

## CHAPTER 8

### MUSLIM SCHOLARS

#### Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio

##### a). Biography of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio

- Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio was born on 29<sup>th</sup> Safar 1168 A.H or 15 December 1754 C.E at Marata, a town in the Hausa state of Gobir.
- His full name is Uthman bin Muhammad bin Uthman bin Salih.
- Shehu Uthman was from the Fulani ethnic community of West Africa. He belonged to a family that had strong Islamic foundation which prompted him to learn the Holy Qur'an at an early age.
- He also studied traditional Islamic sciences such as *Fiqh* (Islamic Law), Exegesis, theology and mastered the Arabic language from several teachers like Uthman Binduri and Jabir bin Umar.
- He then became a teacher and preached the message of Islam even beyond Niger.
- He founded the Sokoto caliph and he was referred to as Amirul Muuminin. Through his efforts, together with the help of Sokoto were able to defeat the pagans and their rulers hence set up Islamic government.
- His administration consisted of a caliph, Wazir, governors, Judges and Law enforcers. Through this administration he was able to enforce the Islamic Sharia completely.
- He had loyal supporters whom he referred to as Jama'ah.
- He was a simple man, pious and intelligent. This earned him a lot of respect from his people and attracted many followers.
- He died in 1231 A.H and was succeeded by his son Muhammed Bello.

##### Educational Background of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio

The following is a short description on how Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio acquired his Knowledge:

- Uthman Dan Fodio began his early education from his father who was a scholar in Gobir.

- Since he came from a family with a strong Islamic background, he went through the traditional Muslim system of education.
- He learnt from his uncle Uthman Binduri, also known as Biddrui, who taught him *Al-Mukhtasar* of Imam Malik.
- He also learnt Theology from his maternal Uncle, Jibril bin Umar.
- He then undertook advanced studies in Fiqh, Hadith, Tafseer, Mathematics, Astronomy and Arabic language from when known scholars.

### Social Problems that were affecting the society of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio

The social problems that disturbed Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio included the following:

- High level of ignorance especially among the Muslim Women. The social system was terrible in that women were oppressed, neglected and mistreated. Women were locked into their houses and circumcised against their will. They walked around in nothing but waist-cloth while exposing their upper part of the body.
- The increasing rate of *bid'aa* (innovation) in Islam. Sheikh was strongly opposed to any innovation that disagreed with the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah.
- The wide spread un-Islamic practices, such as *shirk*. There was a class of sheikhs who posed as spiritual leaders and earned their living through false prophecy and fortune telling. They swindled their followers by pretending to have supernatural powers.
- The violation of the *Sharia* and neglect of the *Sunnah*. Most teachers were hypocrites. They took advantage of the people's ignorance and collected their wealth and property under several pretexts.
- The wealthy Muslims refused to pay Zakat from their wealth and used to engage in unlawful businesses such as Riba, gambling among others.
- The Hausa rulers used to oppress people, forcefully grabbing their lands, imprisoning people on false charges and extorting money from the poor.

### Establishment of the Sokoto caliphate

Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio had gained great popularity among his people due to his general concern for the interest of the people. His reformist process inspired many people including the rulers of Sarakuwa. The people then started opposing and revolting against

their rulers. Due to his popularity among the people, the Hausa rulers became afraid of him and thus began harassing him. They even attempted to assassinate him but he escaped. This forced him to organize an army that would defend him against his enemies. In 1812 C.E Uthman's army emerged victorious over the Hausa States. He thus established his empire based on the Islamic Sharia. The caliphate had its capital in Sokoto which is today's Northern Nigeria and the surrounding areas. Uthman died in 1817 C.E and was succeeded by his son Muhammad Bello.

### **Uthman Dan Fodio's Administrative structure**

During the Sokoto caliphate Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio adopted the following Administrative structure:

- i. Shehu's administration was made up of different arms of government with definite functions and power relating to central authority.
- ii. On top of the administration was the Caliph.
- iii. Directly under the Caliph was Waziri (Prime Minister)
- iv. Then there were Governors who were advisors to the Caliph.
- v. Then there were justice and law enforcement officers.
- vi. To manage the finances were revenue collectors (economic and welfare officers) whose duty was also to distributed Zakat and ghanimah (booty) and collect revenue from people.
- vii. Then there were officers who managed different services in the empire roads, judiciary (judges), prisons, Imams.

### **The two parts of the life of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio**

Dan Fodio lived a life that can be described as of two parts as follow:

- a) ***The period of reformation:*** The first part which falls in the 18th century was a period where he concentrated on writing, teaching, preaching and reforming. He was disturbed by the social problems affecting his society.
- b) ***Establishment of Sokoto caliphate:*** The second part of his life which began in 1802 witnessed his migration and struggle against the unjust and tyrant regimes of North Africa. This prompted Uthman to raise against the Hausa rulers and establish his own caliphate which he called 'the Sokoto caliphate.'

