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COLLECTIONS OF FORTY HADITHS

AL-ARBAIN

Shah Wali Allah ad-Dihlawi



TRANSLATED BY

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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COLLECTIONS OF FORTY ḤADĪTHS

My love for the beloved Muḥammad I remember
when the passionate describe the love of the their
adventure

Ecstasy in the time of his contract I retain
which my heart before the stars existed did
contain

—Shāh Walī Allāh ad-Dihlawī

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COLLECTIONS OF FORTY ḤADĪTHS

Al-Arbaʿīn

SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH AD-DIHLAWĪ



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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE
TO THE FORTY ḤADĪTH SERIES

IN THE NAME of Allāh, the All Kind, the Most Kind. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the worlds, and may peace and blessings be invoked upon Muḥammad, His chosen one, and upon his family and companions, one and all.

The tradition in Muslim religious literature of gathering collections of forty ḥadīth dates as far back as the first century after Hijra. ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī (d. 181 AH) is thought to be the first to have gathered forty ḥadīth in a collection, and his lead was followed by later ḥadīth scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Aslam aṭ-Ṭūsī (d. 242 AH), al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Fasawī (d. 303 AH), and many others. Perhaps the most well-known collection is that of Imām an-Nawawī (d. 676 AH) which exists in English, and has several commentaries including Ibn Rajab’s exhaustive *Jāmi‘ al-‘ulūm wa’l-ḥikam*, published in translation by Turath Publishing in 2007.

The practice of gathering forty ḥadīth springs from a ḥadīth narrated through several Companions that puts the spiritual rank of religious scholarship within easy reach of the ordinary believer with the words: “Whoever memorises forty narrations for my nation in matters of its religion, Allāh will raise him up as a scholar and I shall be an intercessor and witness for him on the Day of Rising.” The narrators of the various versions of this ḥadīth include illustrious names such as ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, Abū ‘d-Dardā’, Ibn ‘Umar, Ibn ‘Abbās, Anas ibn Mālik, Abū Hurayrah, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, may Allāh be pleased with them all.

In this series Turath Publishing hope to present forty ḥadīth collections compiled by some of the greatest scholars of the Muslim tradition. The original Arabic text is presented alongside a translation and brief comment, with additional details of each ḥadīth in endnotes.

It is hoped that through acquainting readers with the sayings of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), the translator, editor, and publisher and everyone who made this series possible is included in the above ḥadīth: “Whoever memorises forty ḥadīth. . . .”

YAHYA BATHA

FOREWORD

THE COMPILATION OF collections of forty aḥādīth was a practice of many of the learned Islamic scholars. Some of these collections, known as *Arabaʿīn* (40 in Arabic) or *Chihil* (Persian), are quite famous, for example, that of al-Nawawī (676/1277). The collections may gather aḥādīth about specific topic, ones well liked by the collector, or, as in the case of the present collection, they may feature reports transmitted through a single chain (*sanad*) of transmission. It is said that the practice of making such collections of forty aḥādīth was begun by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Mubārak (d. 181/787).¹ Among Indian scholars Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (1034/1625) and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī (1052/1642) also compiled such collections.²

In collecting these forty traditions Shāh Walī Allāh is following this practice recommended by the Prophet ﷺ himself, supported by a ḥadīth as quoted in Shāh Walī Allāh's

preface to the collection.³ He is also transmitting reports that he heard directly from his teacher in the Ḥaramayn, Abū Ṭāhir al-Madanī (1733), son of the famous scholar, Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī (1690). The chain of transmission of all of these ḥadīths is the same, going back uninterruptedly to the Prophet ﷺ through Imām Ḥusayn, which is another notable feature of the collection. The fact that his teachers and Shāh Walī Allāh himself, specialized in ḥadīth, thereby earning the honorific designation “Muḥaddith”, also lends authority and significance to this collection.

Shāh Walī Allāh (1214/1703-1762) was a major intellectual figure of eighteenth-century Islam in India and a prolific writer in Arabic and Persian. His approach exemplifies the late medieval synthesis combining Islamic learning in revealed knowledge (Qur'ān and ḥadīth studies), logical and rational analysis, and mystical illumination as sources of truth. Biographical material and anecdotes concerning Shāh Walī Allāh's life and family may be found in his brief autobiography *Al-Juz' al-latīf fi tarjamat al-'Abd aḍ-ḍa'if* and in his work *Anfās al-ārifīn*.

