shy and reserved by nature, and characterized by self-withdrawal, almost bordering on introversion, he received the highest distinctions of honour and prestige both within his own country, in several Muslim countries from Morocco to Malaysia, Kazakhstan to Qatar and even in some foreign lands inhabited by non-Muslims. It is a

Arabic. After sometime, he got himself registered as a Ph.D. student at Punjab University. For his thesis, he wrote a dissertation on the Role of Shah Wali Allah in Muslim Revivalism in India. In the writing of this dissertation, he was supervised by late Prof. Muhammad Aslam, the famous historian of Punjab University. However, due to some internal politics between rival groups of the University teachers, he could not earn the degree. Least discouraged by this maneuvering by unknown elements hostile to his illustrious supervisor, he submitted another thesis to the same University and secured the doctoral degree, though for many years he had been far too advanced in knowledge, erudition and scholarship than such formal accreditations could testify.

One great quality of my brother among so many others, was that he was least deterred from pursuing his academic course by pointless rivalries, jealousies and conspiracies that were constantly hatched by hostile elements against him throughout his career. Such ill-meaning machinations continued unabated till the last hours of his earthly life. Far from being exasperated by such mischiefs – that were more often planned and endlessly executed by those he favored immensely – he did never even complain of such malicious people. Even if mention was ever made of any individuals and their betrayals in his presence by others, he never gave vent to any suppressed vendetta and simply dismissed the topic with a characteristic smile. Far from nursing any vendetta, he continued to treat such individuals with kindness and courtesy and always refrained from venting his wrath against

Mawlana used to start his day with a short lesson in *hadith* from *Mishkat al-Masabih*. My brother naturally joined this class enthusiastically along with other senior scholars of the Institute. In the course of time, my brother also made acquaintance with some other prominent scholars associated with the institute at that time like Prof. Mazharuddin Siddiqi, Professor Muhammad Sarwar, Professor Saghir Hasan Masumi, Professor Qudratullah Fatimi, Professor Detlev Khalid (a visiting Professor from Germany) and Professor M.A. Khan. The latter belonged to the erstwhile East Pakistan, and under his guidance my brother wrote initial articles on Allal al-Fasi, a Moroccan revivalist scholar of the last century. Later, he was assigned to work on the 'Sanusiyyah movement of North Africa'. He completed this project in a matter of months which was published later under the auspices of the Shari'ah Academy, IIU under the same title. In the meanwhile, he passed M. A. exams in Arabic and Islamic Studies with distinction from the Punjab University.

Apart from his official assignment to work on al-Fasi, he wrote several articles on different other topics related to Islamic studies. Most of these articles were published in the *Fikr-o-Nazar*, the then monthly journal of the Institute which was edited in those days by an outstanding scholar, and an authority on the thought of Shah Wali Allah, Prof. Muhammad Sarwar. Later, (in 1980), this monthly journal was turned into a quarterly and my brother became its Editor along with his main editorial duties in *Al-Dirasat Islamiyyah*, the quarterly journal of the Institute in

was more than happy to work with this Egyptian literary luminary. From the next day, they started working on this project. This joint enterprise produced some of the best specimens of the versified Arabic translation of Iqbal's literary legacy. The most outstanding example is the famous Ode entitled: *Shakwa* and *Jawab shakwa* published several times under the Arabic title: *hadith al-ruh* immortalized by the celebrated Queen of Egyptian Melody, Umm Kalthum. My brother remained associated with this leading literary figure of Egypt and helped him translate into versified Arabic, selections from Allama Iqbal's poetic works in Urdu and Persian. After about a year of vigorous activity fully shared by my brother, Shaikh Sawi suddenly left one morning for his home country without leaving a trace behind. My brother naturally regretted this abrupt departure of his senior associate and lamented the loss of this fertile literary resource provided to him by Providence. He, nevertheless remained ever indebted to him and always thanked Allah for this opportunity whereby he was able to further refine his skills in Arabic and greatly improved his linguistic capital and literary sensitivity through this yearlong association with this old and mysterious Egyptian fugitive. Soon, thereafter, my brother was offered a job of Research investigator at the Institute and thus he formally joined the institution with which he had been already so closely familiar, passionately attached and informally associated with his heart and soul.

After joining service at the institute, he became even more closely attached with Mawlana Hashimi. In those days, (1969-) the

(d. 1992), Dr. Mustafa al-Zarqa' (d. 1999), Mr. A.K. Brohi (d. 1987), the Founder-Rector of IIUI, and Justice Shaikh Aftab Husain (d. 1997), Chief Justice, Federal Shari'at Court (1982-1986) and last but not least our former Director General, Islamic Research Institute, Dr. S.M. Zaman. All these prominent figures – extraordinary and well-acknowledged in their fields – not only tremendously benefited my brother with their knowledge, wisdom and experience, but despite his being far junior in age, they shared their time most generously with him and treated him with utmost love and affection. They not only shared their valuable insights – the sum-total of their careers but also invested him with great self-confidence.

