

Chapter – 48

Imam Al-Ghazali

(1058 - 1111 AD)

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali was born in the year 450AH/1058AD. His family was engaged in a cotton business, so he was called Ghazali. The yarn weaver is called Ghazali in Arabic. His father desperately wanted his two sons to be educated. Thus, Muhammad al-Ghazali got his early education in Taos. Then he went to Nishapur for higher education. Here he was benefited from the great scholar Allamah Ishaq Shirazi. On this education journey he came to Makkah too. Here, Imam-ul-Heramain Sheikh Ziauddin was also included among his teachers.

Immediately after the completion of his education, al-Ghazali became a teacher of the Madrasa Nizamia of Baghdad. Here he taught Jurisprudence and wrote some books on it. Then he joined a group of scholars and jurists who were associated with the court of the Slovak minister, Nizam-ul-Mulk. Nizam-ul-Mulk was very much impressed by his knowledge so he used to organize debates based on his knowledge. Al-Ghazali always remained dominant on these gatherings. As a result he became more popular as well.

In the same period, Muhammad al-Ghazali continued to study philosophy too. Eventually, he turned towards Sufism. After a while, his attention on the Oneness of God and His Messenger was increased to that extent that he became surrounded by the thought of the Hereafter. This caused a

revolution inside of him. He was about 37 years old, and keeping all his worldly wishes aside he left Baghdad as a dervish/mendicant.

The next two years al-Ghazali spent in Syria in a sort of loneliness. However, he would occasionally be attracted to his home and world business as well. In Damascus, he taught about the Resurrection and wrote some books on it. Some 9 years later, at the insistence of Sultan Fakhru'l Mulk, he once again visited Baghdad and resumed teaching in Madrasa Nizamia.

Imam al-Ghazali, through his God gifted knowledge, thought and philosophy, he promoted Islamic ideas and beliefs. In his time, he became prominent for his knowledge and his skills. For this, the scholars have given him the title of "Hujjat-ul-Islam"

There are numerous writings by Imam al-Ghazali. He authored "احياء علوم الدين" (*Revival of Religious Knowledge*) that keeps the essence of all his philosophy. There are 4 parts of this Revival, those are: ربيع المنجيات and ربيع العبادات ، ربيع العادات ، ربيع المهلكات . In each part there are 10 books. The name of the book on the subject of Jurisprudence is "الوجيز". The names of books written on Logic and Philosophy are: تهافت الفلاسفه and معيار العلم ، محك النظر مقاصد الفلاسفه . On Ilm al-Kalam (*knowledge in which principles are explained by reasoning*) his detailed book is كتاب الاقتصاد في الاعتقاد . The names of his books in Persian language are: خلاصة and كيمياء سعادت . Similarly he has written many other books as well which is having a long list.

Many scholars also raised objections on Imam Ghazali's writings. He was strongly against personal follow up. He also took practical steps to improve the belief. He also wrote letters to the great kings and invited them to reform their belief.

According to Imam al-Ghazali, there are four factions who are in search of truth. First is Intellect, the second is Inward Thinkers, the third is Philosopher and the fourth is Sufi.

He says, "The truth is not outside these four groups but the Sufi way of life is up to the mark with knowledge and practice."

In view of Muhammad al-Ghazali, all those who agree on the major and fundamental principles of Islam are Muslims. He has explained this principle in his book "تفرقه" (*Differentiation or Sections*). Al-Ghazali says about philosophy that it is, in fact, the name of thinking. In his view, The philosophical systems of thought can be understood by every sensible person. According to al-Ghazali, religious firm belief is the result of excessive love and extraordinary feelings. He further strengthened the position of Sufism in the true faith of Islam.

Imam al-Ghazali is known as the "Reformer" of the religion of the fifth century Hijri. For *Ilm al-Kalam (knowledge in which principles are explained by reasoning)*, Imam Ghazali has similar status as Aristotle has in logic. He was the follower of Shafi'i Fiqh but he himself also owned a place of Mujtahid.

He died in 505AH/1111AD. He is buried in Taos, Tehran. On the death of Imam Sahib, the Muslim world was shocked and many poets wrote sad poetry for him.