

***Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī: A Ḥadīth Study**

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ABSTRACT

Sunan Abī Dāwūd, compiled by *Imām* Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, is one of the principal collections of *aḥādīth al-aḥkām* and ranks among the most authoritative works of *ḥadīth* after the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Among its major later commentaries is *Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd* by Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī. This article examines the commentary from a *ḥadīth* perspective and identifies its principal methodological features and scholarly contribution. It employs descriptive and analytical methods: the descriptive component presents a concise account of the author’s intellectual formation and scholarly works, while the analytical component examines representative passages from the commentary. The study finds that al-Sahāranfūrī combines *riwāyah* and *dirāyah*; evaluates transmitters through *jarḥ wa-ta‘dīl*; vocalises and identifies narrators’ names; discusses *ḥadīth* terminology; explains difficult vocabulary; analyses the *matn*; compares variant wordings and chains of transmission; and critically examines Abū Dāwūd’s judgments. It also demonstrates that he presents juristic positions together with their evidence, accords particular attention to the *Ḥanafī* school, corrects errors in earlier commentaries and circulating copies, and draws extensively on the observations of his teachers. A brief comparison with *‘Awn al-Ma‘būd* further clarifies the distinctive juristic and *madhhab*-oriented character of *Badhl al-Majhūd* alongside its substantial engagement with *ḥadīth* criticism. The commentary brings together material dispersed across *ḥadīth*, *rijāl*, linguistic, and legal sources and contains several independent investigations not found in other commentaries. The study concludes that *Badhl al-Majhūd* is a major later commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* because of its integrated *ḥadīth*, juristic, linguistic, and textual analysis, although it remains insufficiently known outside the Indian subcontinent.

Keywords: *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Badhl al-Majhūd*, Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī, *Ḥadīth methodology*, *Ḥadīth commentary*

INTRODUCTION

Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī occupies a prominent place among the leading Muslim scholars of the Indian subcontinent and is widely recognised as a distinguished scholar of *ḥadīth*. He received his advanced training in *ḥadīth* from eminent Indian scholars, most notably Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad al-Gangohī, and subsequently devoted his scholarly career to the study and transmission of the *Prophetic Sunnah* through teaching, authorship, and textual scholarship. His enduring influence is also evident in the considerable number of students who studied under his guidance and later contributed to the development of *ḥadīth* scholarship in India and beyond.

Among al-Sahāranfūrī’s most significant works is *Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, an extensive commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. The scholarly significance of this work lies in its comprehensive engagement with the text, its extensive use of earlier *ḥadīth* and juristic sources, and its detailed examination of legal reasoning within the *Ḥanafī* tradition. The commentary extends beyond the lexical explanation of individual narrations by integrating *ḥadīth* analysis, juristic interpretation, comparative legal discussion, and critical scholarly evaluation.

It thus constitutes a substantial contribution both to the study of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and to the broader tradition of *ḥadīth* commentary.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

The scholarly biography of Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī has received considerable attention from a number of authors, most notably Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī in his work *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa-Bahjat al-Masāmi‘ wa-al-Nawāzīr*. However, to the best of the author’s knowledge, *Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd* has not been the subject of an independent study that provides a comprehensive introduction to the work and systematically examines its methodology as a *ḥadīth* commentary. This is despite its considerable scholarly significance among the major works of *ḥadīth* commentary produced by Indian scholars and other scholars across the Islamic world. Furthermore, no peer-reviewed academic study appears to have undertaken a comprehensive descriptive and methodological analysis of the commentary. This gap in the existing scholarship therefore prompted the selection of the present topic, with the aim of examining the work from a *ḥadīth* perspective and identifying its principal methodological features and scholarly value.

Research objectives and article structure

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyse the principal methodological features of al-Sahāranfūrī’s commentary. It also seeks to assess the work’s contribution to *ḥadīth* scholarship, particularly its treatment of narrations, engagement with earlier authorities, discussion of juristic disagreement, and presentation of *Ḥanafī* legal perspectives.

Accordingly, the article first presents a concise biographical account of Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī and surveys his major scholarly works. It then introduces *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and analyses *Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, with particular emphasis on the author’s methods of explaining narrations, evaluating scholarly opinions, addressing legal discussions, and articulating *Ḥanafī* juristic positions. The conclusion summarises the principal findings derived from the analysis.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs descriptive and analytical methods. The descriptive method is used to present a concise account of Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī’s personal and scholarly biography. The analytical method is used to identify and examine the principal features of *Badhl al-Majhūd* through representative passages concerning transmitter evaluation, *ḥadīth* terminology, *matn* explanation, juristic disagreement, variant wordings and chains of transmission, textual criticism, and linguistic analysis. The commentary itself constitutes the primary source, while the supporting biographical, *ḥadīth*, *rijāl*, commentarial, and linguistic works are those cited in the article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biographical and scholarly background

Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Anbīṭahwī was born in the village of Nānawtah, in the district of Saharanpur, and grew up in the town of Anbīṭah in a family known for its attachment to religion and the Islamic sciences.

