

students, both at home and abroad. Many of his former students, both Muslims and non-Muslims, are now outstanding scholars in their own right, teaching in universities and colleges. He influenced many, all of whom will remember his smile, his warmth, his energy, his love for family and friends. Professor Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad is survived by his wife and two sons.

Zafar Ishaq Ansari (1932 - 2016)

Dheen Mohammed

Last week, the world of Islam lost one of its most benevolent sons, someone who worked tirelessly and unassumingly to promote knowledge with remarkable dedication and enthusiasm. Prof. Zafar Ishaq Ansari has joined the long list of luminaries who have bowed out of this finite world, *in sha Allah* to live on as a resplendent star guiding all wayfarers in their search for knowledge.

Many are my memories and recollections of his personality, each more powerful than the next, each vying to drop from the pen onto the page. Yet, one image stands out above the others – that of a perpetual teacher, a perennial mentor who exhausted all the strengths of his heart, soul and mind in serving the cause of Islam and creating a generation of scholars and researchers capable of carrying his legacy on to future generations. All this he did without pretension or affectation, just sheer dedication, humility, sincerity, resolve and a uniquely balanced viewpoint.

I had the privilege of working with Prof. Ansari at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) from 1990 to 2004. As a senior colleague, he was always encouraging me to read and research. I saw in him a revival of “the spirit of the fatherly scholar,” something we so often hear about yet so rarely witness. Although Prof. Ansari was frequently sought out by visiting scholars, both domestic and international, big and small, nothing pleased him more than the weekly study forums he hosted for young graduate students. Prof. Ansari found much happiness in coaching these young researchers, in guiding them in their respective fields and always being ready to spend (especially after his wife’s demise) any amount of time advising them. Many past attendees of these forums have since gone on to become prominent researchers in their own right, recognised around the world for the quality of their work. They included such notables as Dr. Modassir Ali, Dr. Qaiser Shahzad, Dr. Muhammad Akram, Mr. Azfar Saeed and his wife Ms. Hafeeza (all from Pakistan), Dr. Faruk Terzic (Bosnia Herzegovina), and Dr. Zuhrauddin (China). But despite being a man of great knowledge and experience, Prof. Ansari was extremely humble; he always

displayed a desire to listen and learn from others, even though they might be young and inexperienced.

His editorial work for the English-language journal, *Islāmic Studies*, one of the Muslim World's leading academic periodicals, readily evinced his commitment and dedication to perfection. He told his friend, Prof. Hasan al-Shafi', a former president of IIUI, that at times he would read and revise an issue of the journal more than a dozen times before allowing publication.

Prof. Ansari was extremely sensitive to the feelings of others and frequently had a hard time expressing opposition to them in a candid way. I vividly recall an occasion when he sent me a couple of books for review, both by his friend John Esposito – *Unholy War* and *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. I duly wrote my review article and returned it to him. He was well aware of my inclination to be uncompromisingly blunt in my criticism and, in that article, I had not held back. He did not, however, share some of my assessments. Nevertheless, he struggled for a month to discuss these issues with me. When we finally met, instead of telling me outright about my academic failings, he afforded me a full-hour lecture on the merits of being soft-spoken and guarded in the academic world. I have never doubted his veracity and wisdom in this regard.

Over the past few years, Prof. Ansari's health deteriorated seriously, particularly after the failure of his kidneys. This did not, however, dampen his resolve; despite undergoing kidney dialysis three days a week, he continued to work tirelessly, undertaking two particular important projects: his UNESCO "Introduction to Islam" and an English translation of Maulana Mawdudi's *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*. Although he successfully completed the former, what little remains to be done on the latter has now been handed over to another accomplished scholar. Prof. Ansari would undoubtedly have realised his most cherished desire had he completed Mawdudi's *Tafhīm* himself, but God works in ways He deems best.

Although Prof. Ansari is no longer amongst us, *in sha Allah* his legacy will last through the efforts of his students (his intellectual children) for as long as God wills it.