

Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee (died 204 AH)

Various Scholars



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the biographies of the noble Salaf.

IMAAM ASH-SHAAFI'

He was Muhammad bin Idrees bin al-Abbaas bin Uthmaan bin Shaafi' bin Saa'ib bin Ubaid ibn abd Yazeed bin Haashim bin al-Muttalib bin abd Munaaf bin Qusay

bin Kilaab bin Murrah ibn Ka'ab bin Lu'ayy bin Ghaalib, the Imaam, the Scholar of his time, the Protector of hadeeth, the Faqeeh (jurist) of the religion – Aboo Abdillah al Qurashee then Mutallabee ash-Shaafi'ee al-Makki, al-Ghazzi by birth, a relative of the Messenger of Allaah and a son of his uncle, as Muttalib is the brother of Haashim who is the father of Abdul-Muttalib.

There is an agreement that the birth of the Imaam was in Ghazzah, his father died whilst still at a young age, so Muhammad grew up as an orphan living with his mother. She feared illness upon him so she took him back to his homeland whilst he was two years of age.

So he grew up in Makkah, whilst at the same time taking up archery, such, that he surpassed his contemporaries in it, and began shooting correctly at the target nine out of every ten arrows fired.

He also began the study of Arabic and of poetry and likewise began to excel in them and became renowned. Then he became greatly attracted to al-fiqh, such that he would be the lead in it for the people of his time.

Al Haafidh ibn Hajar mentions in at-Tahdheeb:

Ibn Abee Haatim said, my father narrated to us that he heard Amr bin Sawaad say: "Ash-Shaafi'ee said to me: 'I was born in the city of Asqalaan, so when I was two years old, my mother took me to Makkah and I had a great desire for two things - for archery and for seeking knowledge. So I took up archery until I would hit on target ten out of ten shots that I would fire'- (Amr bin Sawaad said) but he remained quiet concerning knowledge, so I said to him: By Allaah, you have acquired a greater amount by way of knowledge than that of archery."

Nasr bin Makkee said that ibn 'Abd al-Hakam said that ash-Shaafi'ee said to me: 'I was born in Ghazzah in the year 150 hijrah and my mother took me to Makkah when I was two years of age.'

Adh-Dhahabee says: he took knowledge from his country from the likes of:

Muslim bin Khaalid az-Zanjee- the Mufti of Makkah,

Sufyaan bin Uyainah,

Abdur-Rahmaan bin Abee Bakar al Mulaikah,

Fudhayl bin 'Iyaad and a number of others.

Al Haafidh says: he narrated from:

Maalik bin Anas,

Ibraheem bin Sa'ad,

Ad-Daawardee,

Abdul-Wahhaab ath-Thaqafee,

Ibn Ulayyah,

Ibraheem bin Muhammad bin Abee Yahyaa,

Hishaam ibn Yoosuf as-San'aanee and others.

Adh-Dhahabee says:

Ahmad bin Ibraheem at-Taa'ee al Aqtaa' said: al Muzanee narrated to us that he heard ash-Shaafi'ee say 'I memorised the Qur'aan whilst I was still seven years of age, and I memorised al-Muwatta when I was ten years of age.'

Humaidee said: I heard ash-Shaafi'ee say ' I used to be an orphan living with my mother, but she did not have enough (money) to suffice what was needed to give to my teachers, so my teacher used to allow me to stand in for him over the children when he was away, so I could gain a reduction from him.'

From ash-Shaafi'ee that he said:

"I came to Maalik (bin Anas) when I was thirteen years of age (adh-Dhahabee says this is how it has been said but what is apparent is that he was twenty three years of age), so I went to the son of one of my uncles who was the governor of Al-Madeenah, so he spoke to Maalik, so he said to him 'find someone who will read to you' so I said 'I will read', so I used to read upon him, and sometimes he would have mentioned something during the course of it that had passed, so he would ask me to repeat it, so I would repeat it from memory. So it was as if that would amaze him, then I asked him concerning an issue and he answered to it, then I asked him again concerning another issue so he said, 'you would love to become a judge' (i.e due to his enthusiasm for these issues).

From Muhammad bin Bishr al 'akaree and other than him who said: Ar-Rabee bin Sulaimaan narrated to us saying, 'ash-Shaafi'ee used to divide the hours of the night. So in the first third of it he would write and in the second part he would pray and in the last third he would sleep.'

Dhahabee says 'I say all three of his actions are considered worship, as long as the intention is present.'