He received his elementary education from the scholars of his hometown. He then joined Madrasah Maṣāḥir al-‘Ulūm in Saharanpur in 1283 AH, where he completed his studies in the Islamic sciences under a distinguished group of its scholars and teachers, graduating in 1288 AH. Among his most prominent teachers was Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, who died in 1323 AH/1905 CE. When he travelled to the Ḥijāz in 1293 AH, he studied *ḥadīth* with a number of scholars of the Two Holy Sanctuaries.

Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad later served as a teacher at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband and subsequently at Madrasah Maṣāḥir al-‘Ulūm in Saharanpur, where he spent approximately thirty years engaged in teaching and instruction. During this period, he contributed to the dissemination of the Islamic sciences and to the training of a number of students, particularly in the fields of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and related disciplines. Among his most renowned students was Shaykh Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī, who died in 1402 AH. (Al-Ḥasanī, 1999).

Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad left behind a number of works and treatises on diverse scholarly subjects, reflecting his engagement with *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, theology, and scholarly refutation. Among his most important works are the following:

1. *Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd*: This is one of his most significant contributions to *ḥadīth* scholarship, and it is discussed in detail below.
2. *al-Muḥannad ‘alā al-Mufannad*: In this work, he presented a number of his own theological positions, as well as those of his teachers, which he regarded as consistent with the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah*.
3. *Miṭraqat al-Karāmah ‘alā Mir‘āt al-Imāmah*: A concise treatise in which he critically examined and responded to certain views and doctrines of the *Imāmī Shī‘ah*.
4. *Hidāyāt al-Rashīd ilā Ifḥām al-‘Anīd*: This work was composed in a similar context, addressing a number of theological issues related to the doctrines of the *Imāmī Shī‘ah*.
5. *Tawjīh al-Su‘āl ilā Jamī‘ ‘Ulamā’ al-Shī‘ah*: In this work, he posed several questions to certain *Shī‘ī* scholars, seeking clarification regarding a number of issues related to their school and beliefs.
6. *al-Barāhīn al-Qāṭi‘ah ‘alā Ḥalām al-Anwār al-Sāṭi‘ah*: A scholarly refutation of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Samī‘ al-Rāmpūrī, in which he discussed and challenged some of the views presented in the latter’s work *al-Anwār al-Sāṭi‘ah*.
7. *Tanshīṭ al-Ādhān fī Taḥqīq Maḥall al-Adhān*: In this work, he examined the issue of the place from which the *adhān* should be called on Friday at the time of the *khuṭbah*, responding to the view that it should be called outside the mosque.
8. *al-Mughthanam fī Zakāt al-Ghanam*: A legal treatise written in response to a *fatwā* request concerning the *zakāh* due on sheep.
9. *Itmām al-Ni‘am ‘alā Tabwīb al-Ḥikam*: An Urdu commentary on *al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyyah* by *Imām Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Sakandarī*, who died in 709 AH. (Ghourī, 2000).

Toward the end of his life, while residing in Madinah, Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad suffered a paralytic stroke. He passed away a few days later, on the fifteenth of Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 1346 AH and was buried in al-Baqī‘. His scholarly biography reveals a figure who combined teaching and authorship with a sustained engagement in *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and the intellectual and scholarly debates that shaped his academic milieu (Al-Ḥasanī, 1999; Ghourī, 2000).

***Sunan Abī Dāwūd*: position and structure**

Books of *al-Sunan* are works arranged by juristic chapters, such as *īmān*, *ṭahārah*, *ṣalāh*, and *zakāh*. They do not contain *mawqūf* reports, since a *mawqūf* report is not called *sunnah* in the terminology of the *muḥaddithūn*, but *ḥadīth*. (Al-Kattānī, 2007).

Sunan Abī Dāwūd is one of the most important books of *ḥadīth* and has long served as a principal reference for legal rulings because it gathers *aḥādīth al-aḥkām* across their chapters. Although al-Bukhārī and Muslim distinguished authentic *ḥadīths* in their two *Ṣaḥīḥs* and included legal material, they did not compose independent works devoted specifically to legal *ḥadīths*. Since such reports are central to deriving practical rulings, *Imām Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī* (d. 275 AH) composed this work and gave primary attention to legal *ḥadīths* rather than campaigns, biographies, narratives, and ethics. It thus became a foundational text for jurists seeking evidence of legal questions. (‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 1429 AH)

The book is arranged by *fiqh* topics. It contains thirty-five books and 1,871 chapters, beginning with the Book of *Tahārah* and ending with the Book of Adab. The total number of *ḥadīths* is 5,274. (Ghourī, 2021).