Returning to my brother's informal association with the Islamic Research Institute, it so happened that within weeks of my brother's newly found interest in the library of the Institute and its erudite librarian Mawlana Hashmi, he came across Shaikh Sawi 'Ali Sha'lan. The latter was a renowned Egyptian Poet invited by the late President Ayyub Khan on the advice of Qudratullah Shahab, then Education Secretary, to translate Allama Iqbal's poetic works into Arabic verse. The Egyptian guest was looking for a Pakistani scholar who could assist him in that assignment as the former was not sufficiently conversant with Persian and Urdu. When he met my brother, he was overjoyed to identify in him the scholar *par excellence* he was frantically looking for. My brother – himself a great lover of Iqbal – who had by then virtually memorized almost all his verse and digested much of his prose –



As submitted above, the short scope of the present essay does not permit free use of pen to dilate upon the details of men and matters influencing my brother's life and shaping his personality. Therefore, I can only try to capture some flashes and highlights. The impact of our mother – May Allah prolong her blessed canopy over our heads – had been the most continuous and conspicuous. In so many ways, he resembled her. The most prominent of these personality traits that he seemed to have inherited from our mother is leniency, docility and tolerance. Unlike this humble writer, my brother was an embodiment of tolerance and clemency. He kept his cool in the face of the most provocative interlocutor. I often said to him in a lighter vein that he belonged to the Mu'awiya school of thought in tolerating nonsense, specially in the context of his conduct as a manager of man. Also being eldest, he had been blessed with unshared attention and care of our mother in her younger and healthier phase of life. Hence the deeper impact. It has been rightly said that behind every great man, there is a woman. I would qualify this maxim and replace the word 'woman' with mother. I am hopeful that my brother has already become a dweller of paradise and he has entered it under the shadow of our mother's blessed feet.

Also no less influential on my brother's later life – in his thirties and forties particularly – were some other highly prominent personalities from Pakistan and outside. These men included Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (d. 2000), Dr. Ihsan Haqqi

community. This task he accomplished to the satisfaction of the Mawlana under whose active guidance, he appeared before the Court daily for five weeks during October-December 1987. Another example of the Mawlanas trust in him – an honour that few others shared – is my brother's association with the national commission on the Islamization of the Constitution setup in the early 1980s, again on the sole recommendation of Mawlana Ansari, in which my brother made a not so modest contribution under the supervision of the Mawlana. These and many other activities of national significance initiated by the Mawlana, in which my brother became involved thanks to the former's patronage and guidance, greatly enriched my brother's fund of knowledge and experience and expanded his intellectual horizons. It was due to this close association with this great political and constitutional genius of the world of Islam that my brother developed unusual skills in comprehending and resolving complex problems in the spheres of law, constitution and judiciary. He employed these skills of his master with deftness and discretion subsequently when he was invited to hold certain important offices in the state. Thus my brother had the singular privilege of enjoying long association, trust and patronage of the Mawlana who had dedicated his life, with his whole heart and soul to the service of Islam, Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah. May Allah rest his soul in peace and reward him profusely, *Amin!* It seems probable to me that side by side with transmitting deep insights and original ideas, the Mawlana also transferred to my brother some portion of his great spirit of sincerity and zeal for the service of Islam and Pakistan.

I felt elevated to be of some use to a national leader of the highest caliber engaged in pursuing some national cause on behalf of the people of Pakistan. However, my brother soon earned a place of love and respect in the heart of Mawlana Ansari for his keenness and commitment to pursue higher long-term aims and objectives of national development that occupied the thoughts and initiatives of Mawlana Ansari, aims that transcended immediate political interests or expediences. Like his teacher, Mawlana Hashimi, Mawlana Ansari was no less instrumental in refining the intuition and imagination, defining the right direction for my brother's later academic orientation. Mawlana Ansari – who usually evaded public appearances and often maintained great reserve in mixing with people and sharing his views, increasingly trusted my brother. Gradually, he even started entrusting my brother with specific research tasks required for many of the grand strategies pursued for national development especially in the fields of constitution making and Islamization of Pakistani society and polity. An example of this trust that readily comes to mind is the task of defining the constitutional status of the Qadianis. My brother's role in this important landmark decision was confined to collecting relevant materials for the Mawlana. But later he was destined to play a bigger role in this issue when it was raised abroad. My brother was chosen by the Mawlana for presenting the Islamic point of view with regard to the famous or infamous Qadiani problem before the South African Supreme Court in 1987. It was at the behest of Mawlana Ansari that my brother was invited to appear as a witness in the capacity of an expert, at the Supreme Court of South Africa on behalf of the local Muslim

headquarters of the Supreme Court of Pakistan located at Peshawar road). I asked for the late Mr. Mahmud Ali again with whom I had a prior acquaintance and whom I had met minutes ago. While walking across the lawns of that spacious mansion, the Mawlana introduced himself as simply: 'Zafar Ahmad Ansari', in his typically humble self-effacing manner. On my request Mr. Mahmud Ali re-emerged from the conference room, warmly received this veteran national leader and ushered him in. This was my first encounter with the colossus called Mawlana Ansari.

