

Interview with Al-Haaj Khursheed Ahmed

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Al Haaj Khursheed Ahmed: I was born on January 01, 1956 in Rahim Yar Khan. I acquired my basic schooling from Abbasi Primary School and passed matriculation examination from Colony High School. Then I did diploma in Commerce from Govt. Commercial Institute. In 1973 I shifted to Karachi and joined Radio Pakistan as a typist. The same year, I participated in Naat competition in Dow Medical College and got first position. Mr. Mehdi Zaheer introduced me to Radio and I started reciting Naats there. In 1978, PTV held Naat competition for the first time and I again stood first there too. Firstly the competition held at Sindh Level and then at all Pakistan Level, I stood first in both.

The Naat "Koi saleeqa hai arzoo ka, na bandagi mere bandagi hai" was liked very much not only in Pakistan but all over the world as well. After reciting this Naat, Allah gave me so much respect and people started loving me. Then the process went on and I recited Naats not only in Pakistan but also almost in every country wherever Muslims live.

I possess some unique distinctions by the grace of Almighty Allah that no one could ever have achieved in the history of Pakistan. I would like to mention here.

- n I was the first Naat Khwan to stand first in the first Naat Khwani Contest on TV.
- n I was the first Naat Khwan to recite Naats in USA, Japan, Switzerland, Yemen and France etc.
- n I am the only Naat Khwan who was awarded the Nigar Film Award.
- n The first Naat, I recited in Naat Khwani Contest, became highly popular all over the world. (Yeh sub tumhara karam hai Aqa).
- n I am the only Naat Khwan who was given employment due to Naat Khwani at a leading bank
- n I met the Imam of "Baitu ul Muqdas" in Los Angeles and he listened to my Naats.
- n Mohammad Ali Kilay (Famous Boxer) also listened to my Naats.

Q: How many Naats have you read up till now and how much is Naat Khwani helpful in the endorsement of Islam?

AH. K. A: I can't give you the exact figure of how many Naats I've recited up till now but Alhamdulillah I have recited thousands of Naats in these 30 years. When I started Naat Khwani, I observed that elderly people recited the Naats and it was recited on limited scale e.g. In Ramazans and at Eid-e-Milad Un Nabi etc. only. The Naat Khwans and listeners were almost of same age of more than 50 years. When I was 18 years old I started Naat Khwani with a unique style of wearing cap and waistcoat, now wherever you go you will observe that young boys wear the same attire before recitation of Naat at any gathering of Naat Khwani. I can say it with authority that this has endorsed the religion in young people whether it is Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, hence in every country where Muslims live. Thousands of people come to Naat Khwani gatherings by any means and listen to Naats the whole night. There are so many religious sects in our society but Naat is the only platform where they don't have any differences. The Naats strengthen the love towards Allah and his prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and thus play a pivotal role in the endorsement of Islam.

Q: Mashallah you have been offering Naats for the last 30 years, ups and downs are the part of ones life. Would you like to share such experiences?

AH. K. A: In our country there are many fields one can excel in. Amongst 15 Carore people in Pakistan if you are recognized and liked not only at country level but international as well, then it's a big deal. By the grace of Almighty Allah I am amongst the finest Naat Khwans of the world. Allah helps those who help themselves so I strived very hard with

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patience to achieve this respectable status.

In 1974, it was too difficult to get into PTV premises. Unless there was no friend or relative inside of PTV, you couldn't enter. A friend of mine used to work at PTV; I got my entry card made by his help and when I got to the producers they refused to listen to me. They said, "we only do dramas and there's no space for Naats on TV". They kept sending me to other producers and I had to run a lot after different producers.

Finally I was selected in a chorus of Naat at the arrival of Shah Khalid; I was too happy, I told my family & all my friends and sent letter to in-laws that I would appear in a TV Program. On the day of recording when I reached there with new dress and shoes, the producer said that you couldn't participate in today's program. Then I went to GM PTV and told him that I was invited today but the producer was not allowing me to participate. The GM then said to me to go and participate. I again came to recording studio but when producer saw me he went to GM. After a while GM came to me and said, "I will give you another chance separately so you may leave now". Actually some relative of that producer was participating in my place. I was very disheartened that time and after reaching home I cried wildly.

In 1978, Allah gave me the fruit of this patience in a way that when the Naat contest was held on PTV; I was selected amongst 400, then amongst 200, then amongst 10 and finally stood first at Sindh level and then at all Pakistan level. Over a night I became the Naat Khwan of the country. The next day when I was in Lahore I was announced as the famous Naat Khwan of Pakistan. The blessings due to this Naat Khwani are so much. Earlier people used to write letters of invitation and we had to go by our own means but now Alhamdulillah we get invitation from all over the world with air tickets. They also arrange accommodation in five star hotels and endow loads of respect. Habib Bank, the largest bank of Pakistan, employed me as officer 20 years back. They say, "you only recite Naats, we'll give you monthly salary as par company package".

In 1996 I was awarded with the "Pride of Performance". This is the award for which many people dream. The biggest prize of the blessings of Naat Khwani is the going to "Rooza-e-Rasool" (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam). Alhamdulillah for the last 20 years continuously, my family and me have been visiting there due to the love of people. They give us tickets and provide every facility to go to the holiest "Rooza-e-Rasool" (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam)

This is all due to the recitation of Naat Khwani that I've been blessed with good friends, respect and peaceful life. I am very much thankful to Almighty Allah

Q: Have you written your own Naats?