Shāh Walī Allāh was born in Northern India in 1703 in a learned family descended from the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. His father, Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm, was a noted legal scholar who was also a teacher in his own Madrasa Raḥīmiyya in Delhi and a Sufi guide in the Naqshbandiyya Order. The

honorific title “Shāh” (ruler) in both of their names refers to a Sufi concept of rank in spiritual attainment.

Young Walī Allāh studied ḥadīth works such as *Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābiḥ* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, as well as works on Qur’ān interpretation, Islamic jurisprudence, and theology with his father. In addition, he was exposed to Sufi writings of such masters as Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmi (d. 1492). In fact, when his father died in 1719 and Walī Allāh was about 17 years of age, he was already recognized as an accomplished scholar and teacher and therefore was able to assume his father’s position teaching in the madrasa and functioning as a Sufi guide.

In about April 1731 Walī Allāh departed India to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina where he remained for some fourteen months. This stay in the Ḥijāz was an important formative influence on his thought and subsequent life. While in Arabia he studied ḥadīth, *fiqh*, and Sufism with various eminent teachers whom he mentions in his book *Anfās al-‘arīfīn* (Souls of the Gnostics), the most important being Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdī al-Madanī (al-Shāfi‘ī), Shaykh Wafī Allāh al-Makkī (al-Mālikī), and Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn al-Qalā‘ī (al-Ḥanafī) (d. 1734). Al-Kurdī was the son of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, a very important figure in the revival of ḥadīth studies.

These teachers in Mecca exposed Shāh Walī Allāh to

the trend of increased cosmopolitanism in ḥadīth scholarship which began to emerge there in the eighteenth century due to a blending of the North African, Arabian, and Indian traditions of study and evaluation. While in the Holy Cities, Shāh Walī Allāh developed a particular respect for Mālik's work, the *Muwattaʿ*, on which he later was to write two commentaries, called *Musawwā* and *Muṣaffā*. In these commentaries Shāh Walī Allāh specialized in reconciling divergent legal applications and interpretations of ḥadīth reports.

Shāh Walī Allāh's writing career began in earnest on his return to India in 1732 and the Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha (The Conclusive Argument from God), which is considered his prime achievement, was composed sometime during the decade after his return. This work attempts a revitalization of ḥadīth studies as a discipline, a project that has been associated by some scholars with the rise of 18th and 19th century reform movements in the Muslim world enjoining social and moral reconstruction.

For the rest of his career Shāh Walī Allāh served primarily as a teacher and writer, composing numerous works in Arabic and Persian, the common scholarly languages of Indian Muslim intellectuals that allowed their works to be appreciated throughout the Muslim World. One of Shāh Walī Allāh's other famous achievements was an early Persian translation of the Qurʾān. A number of his additional works

treat the fields of Islamic legal methodologies and Sufi metaphysics. In total he composed some fifty works in various fields of Islamic learning.

MARCIA HERMANSON

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

IN THE NAME of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. To proceed: Praises [upon God] and blessing [upon the Prophet]. These forty narrations have rigorously authenticated chains of transmission to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace). Their explanations are easy and their meanings copious, so that the one desirous of good may study them in hope of being included in the company of the learned on account of what he (upon him be salutations and praise) said: "Whoever preserves forty narrations for my nation in matters of its religion, Allāh will raise him up as a scholar and I shall be an intercessor and witness for him on the Day of Rising".⁴

The one in need of his Lord, Waliullāh (may Allāh pardon him), said: Abū Ṭāhir al-Madanī said to me directly from his father ash-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī from Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn from his father ʿAbd al-Qādir from his grandfa-

ther Yahyā from his grandfather al-Muḥibb from his father's uncle Abū 'l-Yamān from his father Shihāb Aḥmad from his father Raḍī ad-Dīn from Abū 'l-Qāsim from as-Sayyid Abū Muḥammad from his father Abū 'l-Ḥasan from his father Abū Ṭālib from Abū 'Alī from his father Muḥammad Zāhid from his father Abū 'Alī from Abū 'l-Qāsim from his father Abū Muḥammad from his father al-Ḥusayn from his father Ja'far from his father 'Abd Allāh from his father Zayn al-'Ābidīn from his father al-Imām al-Ḥusayn from his father 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (may Allāh be pleased with them) who said: The Messenger of Allāh (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said:



(١) لَيْسَ الْخَبَرُ كَالْمُعَايَنَةِ

1. The report is not like witnessing.⁵

Meaning that a direct witness to something is not the same as someone who merely hears about it.