The first week of April 1972 brought Mawlana Ansari to Islamabad to attend the opening session of the constituent Assembly of which he was an independently elected member from Karachi. Thereafter, he regularly came for the Assembly Sessions and stayed sometimes for weeks at the MNAs Hostel at suite No.112. I and my brother became his regular visitors. Being younger, I often was sent by the Mawlana for small errands in the city of Islamabad for ordinary day to day needs like fetching medicines or purchase of *pans* from a nearby shop. On a couple of occasions, I was sent to fetch a taxi cab to take the Mawlana to the Prime Minister's House at Rawalpindi where he needed to go in connection with resolving important national issues with the late Mr. Z.A. Bhutto. Despite the latter's highest regard for the Mawlana and his ever-obliging attitude to him, the Mawlana refrained from seeking the smallest favour from him. Hence the need for the taxi to travel some 30 KM to see Mr. Bhutto at his Rawalpindi palace. I undertook these 'tasks' with a sense of pride.

arose hardly any significant move for the resurgence of Islam in the last century, in which this great *Mujahid* did not make a decisive and consequential contribution. His epoch-making contributions perhaps escaped notice by our historians if only because he was by temperament averse to publicity and self-projection.

It was the good fortune of this younger brother that he had the privilege of making Mawlana Ansari's acquaintance before the elder brother. The vivid memory of his first casual encounter with him is still fresh in his mind when he first saw this giant leader of the world of Islam on the fateful day of 20<sup>th</sup> December 1971 at East Pakistan House. The anguish of the dismemberment of Pakistan a few days ago, had taken this humble scribe to East Pakistan House, where a meeting of our national leaders was in session to deliberate over the great debacle and its implications for our country. He had gone there in great pain and sorrow searching for some solace for the morrow from the assembly of the national leaders he trusted and knew. After a brief meeting with late Mr. Mahmud Ali, a great Pakistani politician and Patriot from the Eastern wing, he was coming out with a heavy heart when a small cab stopped in front of the East Pakistan House. An old weather-beaten, seasoned looking but attractive elderly figure emerged from the cab and eagerly enquired from this humble scribe: 'Where could I find Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan Sahib? I felt immediately tempted to escort him to the interior precincts of East Pakistan House (a building later used for years as the

teaching and learning, this great savant and spiritual mentor immensely benefited my brother and generously shared his deep and original insights into the vast expanse of Islamic studies. Indeed Mawlana Hashimi, with his varied and extraordinary accomplishments, represented the golden tradition of our great past in his grasp, memory, understanding, extensive knowledge and deep all-round awareness about *Tafsir*, *hadith*, *Sira*, *Fiqh*, *Kalam* and Arabic literary tradition, their major trends, central issues and prominent exponents. The Mawlana who had been a disciple of great scholars of his time including great stalwarts like Mawlana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, displayed in his exceptional talents the superb qualities of his great teachers and mentors.

No less worthy of special mention is the influence that my brother received from another giant – a great and towering figure of recent times who contributed immensely and decisively to many landmarks of our national struggle for independence. He was also solely behind some of the most momentous events in the life of the Muslims of the present age as a whole. Despite his massive contribution to making Pakistan an Islamic Republic and to some other significant achievements made in this country's short career, he is little known, and almost entirely ignored by our historians. He was Mawlana Zafar Ahmad Ansari (d. 1992) one of the lieutenants of Quaid-e-Azam and among the chief architects of 1973 constitution and an outstanding political thinker and constitutional theoretician, a master negotiator and an almost solitary and anonymous *Mujahid* of Islam in his own way. There

source of silent agony for my brother – were adequately compensated – thanks to Divine Grace – by his seemingly casual encounter – evolving into close and lasting association – with Mawlana Hashimi. The visit to his house became a daily routine of my brother and a refrain of his life’s rhythm for many years – almost two decades. After each session with this Polymath, he would often share with this humble scribe and other family members, and with great zeal and relish, the essence of his daily academic acquisitions from these informal sessions.

