

Chapter – 31

Imam Malik

(712 - 796 AD)

Malik is his name. Kunniya is Abdullah, and the title is 'Imam Dar-ul-Hijrah'. Father's name is Anas bin Malik. He belonged to an Arab family who was widely respected both in Ignorance period and Islam. His elders belonged to Yemen, but after converting to Islam, they settled in Madinah. Imam Malik was born in Madinah in 93AH/712AD. From birth to death, his permanent stay remained in Madinah.

The color of Imam Malik was reddish white. He had wide forehead, big eyes, high nose, and large and dense beard. He disliked making the mustaches too small. He was tall with heavy body. There was a lot of cleanliness in his personality. He always wore fine clothing and used perfume. The house where he lived was the house of Hazrat Abdullah bin Masood. And the place where he had meetings, or where he usually sit, was actually the dwelling of Hazrat 'Umar Farooq.

Imam Malik was considered as one of the major worshippers. He extremely loved with the Noble Prophet. Even the city of Madinah was so beloved for him that he never left this place except for the journey of Hajj. He was a good host. He was a very self-motivated, soft, tolerant and clean-spoken person.

When Imam Malik grown up, not only his own home environment was educated but at that time the entire city of Madinah was a repository of scholar and intellectuals. His grandfather and father were Muhaddith. One of Imam's uncle,

Abu Suhail Nafi', was a Sheikh of narrations and hadiths. He got most of the education from them. The gentlemen who studied from the Companions of the Prophet are termed as 'Tabai'. Among these Tabai's were: Abu Bakr bin Harith, Kharija bin Zaid, Qasim bin Mohammed, Saeed bin Musaiyab, 'Ubaidullah bin 'Utba, Salim bin Abdullah and Suleiman bin Bisyar, and they were called as "*Seven Jurisprudents*". These people used to give their decisions on Fatawa, issues and cases. Imam Malik got benefitted from these scholars.

The Imam learnt Tajweed, proper recitation of Quran, from the then Imam al-Qurra of Madinah, Abu Durham Nafi bin Abdur Rahman (*whose recital is the basis of today's Islamic world*). Imam Malik also studied Jurisprudence from several scholars. But his real teacher for it was Abu Uthman Rabee'a. Hazrat Rabee'a was also Tabai'. Since the knowledge of all these scholars was gathered in one chest of Imam Malik, so he was given a title of "*Imam Dar-ul-Hijrah*".

Imam Malik's memory was very good. He used to say for himself that something came to my mind it never faded out. His fondness for the knowledge had gone to such extent that shortage of money began in the house. He had to even sell the steel of his roof, yet his desire for the knowledge never diminished. It is his saying that "Perfection in knowledge is not achieved unless one is afflicted with poverty and even then he prefers seeking knowledge."

Sheikh Nafi' was the special teacher of Imam Malik for Hadiths. For nearly 30 years, Sheikh Nafi' always remained in the company of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar. Hazrat Abdullah Ibn 'Umar was the most learned scholar of Hadith and Sunnah. Imam Malik exerted for at least 10 years for learning Hadith from Sheikh Nafi'. Even after his death he became his successor. When Imam Abu Hanifa arrived in Madinah, he attended the school assembly of the Imam Malik. Imam Shafii' was his regular disciple.

His course group is said to consist of hundreds of students. Many of them belonged to various categories and from many places. Even various rulers, Imams, Sheikhs, Muhaddisin, Mujtahidin, Sufis and literary figures were also among them. Geographically, his student belonged to Egypt, North Africa and Andalusia, along with most of the Arab regions.