(٢) الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ

2. War is deception.⁶

Achieving victory without armed conflict is more perfect, and this is attained through diplomacy rather than confrontation—since there is no risk of physical danger. It is not permissible to violate peace agreements.

(٣) الْمُسْلِمُ مِرْآةُ الْمُسْلِمِ

3. A Muslim is a mirror of the Muslim.⁷

In the same way that a mirror reveals to a person the aspect of his appearance that he cannot see so that he can correct whatever is in

need of correction, a Muslim is like a mirror to another Muslim, revealing aspects that are hidden from one. He advises without openly disgracing one so that one can purge oneself of one's faults.

(٤) الْمُسْتَشَارُ مُؤْتَمَنٌ

4. Someone whose advice is sought is
in a position of trust.⁸

Someone from whom a man seeks advice is trusted in that matter; it is not permitted for him to divulge his secret, and he is to advise to that which is most beneficial for the person seeking advice, in his religion and his worldly affairs. Whoever knowingly misguides a person when asked for advice is a deceiver.

(٥) الدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلُهُ

5. The person guiding (someone) to do a good deed,
is like the one performing the good deed.⁹

In the sense that if the good deed is performed he will receive the same reward as the one who did it. Even if it is not fulfilled he will receive a reward for guiding him.

(٦) اسْتَعِينُوا عَلَى الْحَوَائِجِ بِالْكِتْمَانِ

6. Seek help for any needs discretely.¹⁰

That is to say, fulfil your needs in concealment from people, because if you expose your needs to people they may become envious and work against you in your aims.

(٧) اتَّقُوا النَّارَ وَلَوْ بِشِقِّ تَمْرَةٍ

7. Protect yourself from the fire even
with a part of a date.¹¹

Since giving charity serves as a protection from Hell, a person should give whatever is within their means even if it is a slight gift, here expressed in the image of part of a date.

(٨) الدُّنْيَا سِجْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَنَّةُ الْكَافِرِ

8. The world is the believer's prison and
the disbeliever's paradise.¹²

Meaning that the believer restrains himself from his forbidden desires and so it is as if he is imprisoned, whereas the disbeliever gives free rein to his desires and so it is as a paradise. An alternative meaning is that life in this world is a prison for the believer compared to what is prepared for him in the next world of everlasting bliss, while life in this world is a paradise for the disbeliever compared to what is ahead of him of hellish torment.

(٩) الْحَيَاءُ خَيْرٌ كُلُّهُ

9. Modesty is entirely good.¹³

Because it spurs one to abandon ugly acts, and it is without doubt, a great good.

(١٠) عِدَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ كَأَخْذِ الْكَفِّ

10. The word of a believer is like
seizing of the hand.¹⁴

When the believer makes a promise he fulfils it, and it is impermissible for him to break it.

(١١) لَا يَحِلُّ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَهْجُرَ أَخَاهُ فَوْقَ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ

11. It is unlawful for a believer to sever relations
with his brother for more than three days.¹⁵

Meaning out of anger or such like. One should not shun a fellow Muslim for an extended period. This statement enjoins forgiveness and reconciliation.

(١٢) لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ غَشَّانَا

12. He is not one of us who cheats us.¹⁶

It is blameworthy to deceive others, particularly those who seek one's counsel. Such a person is not true to their commitment to the community of Muslims.

(١٣) مَا قَلٌّ وَكَفَى خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا كَثُرَ وَ أَلْهَى

13. A little that suffices is better than an abundance that distracts.¹⁷

This means that a little that suffices of worldly goods is enough. A person should not strive to amass wealth for its own sake but rather should be content with what they possess, as wealth generally gives rise to arrogance toward the truth: "Surely man is arrogant, for he thinks himself self sufficient" [Sūra Iqra']. It distracts from the Lord and the Next World.

(١٤) الرَّاجِعُ فِي هَبْتِهِ كَالرَّاجِعِ فِي قَيْنِهِ

14. Someone who takes back his gift is like someone who eats his vomit.¹⁸

Just as a dog's habit of returning to its vomit is considered repulsive, this ḥadīth expresses the repulsiveness and undesirability (*karāha*) of taking back a gift once it is given.

(١٥) الْبَلَاءُ مُوَكَّلٌ بِالْمَنْطِقِ

15. Affliction comes from (loose) talk.¹⁹

A servant is safe so long as he remains silent. One should not supply unnecessary details in a conversation or communication as that may confuse the matter and lead to misunderstandings.

(١٦) النَّاسُ كَأَسْنَانِ الْمُشْطِ

16. People are like the teeth of a comb.²⁰

Meaning that they are all equal, like the teeth of a comb, since they are all descendants of Adam. This disavows any hint of racism, rather a common humanity is affirmed and superiority is only achieved in terms of God consciousness (*taqwā*).

(١٧) الْغِنَى غِنَى النَّفْسِ

17. Richness lies in the richness of the soul.²¹

The reality of wealth is not abundance of money, since many of those whom Allāh has expanded in wealth are unsatisfied with what they have been given. True wealth is richness of the soul, namely, sufficing oneself with what one has and being content with it.

(١٨) السَّعِيدُ مَنْ وَعَظَ بِغَيْرِهِ

18. The felicitous person takes lessons from
[the actions of] others.²²

Meaning that one should take warnings from the mistakes of others and avoid falling into anything similar.

(١٩) وَإِنَّ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ لِحِكْمَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ لَسِحْرًا

19. Indeed, in poetry there is wisdom and in
eloquence there is magic.²³

This means that some poetry contains useful and truthful statements of spiritual counsel from which people draw lessons. Eloquent speech appeals to the audience and wins their hearts, as if by magic. The term magic is used to mean winning hearts.

(٢٠) عَفْوُ الْمُلُوكِ إِنْقَاءٌ لِلْمُلْكِ

20. The kings' pardon preserves the kingdom.²⁴

When rulers are merciful and bestow their pardon this preserves and consolidates the kingdom, while severity and wrath provoke people to attack, thereby weakening the kingdom.

(٢١) الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ

21. A man will be with whom he loves.²⁵

This report is usually taken as an encouragement to love the Prophets and the righteous as it leads to closeness to them. However being 'with whom he loves' does not necessarily imply that one's station and reward will be the same as the beloved in every respect.

(٢٢) مَا هَلَكَ امْرُؤٌ عَرَفَ قَدْرَهُ

22. A man who knows his worth
will not be ruined.²⁶

Meaning that one knows one's soul and its inviolability and so is spurred on to shun arrogance and empty claims.

(٢٣) الْوَلَدُ لِلْفِرَاشِ وَلِلْعَاهِرِ الْحَجَرُ

23. The child belongs to the bed and
stoning is for the adulterer.²⁷

That is, the child born in a household is recognised as the legitimate offspring of the husband. An outside party has no share in kinship to the child, and his claims are not recognised.

(٢٤) الْيَدُ الْعُلْيَا خَيْرٌ مِّنَ الْيَدِ السُّفْلَى

24. The upper hand is superior to the lower hand.

The upper hand is the hand that spends in charity; the lower hand is the one begging.

(٢٥) لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهُ مَن لَّا يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ

25. He does not thank Allāh who does
not thank people.²⁸

This is because he has not obeyed Allāh in His command to thank people through whom His blessings appear, and gratitude is only perfected by obedience. Someone who fails to thank people, despite their love of praise, is unlikely to thank Allāh who has no need for our praise.

(٢٦) حُبُّكَ الشَّيْءَ يُغْمِي وَ يُصِمُّ

26. Your love of something can blind
and deafen [you].²⁹

Meaning that it blinds you from the faults of the beloved and his shortcomings, and prevents you from hearing anything against him or accepting advice about him.

(٢٧) جُبِلَتْ الْقُلُوبُ عَلَى حُبِّ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ إِلَيْهَا
وَبُغْضِ مَنْ أَسَاءَ إِلَيْهَا

27. Hearts are predisposed to love someone who does them good and to detest someone who does them harm.³⁰

Predisposed meaning 'created to.' It is natural for people to love those who treat them kindly and vice versa.

(٢٨) التَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ

28. One who repents from sin is like someone without sin.³¹

The deficient is associated with the perfect for rhetorical effect, as when one says "Zayd is like a lion." It does not mean that a repentant person is exactly equal to someone without sin. However, this is an encouragement to repent and the hope of being able to start afresh.

(٢٩) الشَّاهِدُ يَرَى مَا لَا يَرَاهُ الْغَائِبُ

29. The person who actually witnesses (an event) sees that which one who is absent does not.³²

Because the witness of an incident understands things about it that remain unclear to one who was not there.

(۳۰) إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ كَرِيمٌ قَوْمٍ فَأَكْرِمُوهُ

30. If the nobleman of a people comes to you,
honour him.³³

The nobleman of a people is their leader so see well to honouring him, and do not be unmindful or neglectful.