Every meeting between the two was an intellectual feast not only for the young recipient but perhaps for the other side too in some measure. For the latter seemed to have discovered in my brother a real seeker of knowledge with insatiable thirst to regale himself from his overflowing fountain of knowledge, experience, sagacity and wisdom. Until the last moments of his life, the Mawlana maintained his fatherly patronage of my brother and the latter on his part revered him as his real benefactor and a godfather of sorts. The Mawlana would emerge from his house-located near the present *Holiday Inn*, Islamabad, a little before sunset for *Maghrib* prayers. He would pray at the Mosque in our neighborhood in (Street 16) sector G-6/2, and after *Maghrib*, my brother would almost invariably accompany him to his house, spending several hours in his educative and inspiring company. The Mawlana would do most of the talking. The subjects of his talk ranged from *Tafsir*, *hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Kalam*, *Sirah* and Islamic history to literature and poetry. Without any rigid formality of

tremendously from the company of this great savant. Mawlana Hashimi was no ordinary man. A graduate of *Nadwat al-'Ulama'*, Lucknow, he had a sharp grasp, a photographic memory and was deeply versed in the vast tradition of Islamic studies with its main currents, prominent shades and significant diversities. Besides, he was an immensely pleasant personality to meet and one seldom felt bored in his company. He treated my brother like his own son and showered his fatherly graces upon him from the first occasion of their mutual introduction. It seems both discovered in each other something they had been searching for. This mental frequency, established between the teacher and the pupil from their first sight of each other, reminds one of the famous lines of Mawlana Rumi:

'if the thirsty are searching for water in the land, the water too seeks the thirsty in this world'.

Indeed in Mawlana Hashimi, my brother seems to have found the fountain he was looking for to quench his thirst.

The Mawlana's fatherly treatment of my brother was so consistent and conspicuous that many people mistakenly took him to be his real son. After the Mawlana's demise in Karachi, many people even offered condolences to my brother under the same impression.

It seems to have been so destined that a great deal of deficiencies left in his learning at the *Madaris* of Rawalpindi – a



some works due to want of sufficient resources or inaccessibility of certain rare sources. He dedicated his limited fortunes to the procuring books far more enthusiastically than a newly wed bride would spend on jewelry or cosmetics. In the pursuit of this passion, he often earned the ire of his family, but put up with this displeasure as a price worth paying.

Some two-three years after we had been settled in Islamabad, one day my brother received news that was the craving of his life. He could not hide his excitement when he revealed to me that the famous Islamic Research Institute of Karachi had recently been shifted to Islamabad. This was in late 1967. He took me along and we set about in search of this newly found treasure. Islamabad was then a small functional bureaucratic sort of city, the distances of which could be covered on foot. So off we went to look for the Institute's premises in all corners of the city without any address or phone number in our knowledge. At last we found it situated in some residential houses in (Street 67) Sector G-6/4. It was quite dark when we succeeded in our discovery. From the next morning, my brother became a regular visitor of the Islamic Research Institute's Library where he was warmly received by its founder and custodian Mawlana Abdul-Quddus Hashimi. The latter – a disciple of Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi – was an exceptionally gifted scholar. He was virtually a mobile library of Islamic studies and ever generous to share his learning with any sincere seeker of knowledge. My brother thenceforth starting frequenting his house as well. And indeed he benefited

After shifting to Islamabad, my brother often missed the vigor of the academic life that he immensely enjoyed at the *Madrasa 'Arabiyya Islamiyyah* of Karachi. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the only profitable class-room teaching that he ever received in his life was at this *Madrasa* which was a vibrant centre of Islamic education specially during the days of its great founder Mawlana Muhammad Yusuf Binnouri whose spirit of devotion and depth of learning pervaded the entire institution during the latter's life-time and even continued for many years posthumously and is still hopefully maintained to some extent. Courtesy and discretion – that always prevailed upon my brother's thoughts and responses – however, prevented him from complaining of the deficiencies of the teaching system that was practiced in the *Madaris* of Rawalpindi. Instead of any protest or complaint, that would have been of little avail, my brother took refuge in the endearing company of his books. He extensively read great works of his choice in diverse disciplines, and read with exceptional speed. His concentration, grasp and retention were remarkable. When he was only fifteen years of age, he had already delved deep in the basic sources of Islamic studies and exhaustively studied the celebrated works of the leading Muslim scholars specially those from the sub-continent like Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, Shah Wali Allah and Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanvi. Later in his academic career, he wrote several books on the thought and contribution of the former two among these luminaries. His readings covered works in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, English, and during the last three decades of his life, even French and German. The only limit on his reading was non-availability of

the *madrassa*, clubbing this 'human debris' together into one class. All these 'rejects' of different classes and of different age-groups – all of whom were older than their teacher –, were required to be taught Arabic verse and prose, grammar and composition all at once within the span of the few remaining months of the academic year. But when the result was announced, all these mediocres showed outstanding success and excelled many highly reckoned outstanding students.