Badhl al-Majhūd fī Ḥall Sunan Abī Dāwūd

Description of the commentary

This work is a comprehensive commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. It discusses *riwāyah*, *dirāyah*, and the explanation of Prophetic speech; summarises the transmitters through *jarḥ wa-ta'dīl* according to the statements of leading critics; explains difficult *ḥadīth* vocabulary; and clarifies juristic differences. It also includes useful notes by Shaykh Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī written during his review of the work. (Ghourī, 2000).

Motive for composition

In his introduction, Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad explains that he composed the work because he found no comprehensive *Ḥanafī* commentary on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* that combined mastery of *ḥadīth*, command of its sciences, and expertise in *fiqh*. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* is central to establishing or refuting legal positions because its primary subject is *ahādīth al-aḥkām*, where disagreement is frequent and legal inference is tested. Al-Sahāranfūrī therefore addressed the book's major aspects: biographical notices of transmitters, the doctrines and evidences of the four *imāms*, discussions among *ḥadīth* commentators, difficult passages, the grading of *ḥadīths* as *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or *ḍa'īf*, and responses to those who criticised *Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān, may Allah have mercy on him. (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

The Shaykh began the work in India in 1335 AH, but devoted himself to it more fully during his stay in al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah in 1344 AH. His student Shaykh Muḥammad Zakariyyā al-Kāndahlawī, who accompanied him on that journey, assisted greatly in completing the commentary, which was finished in Sha'bān 1345 AH. (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Methodological features

Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī's methodology in this commentary may be summarised as follows:

Introductory Framework, Sources, and Manuscript Collation

He opened the commentary with a scholarly introduction listing the shaykhs from whom he received *ḥadīth* by correspondence and orally, explaining the reason for composition, naming the sources used, and identifying seven manuscripts of Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan* against which he collated his principal copy. He stated that he did not rely on *Ghāyat al-Maqṣūd* or *'Awn al-Ma'būd*, nor on what they transmitted from earlier scholars, unless he found it in the earlier authorities themselves. He then outlined his method, described the transmissions of the *Sunan* and their features, gave a brief biography of *Imām* Abū Dāwūd, and defined major types of *ḥadīth* works, such as *jawāmi'*, *masānīd*, *ma'ājim*, *ajzā'*, *arba'īniyyāt*, *ilal*, and *aṭrāf*. (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Evaluation of Transmitters through *Jarḥ wa-Ta'dīl*

He summarised the transmitters of the *isnād* using authoritative works such as Ibn Ḥibbān's *al-Thiqāt*, al-Dhahabī's *Mizān al-I'tidāl*, and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*. He clarified each transmitter's status in *jarḥ wa-ta'dīl* according to the *imāms* and critics and noted their dates of death.

A clear example is his discussion of Abū Dāwūd's *isnād*: "Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Fāris narrated to us; he said: Ṣafwān b. 'Īsā narrated to us, from al-Ḥasan b. Dhakwān, from Marwān al-Aṣfar, who said: I saw Ibn 'Umar make his riding animal kneel while facing the *qiblah*..."

Al-Sahāranfūrī analysed the transmitters of this chain: "(Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Fāris) is Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khālīd b. Fāris b. Dhu'ayb al-Dhuhli, the *ḥāfiẓ* Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Naysābūrī, the *imām*, trustworthy, a great *ḥāfiẓ*; he died in 258 AH according to the sound view. (He said: Ṣafwān b. 'Īsā narrated to us) al-Zuhri, Abū Muḥammad al-Baṣrī al-Qassām, trustworthy; he died in 198 AH. (From al-Ḥasan b. Dhakwān), with an open dotted letter and a silent *kāf*: Abū Salamah al-Baṣrī, truthful but prone to error; many *muḥaddithūn* deemed him weak; he was accused of *Qadarī* tendencies and practised *tadlīs*. (From Marwān al-Aṣfar), Abū Khalaf al-Baṣrī; it is said that he is Marwān b. Khāqān, and it is also said that he is Sālim; he is trustworthy, and

Ibn Hibbān mentioned him in *al-Thiqāt*. (Ibn ‘Umar) is ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-‘Adawī, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. He was born shortly after the beginning of the Prophetic mission, was deemed too young on the day of Uhūd when he was fourteen, was among the prolific transmitters of the Companions and one of the ‘Abādilah, rigorously followed reports, and died at the end of 73 AH.”

He noted that Ibn Hajar cited this report in *Fath al-Bārī* and said: “It was transmitted by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim with a *ḥasan isnād*.”