Zakariyyah as-Saajee said Muhammad bin Ismaeel narrated to us saying Hussain al-Karabeese narrated to me saying “I stayed with ash-Shaafi’ee for a night, so he would pray for about a third of the night, so I would not see that he would exceed reading more than fifty verses, but if he increased, then he would read a hundred verses, and he would not come across a verse relating to Mercy except that he would ask Allaah (for it) and he would not come across a verse relating to a form of punishment except that he would seek refuge (from it) and it was as if both hope and longing as well as dread had been gathered together for him.”

Muhammad bin Yahyaa bin Aadam said ibn abd al-Hakam narrated to us saying I heard ash-Shaafi’ee saying ‘if the people truly knew of what is found in al-kalaam (theological rhetoric) and innovations, then they would flee from it just as they would flee from a lion’.

‘Abdullaah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal reports saying: I heard Muhammad bin Dawood saying It has not been recorded that during the whole lifetime of Ash-Shaafi’ee, that he spoke from anything relating to innovated desires, nor was anything of the sort ever attributed to him, nor was he ever known for it, even though he had severe hatred for the people of Kalaam (rhetoric) and innovation.

From Ibn Abee Haatim who said: Yunus narrated to us saying: ‘ I said to Ash-Shaafi’ee: our companion al-Laith says: If I saw a person of desires walking upon water I would not take from him’, so he said ‘rather he fell short, if I saw him walking in thin air I would not take from him’.

Az-Za’faraanee and others said we heard Ash-Shaafi’ee say:

‘My verdict concerning the people of Kalaam is that they should be whipped with jareed (palm branches stripped of their leaves), then they should be mounted onto camels, and paraded throughout the district and that it be called out: ‘this is the reward for those who abandoned The Book and The Sunnah, and turned their attention instead to Kalaam’.’

Zakariyyaa as-Saajee said Ahmad bin al-‘Abbaas an-Nasaa’I narrated to us saying, I heard Az-Za’faraanee sayint, that I heard

Ash-Shaafi’ee saying:

‘I have never had a dispute with anyone over the issue of Kalaam except once, and even from THAT I seek the forgiveness of Allaah.’

Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Khuzaimah said: I heard ar-Rabee’ saying: whilst Ash-Shaafi’ee was advising Hafs al-Fard, Hafs said: ‘The Qur’aan is created’.

So Ash-Shaafi'ee replied to him: 'You have disbelieved in Allaah the Great'.

As-Saajee said, Ibrahim bin ziyaad al-Ubalee narrated to us, saying I heard al-Buwaitee saying: I asked Ash-Shaafi'ee : 'Should I pray behind a Raafidhee?' So he said: 'No, do not pray behind a Raafidhee, nor behind a Qadaree, nor behind a Murji'ee'. So I said 'describe then to us', so he said ' whoever says : that Eemaan is only in statement, then he is a Murji'ee, and whoever says, Aboo Bakr and Umar were not Imaams, then he is a Raafidhee, and whoever attributes will (decree) to himself, then he is a Qadaree'.

Az-Zubair bin 'Abdul-Waahid said 'Alee ibn Muhammad informed us in Egypt, saying, Muhammad ibn 'Abdilillaah bin 'Abdil-Hakam said: after Ash-Shaafi'ee debated Hafs al-Fard he acquired a great hate for Kalaam, and he used to say: 'By Allaah, for a Scholar to issue a verdict, and then it be said about him, that the scholar has made a mistake-is better for him, than that he should speak with something and it be said of him: zindeeq (evil heretic), and there is nothing more hateful to me than kalaam and its people.

Alee bin Muhammad bin Abaan al-Qaadhee said, Aboo Yahyaa Zakariyyaa as-Saajee narrated to us, saying al-Muzanee narrated to us saying, If there was anybody that could bring out my innermost conscience, and that which is related to the perilous belief I had with regard to the issue of Tawheed, then it would be Ash-Shaafi'ee. So I went to him, and I found him in Masjid Misr, so I knelt down on my knees in front of him and said : 'there has come to my mind an issue with regards to Tawheed, and I know that nobody has the knowledge which you have, so what do you have ?'(i.e with regards to this issue), so he became angry, then said: 'Do you know where you are ?', so I said 'yes', he then said 'this is the place where Allaah caused Fir'awn (Pharoah) to drown. Has it ever reached you that the Messenger of Allaah commanded us with asking of such an issue?' I said 'no', then he said, 'did the Companions ever speak about it?' I said 'no', he then said 'do you know how many stars there are in the heavens?' I said 'no', to which he said 'taking anyone of those stars into account do you know its type? Its height?, Its setting? Or from what materials it was created?' I said 'no' so he said ' so how then, is there something from the creation that you can see with your naked eye that you have no knowledge of, and yet you speak concerning the knowledge of its Creator ?!'.

