

THIRTY-NINE

SHAYKH RASHĪD AḤMAD GANGOHĪ ؒ



DATE OF BIRTH: 6th Dhū 'l-Qa'da 1244 AH

PLACE OF BIRTH: Gangoh

DATE OF DEATH: 8th or 9th Jumādā al-Thāniya 1323 AH

PLACE OF BURIAL: Gangoh, district Saharanpur

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Shaykh Rashīd AḤmad Gangohī ؒ was the spiritual mentor of Shaykh Khalīl AḤmad Sahāranpūrī ؒ.

After receiving his primary education in his locality, Shaykh Rashīd AḤmad Gangohī ؒ went to Delhi to continue further studies in Arabic. Although Delhi had lost its prestige, there were still a few madrasas running. Shaykh Qāsim Nanotwī ؒ was his fellow classmate there.

Upon returning home to Gangoh after graduation, he thought to himself that he had completed his acquisition of exoteric knowledge and that he should now focus on rectification of the inner-self. Whilst he was still preoccupied with this concern, he had to travel from Gangoh to Thānabhawan with regard to another issue.

THE THREE SAINTS

As I previously mentioned, there were three saints in one masjid of Thānabhawan at one time: Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ occupied one corner, Shaykh Muḥammad Thānawī ؒ occupied another, and Shaykh Ḍāmin Shahīd ؒ would be on a bed at the entrance of the masjid. When someone would enter and offer greetings, Shaykh Ḍāmin Shahīd ؒ would ask, due to his humorous nature, “What is the purpose of your visit?” Thereafter, he himself would say, “If you have come to seek a religious ruling, go to the shaykh over there (pointing towards Shaykh Muḥammad Thānawī ؒ). If you have come to pledge allegiance to a shaykh, go to the saint in that corner (pointing towards Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ). If you would like to smoke hookah, then sit with us friends.

Shaykh Ḍāmin Shahīd ؒ probably smoked hookah. The three saints would eat, drink and sit together. There was a plate of currants and dried fruit which they would consume whilst sitting together, as you occasionally sit casually with your friends snatching and taking from them jokily. This was how they sat together informally, and ate and drank.

BAY ‘A

When Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ reached Thānabhawan to discuss a religious ruling with Shaykh Muḥammad Thānawī ؒ, Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ forbade him from discussing such religious rulings with his seniors in this manner.

Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ was already considering pledging allegiance to someone. Now that he had an opportunity to carefully observe Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ and speak to him in person, although he had gone to discuss a religious ruling, his

intention totally changed. Hence, he said to Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ that he wished to pledge allegiance to him. Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ instructed him to make his way to the masjid, offer two raka'ats of ṣalāt al-istikhāra, and thereafter come back and inform him further.

He then pledged allegiance to Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ and thought it wise to learn dhikr and other spiritual exercises from him during the few days he was going to spend there. Thus, Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ began his dhikr and spiritual exercises whilst in the company of Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ.

His desire intensified day by day and he ended up completing a period of forty days. His journey was not made with the intention of pledging allegiance, but rather for a religious ruling, but look how the wisdom of Allāh Most High came into play. Upon completing his forty days, Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ returned back to Gangoh. To bid him farewell, Ḥājī Imdādullāh ؒ walked a fair distance with Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ along the route to Gangoh, and he also authorised him with *khilāfa*.

THE JIHĀD OF SHĀMLĪ

Immediately after receiving *khilāfa*, he had not yet begun any work when the jihād of Shāmlī took place in 1857. Once Delhi was seized from Muslim control, looting and massacres began happening in the surrounding areas in order to gain control of them too.

MARTYRDOM OF HĀFIZ ḌĀMIN SHAHĪD

Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī and Shaykh Qāsim Nanotwī, both young at the time, were on either side of Hāfiz Ḍāmin Shahīd at Shāmlī. When he was shot by a bullet, Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī took the fellow disciple of his spiritual mentor [i.e. Hāfiz Ḍāmin Shahīd] to a nearby masjid. Following his demise, he was buried in Thānabhawan. There are many incidents regarding Hāfiz Ḍāmin Shahīd.

A saint with the ability of kashf once went to the graveyard in which Hāfiz Ḍāmin Shahīd is buried and began reciting Sūra al-Fātiḥa at his grave. The saint said to his companion, “This seems like the grave of an amazing saint. As I stood to recite by his graveside, he said, ‘Go from here and recite by the dead. Why do you recite by the living?’”