He criticised this statement, saying: “The silence of the *muḥaddithūn* regarding him—that is, al-Ḥasan b. Dhakwān—and Ibn Hajar’s statement, ‘Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*,’ is surprising, for al-Ḥasan b. Dhakwān was declared weak by many *muḥaddithūn*; how, then, can he serve as proof?” He then cited the authorities of *jarḥ wa-ta’dīl*: “Ibn Ma‘īn and Abū Ḥātim said: weak. Abū Ḥātim and al-Nasā’ī also said: he is not strong. Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn said: he narrates oddities and *munkar* reports, and he declared him weak. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā said: he is not strong in my view. Imām Aḥmad said: his *ḥadīths* are falsehoods.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Vocalisation and Identification of Transmitters’ Names

He carefully vocalised and identified transmitters’ names. For example, regarding the chain of the *ḥadīth*, “When one of you wishes to urinate, let him seek an appropriate place for his urination,” he said: “(I am Abū al-Tayyāḥ): with an open *tā*’ and a doubled *yā*’; he is Yazīd b. Ḥumayd al-Ḍubā’ī, with a *ḍammah* on the dotted letter and an open *bā*’, al-Baṣrī. Aḥmad said: trustworthy and reliable; he died in 128 AH.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Treatment of *Ḥadīth* Terminology

While explaining *ḥadīths*, he discussed issues in the sciences of *ḥadīth*, citing Ibn Hajar’s commentary on *Nukhbat al-Fikar* where relevant. For example, in the chain “Musaddad b. Musarhad narrated to us; Sufyān narrated to us from al-Zuhri, from ‘Atā’ b. Yazīd, from Abū Ayyūb, *riwāyatan*, who said...,” al-Sahāranfūrī explained: “(*Riwayatan*) means ‘from the Prophet ﷺ.’ It is a form of implicit attribution, a verbal noun whose verb is omitted, meaning he narrated it. Ibn Hajar said in *Sharḥ al-Nukhbah*: ‘Included under my phrase “*ḥukman*” is what occurs by way of allusive wording in place of explicit formulas regarding him ﷺ, such as when a Successor says from a Companion: he raises the *ḥadīth*, narrates it, traces it up, transmits it as a narration, conveys it up, or narrated it.’” (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, 2000).

Al-Sahāranfūrī clarified Ibn Hajar’s statement: “These are forms of attribution *ḥukman*; therefore, when a Successor transmits from a Companion using any of these expressions, the *ḥadīth* is considered *marfū‘ ḥukman*.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Another example is his comment on Abū Dāwūd’s statement, “This is a *munkar ḥadīth*.” He cited Ibn Hajar in *Sharḥ al-Nukhbah*: “If opposition occurs along with weakness—that is, if the opposing narrator is weak due to poor memory, ignorance, or the like—the preferred report is called *ma’rūf*, and its counterpart is called *munkar*.” He also quoted him elsewhere: “The third is *munkar* according to the view of those who do not require opposition as a condition of *munkar*.” Al-Sahāranfūrī explains that a report criticised for frequent error is *munkar* only according to those who do not require a weak transmitter’s opposition to a trustworthy one; for those who require that condition, it is not. (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, 2000).

Explanation and Analysis of the *Matn*

He explained the *matn* sufficiently, especially where the *ḥadīth* concerned a disputed legal issue.

An example is the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū Dāwūd through his chain from ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, who said: “I said: ‘What do you think of Ibn ‘Umar’s performing *wuḍū’* for every prayer, whether he was already in a state of purity or not? What is the reason for that?’ He replied: ‘Asmā’ bt. Zayd b. al-Khaṭṭāb narrated to me that ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥanzalah b. Abī ‘Āmir narrated to her that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was commanded to perform *wuḍū’* for every prayer, whether pure or not. When that became difficult for him, he was commanded to use the *siwāk* for every prayer. Ibn ‘Umar considered himself strong enough, and therefore he did not abandon *wuḍū’* for every prayer.’” (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī explained: “The substance is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was obliged to perform *wuḍū’* for every prayer, whether he had invalidated his *wuḍū’* or not. When that became difficult—and hardship brings facilitation—he was commanded to use the *siwāk* for every prayer; the *siwāk* took the place of *wuḍū’* and the obligation of *wuḍū’* fell away. Ibn ‘Umar considered himself strong enough, so *wuḍū’* for every prayer was not burdensome for him, and he held that the best deeds are the most difficult. Thus, he did not abandon *wuḍū’* for every prayer.

“I say”—that is, al-Sahāranfūrī— “this *ḥadīth* indicates that *siwāk* was obligatory upon him for every prayer. We must therefore examine whether the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used it immediately before prayer in the mosque, at *wuḍū’*, or at both times. We found that he ﷺ never used the *siwāk* immediately before prayer at the opening *takbīr*. This is not established from him ﷺ or from the Rightly Guided Caliphs; had it occurred, it would have been transmitted by *tawātur* like other obligations. Rather, it is established that he ﷺ used the *siwāk* for prayer at *wuḍū’* or before it, as indicated by the reports in the chapter ‘*Siwāk* for the one who rises at night.’ This use, then, must be the obligatory *siwāk* connected to prayer.