## **Reasons that made Sheikh Uthman not to be amused by the rulers of the Hausa States**

Sheikh Uthman strongly criticized the Hausa ruling class for the following:

- Their heavy taxation and violation of the Muslim Law.
- Their oppression and unfairness.
- The giving and acceptance of bribes.
- The imposition of unfair taxes to their subjects.
- Forceful seizing of land from its owners.
- Unauthorized grazing of animals on other people's crops.
- Extorting money from the poor.
- Imprisonment of his subjects on false charges.

## **Reforms brought by the Sokoto Caliphate under Uthman**

The following are the Uthman Dan Fodio's contributions to the development of Islam in Northern Nigeria:

- a) He challenged the scholars of the time over extremism by writing a book known as *Siraj Al-Wahja* (the lamp of brothers) showing that extremism was a wrong concept.
- b) He taught that all Madhhabs are correct and should be respected.
- c) He reconciled Islamic scholarship with Sufism and emphasized that *Tassawuf* should be for the knowledge of the heart.
- d) He declared custom duties as a source of public revenue.
- e) He forbade revenue officers from accepting gifts from their subjects as are the main source of bribe.
- f) He fought against the cultures that were undermining the rights of women e.g. denial of education, restriction from movement, female circumcision, among others.
- g) He warned the society against Bid'aa (inventing things which are contrary to Islamic belief) such as to kneel for the leaders.
- h) He set up the government provisions to construct and establish roads, bridges, mosques, city walls to ensure comfort for the citizens.

- i) He emphasized revival of the *Hisbah* institutions whose functions included checking the prices, quality of goods, correct weights and measures, prevention of fraud and earning interest.
- j) He ordered that Zakat (charitable alms) should be administered according to the Sharia and be spent in the same region from where it is collected.
- k) He fought against the corrupt Hausa kings and advocated for the removal of oppressive rules on the defeated lot and the powerless people.
- l) He wrote several books such as *Nurul Al-Baab* 'The light of men of understanding', *Kitab Al-Farq* 'Book of differences' among others.
- m) The Sheikh strengthened Islamic knowledge by delivering public lectures in the mosques and schools whereby he taught people Tafsir (Exegesis), Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic law) and others.
- n) He was the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate which secured firm roots for the spread of Islam in Hausa Land.

### **Literary works of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio**

The following are some of the surviving books authored by Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio:

- i) *Nurul Al-Baab* (The Light for Men of Understanding)
- ii) *Wathiqa Al-Ikhwan* (The Document of Brotherhood)
- iii) *Kitab Al-Farq* (Book of Differences)
- iv) *Najma Al-Ikhwan* (Star of the Brothers)
- v) *Siraj Al-Ikhwan* (Lamp of Brothers)
- vi) *Bayan Wajib Al-Hijra* (Description of the Obligation of Migration)
- vii) *Tanbih Al-Ikhwan 'Ala Ahwa Al-Sudan* (Concerning the government of our country and the neighbouring country of Sudan.)

### **Reasons for the rise of Jamaa in Hausaland under Uthman Dan Fodio**

The following are the reasons for the rise of Jamaa in Hausaland under Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio:

- i. The conviction of the people through the teachings and the exemplary life of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio.

- ii. The feeling of freedom by the masses who had been enslaved by the emperors. The Hausa peasants feel emancipated from the injustice and oppressive rule of the Hausa rulers.
- iii. Dan Fodio advocated and lived a simple way of life which made people follow him/made him attract followers to him.
- iv. Dan Fodio established a strong army which over run neighboring states who joined his movement.
- v. The Shehu involved people in decision making and in the affairs to the state established democracy.
- vi. The Hausa appreciated the new efficient system of government that kept them united and replaced stability/ establishments of a strong united empire.

### **Actions Regarded as War crimes by Uthman Dan Fodio**

The following are the actions that were regarded as war crimes by Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio:

- Killing of children.
- Killing of women.
- Rape
- Imposing high tax on the people
- Assassinating and killing the opposers of the King's rule.
- Destruction of property such as animals, farms and buildings.
- Personalizing booty

## **IMAM GHAZALI**

### **Biography of Imam Al-Ghazali**

The following is a brief description of the life of Imam Al-Ghazali:

- His full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali Al-Tusi.
- He was born in 450 A.H (1058 C.E) in a town called Ghazalah at Tus, in North Eastern Persia (Khurasan).