Then he asked me about an issue relating to wudhoo, and I erred with regards to answering it, so he himself answered it from four different angles, and I did not even answer the like of any of them, thereafter he said 'something that you are dependant upon five times a day - you leave off knowledge regarding it, and you burden yourself with the knowledge of the Creator, if there comes to your mind the like of that, then return to Allaah, and to His saying the Most High:

"And your Lord is One, there is nothing worthy of worship other than Him, He is

Ar-Rahmaan Ar-Raheem. Indeed there in the creation of the heavens and the earth." (al-Baqarah : 163-164)

So he proved through the creation, that there is a creator, so do not burden yourself with knowledge that your 'aql' (intellect) cannot reach'. He said (i.e al-Muzanee) 'So I repented from that'.

Ibraaheem bin 'Alee al-'Aabid informed us in his book, that Zakariyyaa al-'Albaa and others informed us, saying, 'Abdul-Awwal bin 'Eesaa informed us saying, Shaikh ul Islaam Aboo Isma'eel al-Harawee informed us, saying, Ya'qoob benefited me, and this is something which I copied from his own handwriting, that Aboo 'Alee al-Khaalidee informed us, saying, I heard Muhammad binul Hussain az-Za'faraanee saying, I heard 'Uthmaan bin Sa'eed bin Bashaar al-Anmaatee say, I heard al-Muzanee say: I used to look into Kalaam before Ash-Shaafi'ee came, so when he came, I went to him, and I asked him about an issue from the issues of Kalaam, so he said to me, 'do you know where you are?' I said 'yes, in the Masjid of al-Fustaat', so he said to me, 'you are in Taraan', ('Uthmaan said, and Taraan is a place on the Red sea, a ship is barely able to survive its waters), so he asked me about an issue in Fiqh, so I answered it, then he entered into it something which distorted my answer, so I answered again, then he entered something into it which again distorted my answer, such, that every time I would answer with anything, he would distort it somehow, then he said to me, 'this is the Fiqh which contains The Book and The Sunnah, and the statements of the people (scholars), the likes of these things can enter into them, (and distort them) so how about speaking with regards to the Lord of the Creation, in which there is much erring to be found'. So I abandoned Kalaam, and turned my attention instead to al-Fiqh.

Az-Zubair bin 'Abdul-Waahid said, Muhammad bin 'Aqeel al-Firyaanee narrated to us saying, al-Muzanee or al-Rabee' said : We were with Ash-Shaafi'ee one day, when there came to him a Shaikh who was wearing a woollen garment, and he had in his hand a staff, so Ash-Shaafi'ee stood up for him, and straightened out his clothes, the Shaikh then gave salaam and sat down. So Ash-Shaafi'ee began looking at the Shaikh out of awe of him, at which point the Shaikh said 'can I ask?', so he (i.e Ash-Shaafi'ee) replied 'ask', so he said 'what are the proofs that we use in the religion of Allaah'?

So he said 'the Book of Allaah', so the Shaikh said 'and what else'?, he replied 'the Sunnah of Allaah's Messenger', so he said 'and what else'? so he replied 'the agreement of the Ummaah'. The Shaikh said 'from where have you taken the aspect of the agreement of the Ummaah'?. So Ash-Shaafi'ee began thinking deeply, after which the Shaikh said ' I give you three days' (to think about it), so either you come with a proof for what you said from the Book of Allaah, or otherwise you should repent to Allaah'. So the colour on Ash-Shafi'ee's face

changed, then he (Ash-Shaafi'ee) got up and left, and he did not come out of his house until the third day between dhuhr and 'asr. While at the same time his face, and his hands and his legs looked swollen, and he looked sickly, so he sat down, and it was not long before the Shaikh arrived, who gave salaam and sat down, then said, 'where is my requirement?' so Ash-Shaafi'ee said 'yes, I seek refuge with Allaah from the Shaitaan the accursed, Allaah The Most High says: ((And whomsoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clear to him, and he follows a path other than the path of the believers, then we shall leave him to that which he turned to...)) (Nisaa : 115). So he would not burn this individual for going against the path of the believers, except that it was an obligation (i.e which he left out).' So the Shaikh said 'you have spoken truthfully', then he stood up and left. So Ash-Shaafi'ee said 'I read the Qur'aan each day and night three times until I decided upon it'.