“Thus, *siwāk* ‘at every prayer’ and ‘for every prayer’ means the *siwāk* performed at *wuḍū’*, not at the prayer itself. He ﷺ regarded the *siwāk* of *wuḍū’* as sufficient for what was required at prayer. The word ‘*inda*’ does not necessarily indicate exact simultaneity. (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

“This is supported by the fact that prayer is intimate discourse with the Lord. In that state, he ﷺ disliked phlegm in the *qiblah* direction of the mosque and was visibly distressed by it. He scraped it with his hand and said: ‘When one of you stands in prayer, he is conversing with his Lord—or his Lord is between him and the *qiblah*—so none of you should spit toward his *qiblah*.’ He ﷺ also disliked spittle in the mosque and made burying it its expiation. Given such strictness, it is inconceivable that he ﷺ would recommend using the *siwāk* at the establishment of prayer, with *siwāk* sticks soiled by saliva and odour placed before the worshippers and the *qiblah*. Therefore, by ‘*siwāk* at every prayer’ he intended the *siwāk* of its *wuḍū’*.” (Al-Bukhārī, 2007).

Clarification of Narrations through Parallel Reports

He cited narrations from the *Ṣiḥāḥ* or *Sunan* that clarify Abū Dāwūd’s wording. For example, Abū Dāwūd narrates from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasanah: “‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and I went to the Prophet ﷺ. He came out carrying a *daraqah*, screened himself with it, and urinated. We said: ‘Look at him; he urinates as a woman urinates.’ He heard this and said: ‘Do you not know what befell the man among the Children of Israel? When urine touched them, they would cut off the part it touched. He forbade them, and so he was punished in his grave.’ Abū Dāwūd said: Manṣūr said, from Abū Wā’il, from Abū Mūsā, in this *ḥadīth*: ‘the skin of one of them’; and ‘Āṣim said, from Abū Wā’il, from Abū Mūsā, from the Prophet ﷺ: ‘the body of one of them.’” (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī cited a clearer version: “Al-Bukhārī transmitted with his connected chain from Manṣūr, from Abū Wā’il: ‘Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī was strict regarding urine and said: Among the Children of Israel, when urine touched the garment of one of them, he would cut it.’ Ibn Ḥajar said in his commentary on al-Bukhārī: ‘In Muslim it occurs as “the skin of one of them.” Al-Qurṭubī said that “skin” means one of the leather garments they wore, though some took it literally.’ He claimed that it was part of the burden imposed upon them, and Abū Dāwūd’s narration supports this, for it states: ‘When it touched the body of one of them.’ However, al-Bukhārī’s wording is explicit regarding garments, so perhaps some transmitted it by meaning” (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, 2005).

Comparative Juristic Analysis

He presented the juristic schools with their evidences and gave attention to the statements of the Companions and Successors, relying heavily on al-Shawkānī’s *Nayl al-Awṭār Sharḥ Muntaqā al-Akḥbār*.

An example occurs at the beginning of the chapter “The Dislike of Facing the Qiblah When Relieving Oneself,” where al-Sahāranfūrī explains the *mawqūf* report from Salmān al-Fārisī, may Allah be pleased with him. It was said to him: “Your Prophet has taught you everything, even *al-khīrā’ah*!” He replied: “Yes, indeed. He forbade us from facing the *qiblah* when defecating or urinating...” Al-Sahāranfūrī explained: “The *qiblah* is the direction toward which one faces; here it means the direction of the *Ka’bah*. Just as one is commanded in *ṣalāh* to face it

in veneration, one is forbidden to face it or turn one's back to it when relieving oneself, out of respect for it. (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

“The scholars differed on this issue. Al-‘Aynī said in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: ‘Their positions may be reduced to four: absolute prohibition; absolute permissibility; prohibition of facing the *qiblah* in buildings and open desert while permitting turning one's back to it in both, which is one narration from Abū Ḥanīfah; and prohibition of both facing and turning one's back to it in open desert but not in buildings, which is the view of Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, Ishāq, and Aḥmad according to one narration.’” (Al-‘Aynī, 2001).

Al-Sahāranfūrī then said: “The *ḥadīth* proves that it is not permissible to face the *qiblah* or turn one's back to it while urinating or defecating, whether in open desert or buildings. This is the school of Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah have mercy on him, and the view of Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Mujāhid, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, al-Thawrī, Abū Thawr, and Aḥmad according to one narration. In *al-Baḥr* it is attributed to the majority, and al-Shawkānī mentioned it in *al-Nayl*.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Analysis of Variant Wordings and Chains of Transmission

He examined variations in wording and *isnād*, preferring some narrations over others through detailed investigation.

An example occurs in the chapter “The Slaves of the Polytheists Who Join the Muslims and Embrace Islam” in the Book of *Jihād*. The *matn* narrated from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, states: “Two slaves came out to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, meaning on the day of al-Ḥudaybiyah before the truce.” Al-Sahāranfūrī discussed whether the incident occurred at al-Ḥudaybiyah and established that it occurred during the expedition of al-Ṭā‘if. He said: “I was perplexed by this incident, which appears in Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and *al-Mustadrak* as having occurred at al-Ḥudaybiyah. The apparent conclusion is that this attribution is an error from some transmitters for three reasons.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Al-Sahāranfūrī explained the reasons in detail. He noted that “al-Ḥudaybiyah” is not from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, but from some transmitters, because Abū Dāwūd's wording says “meaning before the day of al-Ḥudaybiyah.” This indicates that the word was not original to the *ḥadīth* but was added from what a transmitter understood from his shaykh. Even if the incident also occurred at al-Ḥudaybiyah, the word “people” would refer to some disbelievers of Quraysh present there, not to the Companions. (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

This is a precise investigation by al-Sahāranfūrī, absent from the other commentaries on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.