AH. K. A: Yes, Alhamdulillah I wrote two "Kalams". First one I wrote in 1983 in Madina Shareef and other one I wrote in Pakistan. I am not basically a poet but one who recites Naat, has an idea of how a Naat is written. So I showed my "Kalam" to different poets and they also appreciated it.

Q: Whose "Kalam" you recite most?

AH. K. A: There is no alternate to Hazrat Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi's and Hazrat Shaikh Saadi's "Kalam". And in current time I recite "Kalam" of Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Khalid Mehmood, Waqar Ajmeri, Munawar Badauni, Hafiz Tahir and Abdus Sattar Niazi etc.

Q: You have performed on Radio and TV both, what difference did you find between these?

AH. K. A: The people who started Naat Khwani from Radio are perfectionists because the rules of reciting Naat are taught on Radio. So when a person comes on TV from Radio he can create a better impact on the listeners.

Q: What do you say about the inception of Islamic TV Channels?

AH. K. A: This is a very good step towards the endorsement of Islam. In current time where lots of TV channels are available on a single button of remote control, Islamic channels are like a breeze of fresh air. It was the time when people had only one channel in Pakistan and people were compelled to watch it, either to watch it or turn off the TV. Now the channels dedicated to Islam are opening up and I think this is very useful in creating awareness and providing Islamic information to masses.

Q: Please tell us about any of your memorable live performance?

AH. K. A: Once I was to perform in a 14th August official function in 1985 at Parliament House during the times of Mohammad Khan Junejo as Prime Minister. When I came on stage I forgot the tune of which I had been rehearsing but the "Kalam" was lying in front of me. Calling the name of Allah I started off and Alhamdulillah it went too good. It became a big honor when I was reciting the third stanza of the "Kalam", a man sitting in third row, getting lost in the depth of "Kalam", stood up saying Allah o Akbar and fainted. Next day it was the part of news in newspapers. Actually it was my mistake that I forgot the tune but Allah being so kind, converted my mistake in to an honor for me. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Sohail Rana and other pride of performance holders were present in the function and they all were puzzled that in what tune would I recite then but Alhamdulillah Allah blessed me with the honor of captivating people with other tune as well.

Q: Does anyone else recite Naats in your family?

AH. K. A: My brother and my son are Naat Khwans. Alhamdulillah 35% of boys are Naat Khwan in my relatives. My Grandfather was also a Naat Khwan, he got done the recording of Naats on records of gramophone in 1935. Initially I did the same and showed it to my grandmother. She didn't say anything and said, "Go and work hard". In 1981 when President Gen. Zia Ul Haq called me at his office then my grandmother appreciated me a lot and said, "Making records of gramophone is not a big deal, now you are recognized at Govt. level, this is something mentionable".

Q: Any Message for the youth of Pakistan?

AH. K. A: Love Pakistan, built Pakistan and acquire worldly and religious education both. Those youngsters, who think, have appropriate voice for Naat Khwani, should come forward and play their role in the endorsement of Islam through the blessed opportunity of Naat Khwani.

Q1: How would you compare the standard of yesterday Naats with those of today? Is the standard better now or not? (Farzana Akhter – Abu Dhabi, UAE)

AH. K. A: Different people and "Anbias" were already performing Naat Khwani before the arrival of Hazrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam). Hazrat Hassan bin Sabit was the Sahabi who used to recite Naats in the times of Hazrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam) and this process is still going on Alhamdulillah. When Pakistan came in to being, there was a unique style of Naat Khwani set by Mr. Mohammad Ali and Mr. Azam Shafi. Naats were recited in a harmonious way but as the things started changing, the way of reciting Naats was also changed. A kind of music has been included in Naats these days and new Naat Khwans don't give importance to poetry as such. I still own the same style of reciting Naats as I had 30 years ago. This is my request to new Naat Khwans to recite Naats like the way they were recited in past and don't include music and unnecessary things in it. We must consider that Naats are recited in the honor of Hazrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam) and he's the "Rehmat Ul Lil Aalameen". We must recite Naats keeping in mind extreme respect to Hazrat Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi wasallam).

Q2: I like your Naats so much. Who's your teacher in Naat Khwani? (Ghulam Abbas – Khanewal)

AH. K. A: Thank you very much. Respected Faiz Ahmed Sayal is my teacher who diverted me towards Naat Khwani and also taught "Kalam-e-Pak". Mohammad Ishaque Nizami (late) is also my teacher. He taught me the rules of Naat Khwani.

Q3: How are you sir, I like your Naats very much. Please can you tell me what should I do to become good Naat khwan? (Khadim Ali – Badin)

AH. K. A: I am fine Alhamdulillah. You should seek the guidance of some teacher who can teach you the rules of reciting Naats and then work hard and be patient. In 1974 I started Naat Khwani and it is almost a quarter century now, it's a long journey. Success comes to those who know how to wait. Respect seniors & love juniors, keep away from arrogance and always fulfill your promises. If you follow these, the success will be yours InshAllah

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