However, whatever formal assignments might have engaged my brother at the *madrassa*, stray reading increasingly always fascinated him and he remained absorbed in them far beyond the requirement of completing curricula, passing exams or completing text-books. Visiting book-shops was as his favourite pastime. He had located many obscure places where old books were sold at throw-away prices. He thus made a good collection of books at a very early age. Even during childhood and adolescence, he seldom took interest in any sport or entertainment activity and remained devoted to books that always remained his dearest source of fulfillment and proudest possession. In those early days at Karachi, despite the fact that our family's income was quite modest, he was ever-ready to leave any other need of life for the sake of acquiring books. In later years, when Allah eased his financial difficulties and increased his resources, he spent lavishly on buying books.

discipline usually imposed upon the students' community in a traditional *Madrasa*.

Before he formally completed the courses of *Dars-i-Nizami*, he privately pursued other formal studies side by side with the *Madrasa* education and passed Matric, F.A. *Adib-i-'Arabi*, *Fazil-i-'Arabi* and *Fazil-i-Farisi* (Hons.) examinations with distinction. He taught himself English with the help of an 'English-Made Easy' sort of a small book that he *per chance* purchased from an old bookshop in a dark alley frequented by him on our way to the *Madrasa*. During about 100 minutes' long journey between our home in Islamabad and the *Madrasa*, he would immerse himself in this English reader. He learnt this foreign language so silently and imperceptibly that this never seemed to be any issue for him. I do not remember him taking any particular help even from our father for this purpose.

Also, upon my father's insistence, after graduating from the *Madrasa*, my brother taught at *Madrasa Furqaniyya*, another *Madrasa* located at Rawalpindi, run under the stewardship of Mawlana 'Abd al-Hakim, a former member of the Parliament. This was an honorary assignment. My brother soon displayed his exceptional talents as an effective and successful teacher. The administration of the *Madrasa* was not quite reconciled to the intrusive presence of an alien looking non-conformist, somewhat unconventionally attired youth. Instead of opposing my brother's entry, they conspired to collect for him all the hopeless students of

English, my brother managed to acquire a fair knowledge of Persian, and through regular reading, greatly enhanced his proficiency in this language. At an early age, he had developed sufficient taste for Persian literary works of prose and poetry. Later he passed with distinction the examination of *Fazil-i-Farisi* (Hons.) and was awarded a gold medal. In the later years of his life, he even composed verses in Persian and used this medium with facility for his adventures in self-expression and occasional spiritual catharsis, as it were. Some of his Persian Poems had been regularly carried by *Tahqiqat*, a monthly magazine published by Iran-Pakistan Research Centre, Islamabad.

While still at *Dar al 'Ulum Ta'lum al-Qur'an*, my brother became greatly fascinated with the poetry of Iqbal and writings of Mawlana Maududi. These two figures were generally frowned upon in the circles of *Madrassa* in those days. But my brother did not care to hide his interest in these towering contemporary figures of Islamic thought and openly exhibited his admiration for them. Despite his young age, he had earned great respect of his teachers as a keen student and earnest pupil. This respectability, which he enjoyed both among the faculty and the students of the *Madrassa*, prevented any unwelcome interference in his free pursuit of varied academic interests. It should be acknowledged in all fairness that the teachers of *madaris* in general held my brother in high esteem both during his association with them as a regular student and thereafter. This was indeed a great concession made by these people for him as this was an exceptional departure from the rigid

teacher of Islamic studies who left his mark on every student during his long and momentous teaching career in Pedagogy. This Mawlana Merathi later became the father-in-law of the well-known scholar and writer on Islamic Law, the late Dr. Ahmad Hasan who subsequently happened to be a colleague of my brother as a member of the research faculty at the Islamic Research Institute.

After shifting to Islamabad, my brother spent some time in the as a pupil of Mawlana Qari Muhammad Amin, an outstanding teacher who was a graduate of the famous *Madrassa Fatehpuri* at Delhi and was known to our father since those early days as the latter had been teaching Persian language in that seminary run by the famous scholar of Persian Qazi Sajjad Husain. After some time, my brother was admitted to *Dar al-'Ulum Ta'lim al- Qur'an*, the best reputed seminary in those days at Rawalpindi, established and managed by its dynamic founder, popular orator and Qur'an commentator Mawlana Ghulam Allah Khan. It was at this *Dar al-'Ulum*, that he passed his courses in *Dars-i-Nizami* and completed the final year of *hadith* studies in 1967.