Critical Examination of Abū Dāwūd's Judgments

He paid close attention to Abū Dāwūd's statements on transmitters and critically examined them.

An example is the *ḥadīth*: “When the Prophet ﷺ entered the privy, he would remove his ring,” which Abū Dāwūd narrated through the following chain: “Naṣr b. ‘Alī narrated to us, from Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥanafī, from Hammām, from Ibn Jurayj, from al-Zuhrī, from Anas.” Abū Dāwūd then said after it: “This is a *munkar ḥadīth*. It is only known from Ibn Jurayj, from Ziyād b. Sa‘d, from al-Zuhrī, from Anas: ‘The Prophet ﷺ took a ring of silver and then discarded it.’ The error in it is from Hammām, and none narrated it except Hammām.” (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī commented: “Abū Dāwūd said: ‘This is a *munkar ḥadīth*.’ Perhaps this ruling is due to two matters: the omission of the intermediary between Ibn Jurayj and al-Zuhrī, and the substitution of one *matn* for another.” He added: “Al-Tirmidhī disagreed and, after transmitting the narration, said: ‘This *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan, ṣaḥīḥ, gharīb*.’ Perhaps the correct view is with al-Tirmidhī, because *munkar* is a report in which a weak narrator, due to poor memory, ignorance, or the like, contradicts a stronger narrator. The preferred narration is *ma‘rūf*, and its counterpart is *munkar*... Abū Dāwūd's statement is therefore difficult to sustain on either approach, for Hammām is trustworthy and a *ḥāfiẓ*; the two Shaykhs narrated from him and relied on him. He is not weak, nor criticised for gross error, heedlessness, ignorance, or manifest *fiṣq*. Had Abū Dāwūd said, ‘This is a *mudallas ḥadīth*,’ that would have had a basis, since the companions of Ibn Jurayj narrated from him with an intermediary between him and al-Zuhrī, whereas Hammām omitted him.” (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Regarding Abū Dāwūd's statement, "the error in it is from Hammām," he explains that Ibn Jurayj's companions transmitted with this chain the report: "The Prophet ﷺ took a ring of silver and then discarded it." Abū Dāwūd therefore considered Hammām to have altered this into another *matn*: "When the Prophet ﷺ entered the privy, he would remove his ring."

Al-Sahāranfūrī rejects this claim for lack of evidence. The two reports may be distinct *ḥadīths* transmitted through the same chain, as stated in *Darajāt Mirqāt al-Ṣu'ūd*; Ibn Ḥibbān inclined to this and authenticated both. In his view, the only possible defect is Ibn Jurayj's *tadlīs*; if explicit hearing is established, the report may be judged authentic.

As for al-Tirmidhī's statement, "This *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan*, *ṣaḥīḥ*, *gharīb*," al-Sahāranfūrī suggests that his grading may rest on two distinct chains for the two *matns*, or on the existence of a supporting witness. (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Explanation of Difficult and Rare *Ḥadīth* Vocabulary

He explained difficult and rare *ḥadīth* vocabulary with precision, relying on Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab*, al-Firūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, and al-Fattānī's *Majmaʿ Biḥār al-Anwār*.

An example is the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū Dāwūd through his chain from Ḥukaymah bt. Umaymah bt. Ruqayyah, from her mother, who said: "The Prophet ﷺ had a cup made from *ʿīdān* beneath his bed in which he would urinate at night." (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī said: "*ʿīdān*—with an open undotted letter and an open *yā*—refers to tall palm trees stripped of fronds from top to bottom, and is the plural of *ʿaydānah*, as stated in *al-Majmaʿ*." (Al-Fattānī, 1970).

Al-Sindī said in his commentary on al-Nasāʾī: "There is disagreement over its vocalisation: with *kasrah* and *sukūn* as the plural of *ʿūd*, or with *fathah* and *sukūn* as the plural of *ʿaydānah*, meaning a tall palm tree stripped of fronds. The *kasrah* is said to be more common in transmission, but it has been rejected as incorrect in meaning, because sticks gathered together do not form a cup for holding water. With *fathah*, the meaning is a cup made from wood, hollowed out to hold what is placed in it." (Al-Sindī, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī commented: "The sense of plurality is not apparent on either reading. If it is understood generically, both are possible, though taking *ʿīdān* with *fathah* as a generic noun is closer, because its singular and collective forms are distinguished by *tā*, and such words are used generically. Indeed, they said that its original sense is generic and that it is also used for the plural; this avoids difficulty, unlike *al-ʿīdān* with *kasrah* as the plural of *ʿūd*." (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Correction of Earlier Commentators