Al-Haarith bin As-Suraj said, I heard Yahyaa Al-Qattaan saying: 'I make supplication to Allaah for Ash-Shaafi'ee – I specify HIM in it.

Aboo Bakr Khallaad said, 'I make supplication to Allaah for Ash-Shaafi'ee at the end of my prayer.

Muhammad bin Haroon Az-Zanjee said, Abdullaah bin Ahmad narrated to us saying: 'I said to my Father, what kind of man was Ash-Shaafi'ee ? as I have heard you make a great amount of supplication for him', so he said, 'O my son, He used to be like how the Sun is for the earth, as a vitality for the people, so is there for any of these two a successor or from the two any like?'

Qutaibah bin Sa'eed said: Ash-Shaafi'ee is an Imaam.

Al-Maymoonee said, I heard Ahmad bin Hanbal saying: 'There are six individuals for whom I make supplication for in the last part of the night, one of them is Ash-Shaafi'ee.

Ahmad bin Hanbal said, in varying chains of narration from him, 'Indeed Allaah destines for the people at the head of every one hundred years someone who will teach them the Sunan. Someone who will remove from the Messenger of Allaah any lies attributed to him, so when we looked at the end of the first one hundred years and there was 'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez, and at head of the second one hundred years there was Ash-Shaafi'ee.

Aboo Thawr al-Kalbee said: 'I have not seen the like of Ash-Shaafi'ee, nor has he seen the like of himself.'

Ayyoob bin Suwaid said: 'I never thought that I would live to see the like of Ash-Shaafi'ee.'

Yunus as-Sadafee said, ‘I have not seen anybody more perfect in intellect than Ash-Shaafi’ee, I had a debate with him one day regarding an issue, thereafter we parted. Then he met me again, so he took me by the hand then said ‘O Abaa Moosaa, can it not be that we remain brothers – even if we differ in an issue.’”

I say (Dhahabee): This is a proof of the completeness of the intellect of this Imaam, and his understanding of his own soul, as the contemporaries (equals/peers) do not cease to differ.

Ma’mar bin Shabeeb said, I heard Ma’moon saying: ‘I put Muhammad bin Idrees to test in everything, and I found him at the end of it to be undivided’.

Dawood bin ‘Alee said I heard Ibn Raahawaih (Ishaaq ibn Raahawaih) saying: ‘I never knew that Ash-Shaafi’ee was at this distinction, if I had known of it, I would never have left him’. Aboo Dawood as-Sijistaanee said: I do not know Ash-Shaafi’ee to have made a single error in Hadeeth.

Harmalah said, Ash-Shaafi’ee was asked concerning a man who had a date in his mouth, then said: ‘if I swallow it (the date) then my wife is to be divorced, and if I spit it (the date) out, then my wife is to be divorced’. So he (Ash-Shaafi’ee) replied: ‘he should eat half of it and spit the other half out’.

Ibraheem bin Abee Taalib al-Haafidh said: I asked Abaa Qudaamah as-Sarikhsee concerning: Ash-Shaafi’ee and Ahmad, and Abee ‘Ubaid, and ibn Raahawaih, so he said: ‘Ash-Shaafi’ee is the most perceptive of them’.

‘Abdullaah bin Naajiyah al-Haafidh said: I heard ibn waarah saying: ‘I came back from Egypt, so I went to Ahmad bin Hanbal, so he said to me: ‘did you copy out the books of Ash-Shaafi’ee ?’, I said ‘no’, so he said ‘you were neglectful, we did not know the general (principles) from the specific ones, nor did we know which hadeeth were abrogated from those hadeeth which abrogate others, all this we did not know, until we sat with Ash-Shaafi’ee.’ So that inspired me to return to Egypt, after which I began writing them out.

Muhammad bin Ya’qoob al-Farajee said: I heard ‘Alee al-Madeenee saying: ‘Upon you are the books of Ash-Shaafi’ee.

Aboo Bakr as-Sawma’ee said: I heard Ahmad bin Hanbal saying: ‘The companion of hadeeth can never become quenched by the books of Ash-Shaafi’ee.’