During his stay in these *Madaris*, my brother never confined himself to the curricular scheme that was in vogue there. He acquired and read books extensively and thus constantly expanded his academic horizons. Though he had never formally learned Persian from any teacher but with little help from our father-himself a graduate of *Mazahir al-'Ulum*, Saharanpur and AMU (Aligarh) India, and well-versed in Persian, Arabic and

facility but also developed a fine literary taste for the language of the Quran. Thus, an exceptional proficiency in Arabic language remained my brother's *forte* through his academic life. Another teacher who influenced my brother at that time was Mawlana Muhammad Hamid, the younger brother of the famous scholar and teacher of *ḥadith*, Mawlana Badr 'Alam, a great scholar of repute who had migrated to Madinah in the later part of his life and taught *hadith* at the *Haram* till the last moments of his life. When my brother joined the *Madrassa* in 1960, Mawlana Badr 'Alam was still on its faculty. Given the greed of my brother for knowledge and its worthy bearers, it is likely that he had occasions – to benefit from this luminary too. The latter's brother Mawlana Hamid, who was no less accomplished than his renowned brother, – though little known – remained engaged in teaching at the *Madrassa* till the end of his life. For some months, my brother was also afforded an opportunity to study *Usul al-Shashi* with Mawlana Muhammad Yusuf Binnouri himself. This happened when the regular teacher who was originally assigned to teach this text-book on *usul al-fiqh* had left for Madinah Munawwarah for advanced studies at the Islamic University there. My brother went straight to the head of the *Madrassa*, Mawlana Binnouri, agitated the issue before him and solicited his help to fill the gap. Looking at the keenness of the young student, the latter obliged and filled the gap himself.

His teachers at this *madrassa* included Mawlana Muhammad Idris Merathi. He was an experienced and expert

tragedy, she successfully converted this void in her life into an opportunity. She lavished her love on our children (of her two brothers) and this seemed to compensate her loss.

After about a year, in 1960, my brother was admitted to *Madrasa 'Arabiyya Islamiyya* – established a few years ago – by Mawlana Muhammad Yusuf Binnouri at Karachi. My brother studied there for four years until 1964 when our family had to be shifted to Islamabad, the new metropolis, since our father was in Government employment.

At the *Madrasa 'Arabiyya Islamiyya*, my brother had the good fortune to learn Arabic up to a higher standard than usually offered in our *madaris*. He took lessons in Arabic linguistics and literature, mastering its depths and subtleties, from a very able and outstanding teacher from Egypt who was deputed there by the Al-Azhar University. This teacher namely, *Ustadh* Muhammad Yasuf 'Atiyya was virtually the founder of a new trend in Arabic learning in Pakistan and during his short sojourn in Karachi, he was able to produce a number of eminent scholars of Arabic in this country, my brother included. He benefited from the exceptional genius of this teacher far beyond the classroom coaching. He established a close personal relation with him and greatly relished this association throughout his life. He used to visit his revered teacher regularly at his house to supplement his learning at the *Madrasa*. At that early stage of his education (at the age of 15), he had not only learnt to write Arabic prose with



often reminisced about his close emotional attachment with her. He would often relate to his younger brother (the present scribe) and sister some of the most inspiring stories he heard from her. And these stories by no means were ordinary oft-related tales. These were intelligently selected by her and related to decisive events in history. Events that changed the entire course of early Muslim history in the first century of hijra. My brother often revealed the secret that his sharp grasp of the chronological order of the history of Islam had been essentially inculcated by our grandmother. Later readings only added colors. The basic structure had been put in place by her.

We had a younger sister too. She never went out to study anywhere formally. She learnt the Qur'an from our father at home. Later, at the age of forty, she also memorized the Qur'an by herself. With the help of my parents and brother, she easily learnt Urdu, English and Arabic and later rose to high standards of learning by her own personal interest and modest domestic efforts. She wrote and published many articles and booklets on Islam including Urdu translations of two important works from English, before she passed away at an early age of forty five in 2004. Like our grandmother, my sister too remained passionately engaged in teaching Qur'an to ladies of the neighborhood with translation and brief commentary. She completed the whole Qur'an teaching cycle about ten times. Likewise she too spent her leisure in social welfare activities along with other like-minded ladies. She had no children. Instead of treating this vacuum a

of formal education and spending almost nothing in the form of money and material resources on education, he could excel all those of his peers, cousins and friends who were much more fortunate in finding opportunities of excellent learning and highest standards of education at a very high material cost. Some of our cousins- first second and third- went to celebrated seats of learning in the world – in east and west, north and south, from New Zealand to America, from Japan to Egypt, from UK to the Arabian Gulf, and yet none of them could be compared with my brother in his broad outlook, vast accomplishments and a remarkably high level of originality in thought.

