

Chapter – 64

Shamsuddin Zahabi

(1274 - 1325 AD)

The name of Zahabi is Shamsuddin Muhammad. And his Kunniya is Abu Abdullah. His father's name is Ahmad Bin 'Uthman. He was born in Damascus in 673AH/1274AD. He got his early education there. Hadith and Jurisprudence remained as his main subjects. The names of his teachers include Yusuf Almazi, 'Umar bin Qawas, Ahmad bin Haitullah bin Asakar and Yusuf bin Ahmad al-Qauli. In order to pursue higher education, he stayed in various cities of Egypt, especially Cairo. In addition, he has also gone to Hulb, Nablus, Alexandria and Makkah. Here, he had the companionship of many prominent scholars as well. He has mentioned his teachers in his book "معجم", and in total they are reported as 1300.

After the completion of his education, Sheikh Zahabi started teaching hadith in the institute named as "Madrasa Um as-Salih", in Damascus. In this institute he was also a student himself. Over the time, he was considered among the big scholars and later called "Sheikh-ul-Hadith" as well.

Shamsuddin Zahabi who has mastered in various subjects that include Hadith, Jurisprudence as well as History. He was so keen to learn throughout his life that its intensity had affected his vision. According to Abul Fada and 'Umar bin al-Wardi, once a time came when Sheikh Zahabi had completely lost his vision, but despite that he did not allow to make any difference in his normal routines.

The writings of Sheikh Zahabi are numerically less. In fact, his main status was of an Editor and a Compiler. But the important thing about all of his books was that they were vigilantly edited and compiled. They contain complete details of sources and references. That is why each of his work is considered as authentic and credible. His biggest book in history is "History of Islam". Moreover, his another book named "طبقات المشاهير والاعلام" is also a book of history. This compilation contain the entire history, right from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to 700AH/1301AD. In the field of hadith, he has written following two books:

تذهيب الكمال في اسماء الرجال ، المشتبه في اسماء الرجال

Shamsuddin Zahabi was having a versatile personality. His versatility has been praised by many. However, for the compilation of Hadiths he is remembered with the title of:

"محدث العصر" (a great Muhaddith of his time).

While for the subject of history he is referred to as "حاتم الحفاظ". Salahuddin as-Safdi has mentioned in his writings, saying: "Sheikh Zahabi was fully aware of the strength of law. He listened very readily to the opinions of other people." The renowned Mufassir Ibn Hajr al-Asqalani has also praised the attributes of Sheikh Zahabi .

Shamsuddin Zahabi died in Damascus. He is buried near Bab as-Saghir. However, two dates have been quoted as regards to the date of his death. Al-Subki and Al-Suyuti have mentioned his date of death as Zul-Qa'dah, 748AH/1347AD, whereas Ahmad bin Ayas has reported as 753AH/1352AD.