When Caliph Haroon Rashid arrived in Madinah, he desired to listen to Imam Malik's famous book of hadiths, "al-Muwatta". Imam said that tomorrow is the day for this subject. The next day, Haroon Rashid waited for the Imam at his palace but he did not turn up. Haroon Rashid asked the reason for this, he said:

الْعِلْمُ بَرَارٌ وَ لَا يَزُورُ

*{People come to knowledge, and
knowledge never goes to the people}*

Remember that the status of Muhaddith is just similar to an Investor, while the Faqih (*Jurist*) invests with this wealth in the practical world. The responsibility of a Faqih is to find out the causes and strategies of the rules and to distinguish between correct and incorrect. He arranges the Obligations and the Sunnah. He also prepares the rules for general Public and the Government. He has the ability to specialize any common matter as well as generalize any specific thing. Duties of a Jurist include realization of the Supreme's orders and the implementation of the Restrictions. He can clarify the difference between abrogator and the abrogation. Thus, according to the requirements of the human being, it becomes his responsibility to declare all the orders of Sharia'. With all these elements, the importance of a Jurists can be assessed. Imam Malik attained a position in the subject of Jurisprudence so fast that the people began to approach him, even in the presence of his teacher Hazrat Rabee'a. After the death of Rabee'a, he became a regular Jurist. All the scholars of that time

acknowledged the understanding and perfection of Imam Malik. Yet the Imam himself, as a preventative measures, he did not stood for the higher status (*Imam*) until the 70 renowned scholars of the time gave a decree for Imam's knowledge and his perfection.

When 'Umar bin Abdul Aziz was appointed as Governor of Madinah, he not only made the formal committee of Jurists and jurisprudence, consist of the prevailing famous Tabai' names, but also strengthened it by restructuring it. After the proper debates of these members, all the decisions of the cases were made. And whatever the verdict was given, it was recognized as the Jurisprudence decision of the court of Madinah. Much of its support was taken from the decisions and decrees of Hazrat 'Umar's period, because in his government all the victories and extensions in Muslim land had created many new needs. In view of this, Imam Malik also based his Jurisprudence and Fatawa on the Fiqh of Madinah.

Imam Malik always had a rush of questions and claims from the people of Madinah and Hijaz, but on the occasion of the Hajj, the people used to come from all sides therefore the government used to announce that no one other than Imam Malik and Ibn Abi Zayb would give any fatwa.

Till his time, the work on writing and compilation was already in action, but Muwatta, Magazine Malik Al-Rashid, Almadunah al-Kubrah, Kitab al-Aqziah and Elucidations of Quran were considered as nice works of Imam Malik. The importance of his book Muwatta is that almost all the Imam's disciples have narrated from this book. While the other books attributed to him have only been narrated by some.

The time of Imam Malik was that when the knowledge and information was dispersed in different Islamic countries. In this period, all the works on compiling Hadiths was confined to the boundaries of their own country. Ibn Jareeh had compiled the Hadiths in Makkah, Auzai in Syria, Sufyan Thori in Kufa,

Abu Salamah Hammad in Basra, Maithum in Wasat, Muammar in Yemen, Ibn Mubarak in Khorasan and Jarir bin Hameed's collection was in Ray. Whereas Madinah, which was the largest centre of the Prophet's education, Imam Malik got this opportunity to collect Hadiths from here. His book of Hadith, Muwatta was not only considered as an important collection of knowledge from Madinah, but it was also called the "**First Islamic Book**", after Quran. When Imam Malik was engaged in compilation of Muwatta and this news reached to other scholars of Madinah, they also started compiling their own for Hadiths. People reported this thing to Imam Malik, he said "**Only good intentions would survive**", and his prediction later proved to be true. One of the important aspects of the book Muwatta was that for this book various heads of state (*Mahdi, Hadi, Haroon Rashid and Mamoon Rashid*) traveled from Iraq to Hijaz. Moreover, Sultan Salahuddin Ayubi, the conqueror of Jerusalem, traveled from Cairo to Alexandria for this book.

The word '**Muwatta**' means the path that people often follow. And Sunnah also means the way, i.e., is the path of Muhammad (PBUH). Muwatta is the book of hadith and Fiqh Some of its Fiqh has been derived from various hadiths, whereas some Fiqh is consisting on the consensus of the people of Madinah. Some part of it contains those statements on which the Tabai' people used to follow, means, those whom Imam Malik met and learned from. In some parts are the people's views which were chosen by Imam Sahib. Some parts of it are speculative as well. Thus. it is a complete and comprehensive collection.

When Imam Malik reached the age of 84, he became very weak. It was difficult for him to reach the mosque for prayer. He left this world in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, 179 AH/796AD.