The answer, perhaps, lies to a great extent in the deep influence on him of our grandmother's matchless extraordinary personality- a personality the like of which is rarely seen in this human world, males included. It seems my brother's sincere and innocent service rendered enthusiastically to her very august, altruistic and noble mission- a mission that permeated her heart and soul and engaged her frail physique day and night – earned both the old missionary and her young lieutenant- a certain Divine approval and blessing. This latter fact seems to have been the foremost factor in my brother's unique evolution and singular success. He missed his loving mentor most terribly when she suddenly expired in September 1959 – in the same month on the same date when her illustrious grand son expired also suddenly fifty one years later on the same date: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2010. And my brother himself always fully acknowledged his debt to her. He

also trained- whenever time permitted- in small crafts of the household like cooking, sewing, knitting, and embroidery. Our mother- may her life be prolonged by Allah's mercy- continued this special service of running an informal coaching centre well after our *Amman's* demise in 1959.

My brother worked throughout this period as a special lieutenant of *Amman*. He would often accompany her in her visits to the shanty village. In fact he was her preferred escort in all her visits outside the house. He keenly observed her and seems to have deeply absorbed the spirit of overflowing sincerity and altruism that animated *Amman*, as he perhaps also learnt the art of persuasive communication from this articulate lady. His impressionable mind at that tender age of 8-9 years seems to have deeply registered her simple method of teaching and effective mode of preaching- a method rooted essentially in sincerity of intention and intensity of speech. In many ways, my brother emulated the qualities of our beloved grandmother. And he loved her passionately as much as she showered her affection upon him. This indeed is a vital psychological factor in effective teaching and learning- a method whose origin is traceable to the Prophet (S.A.W). In many respects, my brother displayed the abiding impact of our grandmother on his over-all traits of character and features of personality. I have often reflected on the issue of upbringing specially with reference to my brother. What fascinated me, often caused bewilderment and always generated great respect for him, was that despite finding very limited opportunities

passing through many travails because they had opted for living in Pakistan- became greatly attracted to our grandmother whom they all acknowledged as their common *Amman*. The latter, however, did not confine her interaction with this community to mere mundane matters. She employed her natural gift of teaching and preaching- a talent she had applied to so many others with success- her own children included. *Amman* also secured great success with her new audience. She somehow succeeded, in the course of time, to instill into their injured hearts and souls, the soothing consolation that a strong faith in Islam alone could provide. But she did this in a friendly and imperceptible way. *Amman* was successful in transmitting to these ladies the supreme values of Islam through narrating stories and anecdotes in simple idiom and ordinary medium which they understood and willingly assimilated. On Fridays, *Amman* would hold a large assembly of these ladies at her own house. On Friday, therefore, our father would invariably spend his whole evening in the mosque till *isha* to allow full peace and privacy to these *hijab* -wearing ladies.

Eventually, these ladies- the informal students of *Amman*- adopted a positive attitude to life and learnt to overcome problems and worries arising out of their hard living conditions. A large number of their children were attracted to our house to take lessons in Qur'an-reading from our mother – *Amman's* daughter in law – and their regular coming evolved into an informal Qur'an school at our house specially for the girl-children. The latter were

became acquainted with her. But my brother was closest to her heart and enjoyed the position of her most favorite child.

Often *Amman* went out of the house- almost as a daily routine- to visit the nearby huts (*jhuggis*) inhabited by swarms of Muslim immigrants that had been coming from India. Our area in Jacob Lines was surrounded by a whole shanty-village in which these *wretched of the earth* fought their battle of existence. These poor but patriotic Pakistanis had still been flooding from India well into the late fifties. The male members of their families would go out in search of small labor to earn their daily bread. *Amman* had made a habit of visiting their ladies – left alone and forlorn having little to do save serving as domestic helpers in the houses of comparatively better off residents of Jacob Line quarters, for meager wages of 5-10 rupees per month. Even this little opening was not available to all.

In due course, *Amman*, by her regular visits made friends with many elderly ladies of then hutments, helping them with whatever material or money she could afford. Gradually she became a popular figure among these ladies and their children who also lovingly called her *Amman*. She became a source of solace for them. If she failed to fulfill many of their pressing needs, she would surely provide them some consolation in their miseries. She would often give practical advice to them in solving their small problems and thus rendered a sort of 'counseling' service for these ladies in her own way. After a while, these rootless creatures-

Allah reward him tremendously), who was no mere disciplinarian, but a highly intelligent and innovative trainer of mind and tamer of soul, knew well that his younger son was much more in need of supplementary coaching. The case of my brother, however, was entirely different. His was a unique case. He never needed to be convinced even during childhood that acquisition and expansion of knowledge was an essential requirement of human vocation of life.