Ahmad bin Salamah An-Naisaabooree said: Ishaaq bin Rahawaih married a women whose husband had died, but he had possessed the books of Ash-Shaafi’ee, he (Ishaaq) did not marry her except for those books.

Ash-Shaafi'ee said: 'Knowledge is what benefits, knowledge is not what is merely memorised'.

Aboo 'Alee bin Hakamaan said: Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Haaron al-Hamadhaanee al-'Adl narrated to us, that Aboo Muslim al-Kajjee narrated to us saying: al-Asma'ee narrated to us from Ash-Shaafi'ee, that he said: 'The core of knowledge, is steadfastness, and its fruit is security, and the core of cautionness is contentment, and its fruit is tranquillity, and the core of patience is to be resolute, and its fruit is triumph, and the core of actions is ability, and its fruit is success, and the goal in each and every affair is truthfulness.'

Aboo Thawr said: I heard Ash-Shaafi'ee say: 'It befits the Faqeeh (jurist), that he should place some soil onto his head – out of humbleness to Allaah, and out of thanks to Allaah'.

Ar-Rabee' said: Ash-Shaafi'ee said to me: 'If the Fuqahaa (jurists and people of knowledge) are not the Awliyaa (loyal and devoted ones) of Allaah, then Allaah has no Walee.'

Hurmulah said: I heard Ash-Shaafi'ee say: 'I would love that all the knowledge that I have learnt, that I should teach the people, so that I would get the reward, and they would not praise me for it.'

It has been reported through two chains from Ash-Shaafi'ee, that he said:

'If I see a man the companions of Hadeeth, then it is as if I am seeing a companion of the Prophet, may Allaah reward them with all good, they protected for us the asl (origin/foundation), so they have excellence over us'.

Yunus bin 'Abdil-'A'laa said: Ash-Shaafi'ee said to me: 'Pleasing the people is a goal you will never reach, and there is no way to ensure security from them, so upon you be that which will benefit you, then adhere to that.'

From Ash-Shaafi'ee that he said: 'The sign of a true friend, is that he behaves to the friend of his friend as a friend.'

From Ash-Shaafi'ee that he said: 'The most elevated of people in status, are those who do not recognise from themselves any status, and those of them who possess the most excellence are those who do not see their excellence'.

From Ash-Shaafi'ee who said: 'If you see in any of my books that which is contradictory to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah, then speak with THAT, and leave alone what I said'.

Al-Humaidee said: Ash-Shaafi'ee narrated a hadeeth one day, so I said to him 'are you going to take that ?' (i.e as a means of practice), so he said: ' did you see me coming out from a church, or do you see upon me a zunnar (the waist belt of the Christians and Magians) that I should hear a hadeeth from the Messenger of Allaah and that I should not speak with it ?!'

It has been narrated that he said : 'If a hadeeth is proven to be authentic, then it is my Madhab, and if the hadeeth is proven authentic, then throw my saying against the wall'.

Ar-Rabee' said: I heard him (Ash-Shaafi'ee) say after a man had said to him: 'do you take this hadeeth O Abaa Abdillaah?', so he said: 'when I narrate a hadeeth from the Messenger of Allaah, which is an authentic hadeeth, and that I do not take it, then you should bear witness that my 'aql (intellect) has gone'.

Al-Haafidh says in at-Tahdheeb:

Ibn Abee Haatim said : Abdal-Hakam narrated to us, saying that Ash-Shaafi'ee was born in the year 150H, and died in the last day of Rajab in the year 204H more than one person have written historical accounts of him, and his outstanding virtues and excellence are very many.

Ibn Abee Haatim and Zakariyyaa as-Saajee and al-Haakim and al-Baihaqi and al-Harawee and ibn 'Asaakir and others have gathered them.

Aboo Moosaa ad-Dareer was asked regarding the books of Ash-Shaaf'ee as to how they became so widespread amongst the people, so he said: 'Allaah chose him for his knowledge, then he raised him'.

Ishaaq bin Raahawaih was asked how it was that Ash-Shaaf'ee authored all those books yet his age was not very much, so he said: 'Allaah gathered for him his 'aql (intellect), despite the shortness of his age'.

Taken from:

Siyar 'a'laam an-nubalaa (Imaam adh-Dhahabee) Muasasa ar-risaalah vol 10 pages 5 – 99

Tahdheeb at-tahdheeb (Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalaanee) Hindiyyah Hyderabad - Deccan vol 9 pages 25 - 31