His companion replied, “Do you not know he was really martyred and martyrs are alive in their graves?”

The father-in-law of Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī was also martyred in the jihād of Shāmlī. The police searched for Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī for months, carrying out raids in many places. Finally, they captured him and he was imprisoned at Saharanpur where he remained on trial for a long time. After his release, Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī saw that three and a half thousand madrasas had been destroyed.

Prior to the major revolution that took place there, everyone was educated and their only source of education was through the madrasa system. Their academic language was Persian, and reading and writing in Persian was taught. Like Delhi, every city was home to thousands of madrasas which were open to all, both Muslims and Hindus.

Since these madrasas were abolished, a similar education system has never been established in that region to date. If they

had established an education system to replace it and replaced the many thousands of madrasas which they closed in Dehli with a similar number of schools, we could have accepted that an alternative education system was established to teach people how to read and write. However, even now you will realise the lack of education in India and Pakistan, the ultimate cause of which is as explained.

Calcutta was home to even more madrasas, where people were taught the basics of reading and writing, than Delhi, but all these madrasas were closed.

THE MADRASA OF GANGOH

Seeing that preserving the Holy Qur'ān and Sunna is the responsibility of the scholars, Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ established a madrasa at home where students would come to from all over the world to study the major collections of ḥadīth under him. He financed this madrasa based at his home for years on end, at a time when Dar al-'Ulūm Deoband and other madrasas had not yet been established.

When this madrasa of Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ flourished successfully, Shaykh Qāsim Nanotwī ؒ inaugurated the madrasa at Dar al-'Ulūm Deoband, upon the advice of Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ himself. Six months later, the foundations of Maẓāhir al-'Ulūm, Saharanpur, were laid. Scholars in large numbers used to travel from as far and wide as Arabia, Indonesia and Malaysia to study under Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ at Gangoh.

Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ؒ used to teach the *Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta* [six authentic books of ḥadīth] all by himself in a single year. I mentioned at the Bukhārī completion ceremony that you

can imagine the quality of the lectures by the fact that Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī رحمته completed the first and second volume of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in a period of forty days each, the notes of which were recorded by the respected father of Shaykh Zakariyyā رحمته, titled, *Lāmi‘ al-Durāri*, comprising numerous volumes. This was the condition of Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī رحمته during his old age when he had become weak and formally discontinued teaching. What must have been his condition when he first began teaching in his youth?

It is for this reason that Shaykh Anwar Shāh Kashmeeri رحمته said that Allāh Most High bestowed Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī رحمته with such competence in deriving fiqhi rulings that if the fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa رحمته were to become extinct, he would have been able to rearrange it in its original form.

LEVEL OF HIS EXPERTISE IN FIQH (JURISPRUDENCE)

There is a verse of the Holy Qur’ān which states:

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

And that a man shall not deserve but
(the reward of) his own effort.

An objection arises regarding the reward we send in the form of physical worship and charity (*iṣāl al-thawāb*); does it actually reach the intended recipient? This verse apparently seems to negate it. Much has been written to answer this objection under the commentary of this verse.

Look at Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī’s رحمته expertise in excogitation. He answered the question in a single statement

upon being asked. He says that the word ‘effort’ mentioned in the verse referred to effort in faith (*imān*). *Allāhu Akbar!* A man can only benefit from his own faith. This means that if the entire population were to gather and try to save an individual who had not accepted faith from Hellfire, they cannot save him. “And that a man shall not deserve but (the reward of) his own effort”: only his own declaration of faith can save him. May Allāh Most High elevate the ranks of Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī ﷺ.

Below are the names of some of his authored works:

1. *Taṣfiyat al-Qulūb*
2. *Imdād al-Sulūk*
3. *Hidāyat al-Shī'a*
4. *Zubdat al-Manāsik*
5. *Laṭā'if Rashīdiyya*
6. *Fatāwā Mīlād wa 'Urs* and other fatwās
7. *Risāla Tarāwīḥ*
8. *Quṭūf Dāniya*
9. *Jumu'a fī Qurā*
10. *Rad al-Ṭughyān*
11. *Iḥtiyāṭ al-Ḍuhr*
12. *Hidāyat al-Mu'tadī*
13. *Sabīl al-Rashād*

اللهم صل على سيدنا ونبينا وشفيعنا وحيينا وسندنا ومولانا محمد وبارك
وسلم، سبحن ربك رب العزة عما يصفون وسلام على المرسلين والحمد لله رب
العلمين