During the years spent at the *Maktab* in Karachi, my brother had been greatly inspired by our paternal grand mother. Though not formally educated, not even properly lettered, she had a vast and deep understanding of Islam, particularly its early history. She had a peculiar captivating style of narrating to her grandchildren, stories of the prophets and early heroes of Islam. Immediately after *Isha*, lights were put off and all activity was suspended in our home. Dear old *Amman*, as we called her, would attract the children, specially my brother who was more eligible age-wise to listen, grasp and register the morals conveyed in her rich stock of fascinating stories. Even otherwise, he had seen more of her and lived longer under her special care. He was particularly inspired by her charismatic personality like many others who knew her both in our larger family of relations and outsiders. Our dear *Amman* was an embodiment of love and affection, a repository of wisdom and a source of sincere counsel not only for her children and grandchildren but for so many other people who

Hafiz Muhammad Ilyas. This *maktab* had been established by the famous Mawlana Ihtisham ul-Haq Thanvi, reputed in those days as a popular public speaker in the religious circles of the country. The latter had been an old friend of our father since their early youth.

Early in the morning, we would go to the *Maktab* together and returned by sunset. After a quick evening meal and a brief family get-together at home, our father-himself coming home after a long strenuous day of working in his office – would sit with us again for a kind of post-audit of that day's learning. This session was no less vigorous and awe-inspiring than the whole day's 'ordeal' at the *Maktab*. Those who have been exposed to the rough routine of a typical Qur'an school would well appreciate our situation. Our father-a highly organized and disciplined, methodical and meticulous, but extremely loving and caring man, continued this daily 'audit' for many years until we reached a certain stage of self-reliance and responsibility in our education. This thorough daily revision of the substance of knowledge gained on each day was continued by our father regularly well into several subsequent years even after we entered the stage of our regular education in the system of *Dars-i-Nizami*. This daily exercise was maintained more for my sake than for my brother. And looking in retrospect I feel that this daily supplement to regular academic diet was particularly helpful in my case since I was far from being brilliant and never could become a hardworking student all my life. Therefore, our dear father (may

the real stage and hopefully admitted to Heaven, this surviving inferior mortal part felt the greatest pain that a human could possibly suffer. If I were to try an approximate description of this feeling, I could say that I felt like being cut into two uneven pieces, one of which (the real one) has been assigned to the blissful realm of the Hereafter while the other has been consigned to this tormenting *terra incognita*, – as it suddenly turned for him – to face all its melancholy music, its travails and troubles. I hope and pray that with Allah's Infinite Help, unending Support and superabundant Mercy, this phase will soon be traversed and I will be joined with the already liberated major part of the soul once again – *in sha Allah* in Paradise – thanks to sheer Divine Grace alone – and by no means – due to any justification.

I remember my brother faintly since the age of four. We went to the same *Maktab* together for learning the Qur'an when I was five and he was ten. He had, of course, started some five years earlier. By the time I was admitted to the *Maktab*, he had already memorized the Qur'an with late Hafiz Nazir Ahmad. This centre of Qur'an learning was at Karachi. I understand it still functions at a larger scale at the *Jami' Masjid* of Jacob Lines, in the vicinity of which we lived in modest government quarters from 1954 to 1964. When I was admitted to this Qur'anic school by my parents, I found my brother struggling hard with revising the Qur'an and rehearsing its recitation according to the grammar of *tajwid* under the supervision of a seasoned scholar of the Qur'an namely, Qari Waqa Allah 'Uthmni. I was assigned to a junior teacher, the late



telephone to check whether I was being mistaken for him by the Protocol Officer resolutely waiting with the official limousine. In the end, I felt obliged to accompany the 'royal' emissary. When I was received by the President, he greeted me with warmth and a show of familiarity. He said: 'where had you been all this while? And he uttered such other phrases clearly indicating that he was mistaking me for my brother. At length, my true self was revealed to him. To overcome his embarrassment and to put my own fear of the unfamiliar at rest, he had a hearty laugh.

Likewise, often it was I who was met by his many friends, students and admirers, in Pakistan and abroad, whose ordinary questions I readily answered and later reported to my brother. Rarely did it happen the other way round.

This, however, does not mean that I always hid this duality for the sake of convenience or advantage. Whenever I was asked any academic question – meant actually for the elder brother – I hastened to reveal the 'duality', again for the sake of convenience. In fact, quite honestly I was never fit to be his substitute. I had often been seen – and rightly so, to my great pride – as an appendage to my brother. And I had been perfectly satisfied and happy with myself as a shadow of my tall brother, a sort of *buruzi* brother, as it were. That is why when the real spirit, the archetype that provided luster and meaning to this common existential pattern of a unique kind of living in unity yet in duality, namely, my brother was recalled to proceed to that stage of life which is