He examined errors of earlier commentators on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, whether minor or major. For example, he critiqued Shaykh Abū al-Ṭayyib Shams al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAzīmābādī at the beginning of the Book of *Ṭahārah*. Explaining *ṭahārah*, he said: "In *al-Qāmūs*, *al-ṭuhr*, with *ḍammah*, is the opposite of impurity; *ṭahara* follows the patterns *naṣara* and *karuma*, and he is *ṭāhir*. This is also stated in *Lisān al-ʿArab* and other lexicons. None says that *ṭahara* follows the pattern *ḍaraba*. Thus, the statement in *Ghāyat al-Maqṣūd* that *ṭahara* follows the patterns *qatala* and *ḍaraba* should be corrected to *qatala* and *karuma*." (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Textual Criticism of Manuscript and Printed Variants

He also corrected the different circulating copies of Abū Dāwūd and noted additions found in some copies but not others.

An example is the following *ḥadīth*: "Ibrāhīm b. Khālid narrated to us; Aswad b. ʿĀmir narrated to us; Sharīk narrated to us—and this is his wording. *Hā*': Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, meaning al-Mukharrimī, narrated to us; Wakī' narrated to us from Sharīk, with the meaning, from Ibrāhīm b. Jarīr, from al-Mughīrah, from Abū Zur'ah, from Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: 'When the Prophet ﷺ came to the privy, I brought

him water in a basin or a small vessel, and he performed *istinjā*.' Abū Dāwūd said: 'In the *ḥadīth* of Wakī': then he wiped his hand on the ground, then I brought him another vessel and he performed *wuḍū*.' Abū Dāwūd said: 'The *ḥadīth* of al-Aswad b. 'Āmir is more complete.'" (Abū Dāwūd, 1999).

Al-Sahāranfūrī noted the addition: "The phrase 'Abū Dāwūd said: in the *ḥadīth* of Wakī' is not found in the manuscript of our master Shaykh Aḥmad 'Alī al-Muḥaddith, nor in the Egyptian printed copy; I found it only in the Indian printed copy, marked as a variant. Al-Nasā'ī's narration through Wakī' states: 'He performed *wuḍū*', and when he had performed *istinjā*' he rubbed his hand on the ground.' (Al-Nasā'ī, 1999). Ibn Mājah's narration through Wakī' from Sharīk states: 'The Prophet ﷺ relieved himself, then performed *istinjā*' from a basin, then rubbed his hand on the ground.' Neither contains Abū Dāwūd's phrase: 'Then I brought him another vessel and he performed *wuḍū*.'" (Ibn Mājah, 1999).

"In my view, the phrase 'Abū Dāwūd said: in the *ḥadīth* of Wakī' mistakenly entered the text through a copyist. This is indicated by Abū Dāwūd's final statement in the chapter: 'The *ḥadīth* of al-Aswad b. 'Āmir is more complete,' which shows that Wakī's narration is shorter. If the additional words belonged to Wakī's narration, the reverse would be true. Abū Dāwūd's earlier statement, 'and this is his wording,' also supports this, since it indicates that the wording cited is Wakī's. Thus, the phrase entered the text through copyists.'" (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Use of Teachers' Scholarly Observations

He frequently cited the statements of his teachers and shaykhs to support his explanations. An example appears in his explanation of Abū Dāwūd's *ḥadīth* from Abū Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him: "When the Prophet ﷺ entered the privy, I brought him water in a basin or vessel and he performed *istinjā*.'" Abū Dāwūd said in Wakī's narration: "Then he wiped his hand on the ground, then I brought him another vessel and he performed *wuḍū*.'"

Al-Sahāranfūrī said: "(Then he wiped his hand on the ground): this was for cleaning, to remove whatever faint odour might remain, although *ṭahārah* had already been achieved by washing, since the substance and trace of the impurity had disappeared."

He added: "In my view, this act was to teach the *ummah*. They might perform *istinjā*' and soil their hands, or traces of impurity might remain, so they should clean themselves in this manner. As for him ﷺ—scholars have affirmed the purity of his perspiration and saliva—it is impossible for them to contain foul odour, for he ﷺ is pure and fragrant in life and death."

He then quoted his teacher Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad al-Gangohī: "Our *Ḥanafī* jurists—may Allah increase their number and reward their efforts—differed regarding the purity of the exit point and the hand when the odour of impurity remains after its substance disappears. Some ruled that purity is attained once the substance disappears, even if odour remains. Others held that it is not pure unless the remaining trace is difficult to remove. The disagreement may rest on the nature of odour: is it caused by minute particles from the odorous object, too small to perceive, or by the air acquiring the quality of the odour?"