- His father was a pious craftsman who used to make clothes from sheep skin. His father often used to sit in the company of learned theologians and would pray for a son who would be a Faqih (Muslim Jurist) and whose sermons would be listened to by many.
- His father died when he was still young and from there Al-Ghazali was then entrusted under the care of his father's friend Sheikh Ahmed Al-Razakhan who became his first teacher.
- Later, in the year 1070 C.E, Al-Ghazali and his brother Ahmed enrolled in a Madrassa in Gurgan town.
- There, he studied fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) especially the Shafii School of Thought from Abu'l Qasim Jurjani and Ahmad ibn Muhammad Razkhani for a period of seven years.
- He attended the village madrassa and then joined Nizamia Madrassa, which was a very famous educational institution in Nishapur.
- He was an intelligent and keen student who took interest in all subjects like philosophy, theology, natural science, Islamic law and Logic.
- After the death of his teachers, he travelled to Baghdad where he learnt Sahih Bukhari from Abu Sahal bin Mohammad ibn Ahmed al Hafsi.
- Al-Ghazali is one of the greatest Islamic Jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers from Persia.
- He spent some time in Damascus and Jerusalem then visited Madina and Makkah in 1096 C.E.
- Finally, he settled in a village called Tus where he spent the next several years in seclusion until his death in December, 1111 C.E at the of 55 years.

### **Educational background of Imam Al-Ghazali**

The following is the educational background of Imam Al-Ghazali:

- Imam Al-Ghazali started to be taught his basic education at a tender age by his guardian who was a friend to his father, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Razakhan.

- He started schooling at his own town and mastered the Shafii system of teaching from Sheikh Ahmad Al-Razkhani. He first took interest in understanding Fiqh (the Islamic law).
- He then went to Jurjan to learn science and Arabic Rhetoric from Imam Abu Nasr Al-Isma'ili.
- Thereafter, he went to Nishapur where he joined Nizamiya Academy and became a student of Abu'l Ma'ali Juwayni also known as Imam Haramain for eight years, where he earned the title '*ocean of knowledge*' from Imam Haramayn because of his excellent academic performance in a variety of fields like Fiqh, Theology, Natural Science, Logic and Philosophy.
- He undertook his studies with seriousness and graduated with a distinction as a teacher.
- He frequently criticized the works of the Greek Philosophers like the concept of Meta Physics in the study of Theology. He also further criticized the works of other Muslim philosophers like Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi.
- He then began his career of teaching, giving fatwa, and authoring books in nearly all the Islamic Sciences.
- After the death of Imam Haramayn in 1085 C.E, Al-Ghazali was invited together with other scholars to go to the court of Nizamul Mulk Tusi, the powerful Minister of the Seljuq Sultans. The Minister was so impressed by Al-Ghazali's scholarship and participation and in 1091 C.E, he appointed him as the chief professor in the Nizamiyya Academy.
- He became a great advisor in religious and political matters to several ministers of the state.
- He would participate in Islamic debates and discussions and give lecture to more than 300 students. This made him earn popularity all over the Muslim world.
- By 1095 C.E, Imam Al-Ghazali had made great advance in his career.
- He then had an internal call and felt that he had neglected the Creator and his whole life was attached to the world. He passed through a spiritual crisis and abandoned his teaching career. He disposed off his wealth and adopted the life of Sufism.



## Imam al Ghazali Lived in Seclusion

### Meaning of seclusion

It is a necessary situation to renounce the world and to devote oneself to mystical practice. Imam Al-Ghazali finally left Baghdad, renouncing his career and the world and lived in seclusion.

### Reasons/ factors that made Imam Al-Ghazali to live in seclusion

The following are some of the reasons that made Imam Al Ghazali renounce the world and live in seclusion:

- i) The Imam noticed that his idea of being scholar of science and philosophy was not important for his hereafter. And therefore, he thought for the search of Allah as more worthy venture.
- ii) He was not satisfied with the success and pleasures of the world and minor carriers that led him only material gain and not spiritual one. i.e. his high position as a Professor and the brilliant teaching career.
- iii) He wanted to concentrate on studying the doctrines that were against the Islam and try to find solutions. Therefore, he could be able to guide people to the right path.
- iv) He realized that Science and Philosophy will be of no help to him in the hereafter, and that nobility and honour of hereafter could only be found in the life of piouness.
- v) He wanted to strengthen the societal laws by removing the social vices like corruption and injustice.
- vi) He wanted to meditate in order to give up all temptations in the world and therefore to purify his heart.
- vii) He wanted to understand philosophy and then criticized it in order to give it an Islamic perspective.

## Imam Ghazali's views on righteous conduct

### Ten rules of conduct by Imam Ghazali

Imam Ghazali gave us the following rules of conduct which sum up the Muslim ethical system:

- i) Good intention is most essential in Muslim deeds and action. It should remain unchanged under all circumstances.
- ii) