

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tazkiratu'l Awliyā'

AL-IMAM AL-HABIB 'ALI BIN MUHAMMAD AL-HABASHI نفعنا به

He loved the Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم loved him

All praise is for Allah سبحانه and may He continue to shower His blessings and peace upon our Beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa, Nūrīn min Nūrillāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habashi نفعنا به (1259-1333 A.H) is a descendant of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. He loved him so much that he referred to him as “father” as in the opening words of this salāt (invocation of blessing) on him in his kitab (book) titled Lataifi'l 'Arshiyah (Subtleties from Allah's Throne).

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى الْآبِي الْكَرِيمِ

O Allah! Bless and bestow peace on the noble father.

Allahumma salli wa sallim 'alayh (may Allah سبحانه bless and bestow peace on him).

Lataifi'l 'Arshiyah is a book of salawāt (invocation of blessings) on Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. Its main theme is that the Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is al-Insān al-Kāmil (the perfect human being) in that he combined in himself all the noble attributes of the previous Prophets عليهم السلام in the greatest measure. He also fulfilled the duties of 'ubūdiyyah (worship of Allah سبحانه) as no one else did. May Allah سبحانه guide us to fulfil our duties of 'ubūdiyyah. Āmīn.

The Imam learned Islam from his father, Imam Husayn al-Habashi نفعنا به who was the mufti (jurist) in Makkah.

He followed in the footsteps of his pious and noble ancestors, and all in good time, came to be acclaimed as the qutb (the greatest spiritual master) of his time. One of his titles is al-'Arif Billah (the knower of Allah through direct experience).

The Beloved Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told someone in a dream that at that time, he loved Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Habashi نفعنا به the most.

نفعنا به Naf'an Allahu bih (may Allah make us benefit from him). Āmīn.

His vision that Mawlid un-Nabi ﷺ should be celebrated world-wide has been fulfilled

His most famous book is about Mawlid-un-Nabi, the birth of the Prophet ﷺ, titled Simtud-Durar (A Necklace of Pearls). His vision was that it should be recited worldwide. So he instituted it in his Masjid Riyada in Seiyun, Hadhramaut, sent his grandson to Solo in Java, Indonesia to institute it there, and sent a message to his muhibb (loving disciple), al-Habib Swaleh bin ‘Alwi Jamalillayl نفعنا الله who established it in Lamu, Kenya. The recitation of this kitab in the celebration of Mawlid-un-Nabi ﷺ has attracted thousands of people to Islam, especially in Lamu, Al-Hamdu Lillah (All Praise is for Allah ﷻ).

Since then, the recitation of this book of Mawlid has spread to other Arab, Asian, and East African countries, and now it has spread to North America and Europe. The vision of the Imam that it be recited all over the world has been fulfilled.

Al-Hamdu Lillah (All Praise is for Allah ﷻ).

In this kitab, he follows the tradition of his predecessors who wrote books of Mawlid by

- i) Including the Kalima:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَ الصِّدْقِ فِي قَوْلِهِ وَفِعْلِهِ

I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One and Only; He has no partner, and I bear witness that our master Sayyidina Muhammad is His Ultimate Devotee, in word and deed.

- ii) Including the Kalima:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Glory be to Allah, and all Praise is for Allah, and there is no god but Allah, and Allah is Supremely Great.

- iii) Mentioning that Sayyidah Asiya عليها السلام (who took care of Nabi Musa عليه السلام when he was a baby), and Sayyidah Maryam (the Blessed Virgin Mary عليها السلام) were present with the maidens of Paradise when the Beloved Prophet ﷺ was born.

Besides this, what you surely retain from this kitab of Mawlid is the Hadith narrated by Hadrat Jabir bin ‘Abdallah رضى الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said that the first thing Allah ﷻ created was the nūr (light) of His Prophet from His own Nūr (Light).

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ الْأَعْظَمِ

Invoke Allah’s blessing on the most Beloved Prophet.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ

Allāhumma salli wa sallim ‘alayh (may Allah ﷻ bless him and grant him peace).

It has been narrated in the biography of the Imam that when he did the ziyarah of the Beloved Prophet ﷺ (visited him in Madina), he saw him in waking vision descend in Masjid Nabawi as a brilliantly shining light. On another occasion, he and some of his companions saw the Beloved Prophet ﷺ with some of the Bā ‘Alawi mashayikh in waking vision, and he composed a poem about that occasion.

صَلُّوا عَلَى النَّبِيِّ
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ

Invoke Allah’s blessing on the Prophet!
May Allah ﷻ bless him and grant him peace.

Any shaykh who writes a book of Mawlid composes a qasīda Muhammadiyyah in the tradition of Imam al-Busiri نفعنا به, a qasīda (poem) with the name Muhammad ﷺ in all the couplets. Imam al-Habashi نفعنا به composed three such qasāid (poems). The opening couplet of one of these qasāid is:

يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ
أَشْرَفِ بَدْرِ فِي الْكَوْنِ أَشْرَقُ

O Lord! Bless Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
The Most Noble Full Moon to have arisen in the universe.

His aim to nurture love for the Beloved Prophet ﷺ has been fulfilled

His message is to love the Prophet ﷺ and to be linked to him as we learn from the last three lines of his qasīda Muhammadiyyah.

يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَاللَّهُ وَمَنْ بِالنَّبِيِّ تَعَلَّقُ
يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَاللَّهُ وَمَنْ لِلْحَبِيبِ يَعَشَقُ
يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَمَنْ بِحَبْلِ النَّبِيِّ تَوَثَّقُ

O Lord! Bless Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
and his Family and whoever is connected to him.

O Lord! Bless Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
and his Family and whoever loves the Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

O Lord! Bless Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
and whoever is tied firmly to his rope.

Everyone loves the qasāid of the Imam, especially the youth and their joy in reciting these qasāid is something to behold. The aim of the Imam to nurture love for the Prophet ﷺ has been fulfilled. Al-Hamdu Lillah! (All Praise is for Allah ﷻ).

Imam al-Habashi ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} was a religious poet by nature

Imam al-Habashi ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} was naturally poetic. Even when he wrote in prose or recited du‘ās (supplications to Allah ^ﷻ), he wrote or recited in poetic prose. First, I will explain the poetic diction of the qasāid (poems) he composed. Then, I will give some illustrations of his poetic prose.

Imam al-Habashi ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} was a prolific composer. He composed

- a) 230 qasāid (not counting the small ones), arranged in alphabetical order, and published in his Diwan (Collected Poems) titled Al-Jawharu’l Maknūn wa Sirri’l Masūn (Distinguished Jewels and Well-Kept Mysteries),
- b) 81 qasāid arranged by topic in Majmū‘ Simtud-Durar (A compendium of Simtud-Durar and his qasāid), and
- c) 28 qasāid in Qutūf-u’r-Rabi’ fī madh Tāhā’sh-Shafi’ (The Harvest of Spring in Praise of the Beloved Prophet, Taha, the Intercessor ^ﷺ) which has qasāid by other shuyukh as well, for a total of 56 qasāid, compiled under the supervision of al-‘Allamah Ustadh Muhammad Sharif Sai’d al-Biedh ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} of Mambrui, Kenya, and handwritten by Ustadh Shami ‘Uthman al-Bajuni ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به}.

The qasāid are

- i) In praise of the Beloved Prophet ^ﷺ,
- ii) On the occasion of his ziyara (visit) to Nabī Hūd ^{عليه السلام},
- iii) About the month of Ramadan, greeting its arrival as well as bidding it farewell,
- iv) With du‘ā’ (supplication to Allah ^ﷻ),
- v) With nasīhah (advice),
- vi) For various occasions, for example, the Islamic New Year, Isra’ and Mi‘raj, while at ‘Arafah on Hajj, the Day of ‘Eid, ‘aqīqah, sun eclipse and moon eclipse, and marriage,
- vii) For audition (samā’iyyah) and
- viii) In praise of various awliyā’ Allah (Friends of Allah, sufi saints) for example, al- Muhajir Ilallah Muhammad bin ‘Isa, al-Faqih al-Muqaddam Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, Imam al-‘Aydarus al-Akbar, ash-Shaykh Abi Bakr bin Salim, al-Habib ‘Umar bin ‘Abdar-Rahman al-‘Attas, Imam ‘Abdallah bin ‘Alawi al-Haddad, ash-Shaykh al-Habib Abi Bakr bin ‘Abdallah al-‘Attās, ash-Shaykh Sa‘id bin ‘Isa al-Amudi and al-Habib Ahmad al-Mihdar.

^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا الله} ^{بهم} (may Allah ^ﷻ make us benefit from them). Āmīn.

When Imam Yusuf bin Isma‘il an-Nabhani ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} composed the book titled Tayyibatu’l Gharrā’ fī Madhi Sayyidi’l Anbiyā’ ^ﷺ which consists of “qasāida Hamziyyah al-Alfiyyah” on the history of the Prophet ^ﷺ with a thousand couplets all rhyming in the letter hamza, Imam ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Habashi ^{اللهم} ^{نفعنا به} sent him some couplets which he had composed in his honour.

The Imam composed

- a) abyāt (couplets),

- b) rubā‘iyyāt (quatrains), and
- c) musaddas in which each stanza has 6 hemistiches, with 3 ziyada (additional) in a different rhyme.

Most of the qasāid of the Imam have abyāt (couplets) that end and rhyme in a particular letter as is the tradition. Some of his qasāid, however, have interesting rhyming patterns. For example, consider the qasīda with this opening couplet:

يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مَنْ جَاءَنَا بِالرِّسَالَةِ
طَهُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ وَآلِهِ مَنْ كَلَّمَتْهُ الْغَزَالَةُ

O Lord! Bless the Prophet who came to us with the Message (the Qur’an)
Tāhā Muhammad, to whom the gazelle spoke, and bless his Family as well.

Since this is the opening couplet, as per the requirement of diction, both the hemistiches obviously rhyme. The rhyming words are “Risālah” and “ghazālah”. Interestingly, both the hemistiches rhyme in all the couplets.

The rhyming words in couplets that follow are:

“hālah” and “jamālah”,
“sahālah” and “mālah”,
“dalālah” and “dalālah”,

and so on.

A more interesting rhyming pattern is where all the first hemistiches rhyme in one way and all the second hemistiches rhyme in a different way. For example, in one qasīda, the first hemistiches rhyme in the words “ghamāmah”, “malāmah”, “salāmah”, “alāmah”, and so on, while the second hemistiches rhyme in the words “yamānī”, “shānī”, “habānī”, “atānī”, and so on.

الله أكبر! (Allah ﷻ is Supremely Great!)

When he wrote or recited in prose, it was always in rhyming prose. For example, his Lataifi’l-‘Arshiyya (Subtleties from Allah’s Throne) with Salawāt ‘ala’r-Rasūl ﷺ is in rhyming prose. At this juncture, let us benefit from reciting just one of these salawāt.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى مظهرِ التَّعِينَاتِ وَسِرِّ التَّعْلُقَاتِ * الْقَائِلِ (إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ) * سَيِّدِ الْكَائِنَاتِ * وَعَلَى آلِهِ
وَصَحْبِهِ الَّذِينَ اتَّصَلُوا بِهِ فِي التَّلَقِيَّاتِ * بَعْدَ مَا تَبِعُوهُ فِي التَّوَجُّهَاتِ *

O Allah! Bless and bestow peace on
the visible appearances
and the secret connections (of Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ)
who said: “Actions are judged by intentions”.

He is the leader of the worlds,
and (bless and bestow peace) on his Family and Companions,
who received (bounties) through their contacts with him,
after following him under his watchful care.

We notice that in this *salāt*, the words *ta‘ayyūnāt* (appearances), *ta‘alluqāt* (connections), *niyyāt* (intentions), *al-kāināt* (the worlds), *talaqqiyāt* (contacts), and *tawajjuhāt* (watchful care) all rhyme. He achieves such rhyming prose in 87 pages of *salawāt ala’r-Rasūl* ﷺ.

Naf’an Allahu bih (may Allah ﷻ make us benefit from him). Āmīn.

His *Simtud-Durar* (A Necklace of Pearls) with 14 fasls (chapters) on the *nūr* (light), birth, and history of the Prophet ﷺ is in rhyming prose as well. The rhyming words in the first four sentences of the first chapter are *Sultānuhu* (His {Allah’s} Rule), *Burhānuhu* (His Proof), *Ihsānuhu* (His Beneficence) and *Shānuhu* (His Eminence). The rhyming words in the next four sentences are: *Hikmah* (Wisdom), *‘Ilmah* (knowledge), *Qismah* (distribution), and *Rahmah* (Mercy); and so on.

Most of his *du‘ās* (supplications to Allah ﷻ) are also in rhyming prose. His *du‘ās* are given in *Mukhkhu’l ‘Ibadah* (the Essence of Worship), compiled by as-Sayyid ‘Abdallah bin Mustafa al-‘Aydarus ﷻ. The *du‘ās* that are in rhyming prose are:

- i) Du‘ā’-un li-khatmi *Sahīhi’l-Bukhārī* (supplication on completion of *Sahīh* al-Bukhārī),
- ii) Du‘ā’ Yawmi ‘Arafah (supplication on the Day of ‘Arafah, the ninth of Dhu’l Hijjah), and
- iii) *Salātun tuqālu ‘inda ziyarati’n-Nabī* ﷺ (supplication when visiting the Beloved Prophet ﷺ in Madina).

In the supplication on completion of *Sahīh* al-Bukhārī, after the opening paragraph, the rhyming words are:

in the first sentence: *qawīm* (authentic), and *mustaqīm* (straight);

in the second sentence: *sami‘nāhu* (we heard it), and *bi-ma‘nāhu* (with its meaning);

in the third sentence: *alfāzihī* (its words), and *huffāzihī* (its memorizers).

We conclude that Imam ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Habashi ﷻ was naturally poetic. Allah ﷻ made him a poet by nature. This is one of the ways Allah ﷻ honoured him.

Naf’an Allahu bih (may Allah ﷻ make us benefit from him). Āmīn.

Imam al-Habashi ﷻ is one of the rijal u’l-ghayb (men of the unseen)

The *rijal u’l-ghayb* are men of the unseen. One of their noble characteristics is that they help people even in far-off places. Imam al-Habashi ﷻ is one such illustrious shaykh as we learn from his miracle which was narrated to me by Elder Haji Muhammad ‘Ali Haji Adam Jin ﷻ. He said that once there was a fire in Lamu and al-Habib Sayyid Swaleh bin ‘Alwi Jamalillayl ﷻ went out. When he came back, he was covered in soot from the fire, so his companions asked him where he had been. He replied

that he saw Imam al-Habashi نفعنا به الله who was in Hadhramaut at that time, driving the fire away from the residential area of Lamu to the wilderness. In a little while, the fire had changed direction and disappeared.

Al-Hamdu Lillah! (All Praise is for Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ).

According to another narration by Brother Hassan Bagha حفظه الله, al-Habib Sayyid Swaleh نفعنا به الله had the flag of Imam al-Habashi نفعنا به الله hoisted on top of the dome of Masjid Riyada in Lamu. The wind died and the fire expired. At that same time, Shaykh Mohamed Saleh Munif رحمته الله of East Africa was in Seiyun and when he met Imam al-Habashi نفعنا به الله, he saw that he was covered in soot. When he enquired what had happened, the Imam said that he had gone to Lamu to extinguish a fire there and that he knew about it through telepathy with al-Habib Swaleh. When he returned to Kenya, Shaykh Munif met al-Habib Swaleh who corroborated his narration.

SubhanAllah (Glorified is Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ).

Now we come to one of the recommended du‘ās of Imam al-Habashi نفعنا به الله. As-Sayyid al-‘Allamah Ahmad bin ‘Abdallah al-Bār نفعنا به الله requested the Imam for a du‘ā to recite at the end of the night and he composed for him a qasīda whose opening couplet is:

رَبِّ إِنِّي يَا ذَا الصِّفَاتِ الْعَلِيِّهٖ
قَائِمٌ بِالْفِنَاءِ أُرِيدُ عَطِيَّهٖ

My Lord, Possessor of the Highest Attributes
I am standing in the courtyard, hoping for a gift.

As some murīdīn (loving disciples) love to make this qasīda part of their awrād (regular voluntary invocations), it has been included in some books of adhkār (invocations), such as:

- Al-Maslaku’l Mahmūd (The Praiseworthy Way), compiled by the great-grandson of the Imam, as-Sayyid ‘Ali bin ‘Abdul Qadir bin Muhammad حفظه الله. (It contains the daily adhkar {invocations} of the Imam),
- Mukhkhu’l ‘Ibadah (The Essence of Worship) mentioned earlier,
- Manba‘ul Wurrād fi’l Adhkār wa’l Awrād (The Fountain of Regular Voluntary Recitations and Invocations) of Shaykh Muhyiddin ‘Abdur-Rahman bin Muhammad az-Zanjibari رحمته الله, and
- Al-Khulāsah (The Cream of Regular Voluntary Invocations) of al-Habib ‘Umar bin Hafiz حفظه الله

Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Mu‘awy نفعنا به الله of Lamu composed a tawassul in honour of Imam ‘Ali bin Muhammad al-Habashi نفعنا به الله. A tawassul is a supplication to Allah سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ through mediation. In his supplication, Shaykh al-Mu‘awy used the mediation of the Beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and of Imam al-Habashi.

The 100th Anniversary (hawl) of the Imam was celebrated in Seiyun, his last resting place, on 21 Rabi‘ al-Thani, 1433 A.H.

The hawl (Anniversary) of the Imam attracts the largest gatherings in population-rich Indonesia. Al-Hamdu Lillah (All Praise is for Allah ﷻ).

In his kitab of Mawlid un-Nabi ﷺ, the Imam, following tradition, composed a salam (salutation) to the Prophet ﷺ. The reply to the couplets that end this salam are:

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي
بَرَكَتِ الْهَادِي مُحَمَّدٍ

O Lord! Forgive my sins
with the blessing of the Guide, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

May Allah ﷻ make us continue to benefit from the knowledge of the Imam, his asrār (spiritual mysteries) and his love for the Beloved Prophet ﷺ.

Amīn, Yā Rabbal ‘Ālamīn. (May it be so, O Lord of the worlds).

Following the Prophet ﷺ, our heroes are members of the Ahl al-Bayt (his Family and his Blessed Household) and the *Sahāba* (his Companions) رضي الله عنهم, the awliyā’ Allah (Friends of Allah) and the ‘ulamā’ (scholars) نفعنا الله بهم, and the mujahidin رحمة الله عليهم who fight to defend Muslims and Muslim lands against bloodthirsty invaders. Islam has reached us because they gave their lives or spent their whole lives to preserve and spread Islam. May Allah ﷻ bestow upon us love for them. Āmīn.

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