(۳۱) الْيَمِينُ الْفَاجِرَةُ تَدْعُ الدِّيَارَ الْبَلَاءَ

31. False oaths lay waste to home (lands).³⁴

The false oath is the lying, calamitous oath that a man swears by, knowing that the matter is contrary to that. The wastelands are ruins, desolation and vacant houses. False oaths can actually or morally destroy the integrity and foundation of a person, his family, and nation.

(۳۲) مَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ مَالِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

32. Whoever is killed attempting to save his
property is a martyr.³⁵

Because the life, wealth and family of a believer are sacrosanct, and if anything of this is threatened, it is permissible to protect oneself and to fight. If this leads to the murder of the owner he gains the rank of the martyr.

(٣٣) الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّةِ

33. Actions are through intentions.³⁶

The reward received for an action is dependent on the intention for which the action was performed.

(٣٤) سَيِّدُ الْقَوْمِ خَادِمُهُمْ

34. The leader of a people is their servant.³⁷

The leader of a people ought to be like this as it is obligatory for him to establish their welfare and protect their conditions.

(٣٥) خَيْرُ الْأُمُورِ أَوْسَطُهَا

35. The best of affairs is that which is balanced.

This ḥadīth exhorts to being balanced in all affairs.

(٣٦) اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ فِيْ اُمَّتِيْ فِيْ بُكُوْرِهَا يَوْمَ الْخَمِيْسِ

36. O Allāh, bless my nation in its early
rising on Thursdays!³⁸

The first part of the day is a blessed time, particularly the early part of Thursday. Whoever has a regular devotion, such as reciting the Qur'ān or studying sacred law, or has to work, travel, or fulfil a need should do it in the morning.

(۳۷) كَادَ الْفَقْرُ أَنْ يَكُونَ كُفْرًا

37. Poverty can almost turn into disbelief.³⁹

Meaning that the desperation of poverty, may occasion hopelessness which can lead to disbelief and rebellion against Allāh.

(۳۸) السَّفَرُ قِطْعَةٌ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ

38. Travelling is a portion of punishment.⁴⁰

Because of what it entails of hardship, danger, and separation from loved ones.

(۳۹) خَيْرُ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى

39. The best of provision is God-consciousness

(*taqwā*).⁴¹

The best provision for the Hereafter is to take God-consciousness as a companion, it is of more benefit and better for you than anything else.

(۴۰) الْمَجَالِسُ بِالْأَمَانَةِ

40. Meetings are under trust.⁴²

Meaning that a virtue in conducting meetings is the trustworthiness of those present in that they should keep confidential anything that takes place, whether words or actions. This is like a trust; whoever

divulges it is a betrayer. In this there is encouragement to keep private any secrets or personal matters mentioned in meetings.



And Allāh (Most High) blesses the best of His creation Muḥammad and his family and all his Companions.

O Allāh! Bless Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad with blessings that are pleasing to you and that fulfil his right. Give him the intercession and the praiseworthy station that You promised him and reward him on our behalf with that which he deserves. Reward him on our behalf with more than You have given to any prophet on behalf of his nation. Bless all his brethren amongst the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. Our Lord, accept this from us, indeed You are the All-Hearing and All-Knowing!

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- narrations have: "a believer is a mirror of a believer." See *Abū Dāwūd* (ḥadīth no. 4918); *Tirmidhī* (ḥadīth no. 1929) and Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 6:113 (ḥadīth no. 7645); Bukhārī, *al-Adāb al-Mufrad*, p.115 (ḥadīth no. 2389).
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In this collection, the great eighteenth century Muhaddith, Shāh Walī Allāh, transmits forty hadith that he heard directly from his teacher, Sheikh Abū Ṭāhir al-Madanī, with an uninterrupted chain of transmission through Imam al-Ḥusayn (may Allah be pleased with him).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shāh Walī Allāh was born in northern India in 1703 in a learned family descended from the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. As a young man, he studied the major ḥadīth collections with his father, and then traveled to the Hijaz where he continued his studies with various eminent teachers, including Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir al-Kurdī al-Madanī through whom he transmits the hadiths in this collection.

Shāh Walī Allāh composed some fifty works in total, including the *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* (*The Conclusive Argument from God*), which is considered his prime achievement, and an early Persian translation of the Qur'an, as well as a number of works treating Islamic legal methodologies and Sufi metaphysics.



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