"The proof for the first group is that, even if we concede the separation of minute particles from the odorous object and their mixing with the air, the Sacred Law does not consider them; their existence is therefore legally non-existent. If wind from the anus passes over wet trousers, they do not become impure; likewise, an impure odour from refuse heaps does not render wet clothing impure by agreement. Were such particles legally considered, impurity would necessarily result.

"The second group may argue that if wind contained no impurity, *ṭahārah* would not be nullified by passing wind.

"The first group may respond that passing wind nullifies *ṭahārah* because of the explicit text, not because it contains particles of impurity." (Al-Sahāranfūrī, 2006).

Thus, al-Sahāranfūrī frequently uses the statements of his teachers, especially Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad al-Gangohī, to resolve difficult points and clarify complex issues in his commentary on the *Sunan*.

Distinctive features of the commentary

A major feature of this commentary is that Shaykh Khalīl Aḥmad al-Sahāranfūrī composed it according to the method of the great *ḥadīth* commentators whose works were accepted by the *ummah*. It contains valuable discussions of transmitters' names and *ḥadīth* principles, and its argumentation generally remains within the discipline of *ḥadīth* and its related sciences. By contrast, many earlier works on *ḥadīth* commentaries, *Ḥanaḥ* legal argumentation, or disputed legal issues were dominated by *kalām-style* discourse, rational argumentation, and subtle legal observations, with comparatively limited attention to transmitters, *jarḥ wa-ta'dīl*, defects, strata of *ḥadīth*, and other inquiries needed by students of *ḥadīth*.

Another feature is the author's subtle derivations and refined discussions, which reveal the soundness of his reasoning and his wide acquaintance with the books of *ḥadīth*.

The book also contains important discussions, especially on *ḥadīths* concerning tribulations and battles, in which the author identifies the events alluded to, weighs competing views, and sometimes reaches conclusions through his own *ijtihād* and investigation.

These discussions show the commentator's confidence, decisiveness, and certainty in the conclusions reached through study and reflection, which in turn strengthens the reader's confidence.

A Note on 'Awn al-Ma'būd and Its Methodology in Comparative Perspective with Badhl al-Majhūd

In concluding this article, it is appropriate to draw attention to two well-known Indian commentaries on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. The first is *Badhl al-Majhūd*, which has been introduced and methodologically examined in the preceding sections, while the second is 'Awn al-Ma'būd, authored by Shaykh Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓīmābādī (d. 1329 AH).

Both works constitute valuable contributions to the scholarly study of *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Nevertheless, they differ considerably in their methodological orientation and scholarly emphasis. 'Awn al-Ma'būd broadly represents a tradition-oriented approach to the interpretation of *ḥadīth*, without strict adherence to any particular recognised school of Islamic law. By contrast, *Badhl al-Majhūd* reflects a more explicitly madhhab-based orientation, with particular emphasis on the Ḥanaḥ legal tradition.

This methodological distinction is reflected in the respective priorities of the two commentaries. 'Awn al-Ma'būd gives greater prominence to technical *ḥadīth* analysis, including the documentation and evaluation of narrations, the assessment of their degrees of authenticity, and the citation of the judgments of leading *ḥadīth* critics concerning their chains of transmission and narrators. Its author also frequently adopts the view that he considers most consistent with the available textual evidence.

Badhl al-Majhūd, on the other hand, devotes more extensive attention to jurisprudential questions, the presentation of the opinions and evidences of the various legal schools, and the comparative discussion of juristic disagreement. Particular consideration is given to the articulation and defence of Ḥanaḥ legal positions, the interpretation of their supporting evidence, and the response to objections raised against them.

A comparison of the two works therefore reveals two prominent methodological trajectories in the commentary tradition of the Indian subcontinent. The first is a tradition-oriented approach characterised by *ḥadīth* criticism and the analysis of chains of transmission. The second is a juristic and madhhab-oriented approach that combines the interpretation of *ḥadīth* with the exposition of legal rulings, particularly within the framework of the Ḥanaḥ School.

CONCLUSION

The study reached the following conclusions:

1. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* is one of the most important books of *ḥadīth* and a major pillar of the *Prophetic Sunnah*, because it is relied upon in deriving legal rulings and contains a large body of *aḥādīth al-aḥkām*.

2. Many leading *imāms*, across different ages and regions, commented on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Indian scholars made a significant contribution to serving it through commentaries and marginalia.

3. *Badhl al-Majhūd* is among the most important later commentaries on *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. It is distinguished by its *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and linguistic benefits, and by the author's commitment to research and verification according to the method of the great commentators on books of *riwāyah*.

4. Despite its many *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and linguistic benefits, *Badhl al-Majhūd* remains little known outside the Indian subcontinent. Teachers of *ḥadīth* should direct students to it, encourage them to benefit from it, and assign comparative research between it and other commentaries on the *Sunan* from the perspective of *ḥadīth* scholarship.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was not required because this study is based exclusively on published textual sources and did not involve human participants or animals.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

No new data were generated or analysed in this study. All sources examined are identified in the reference list.

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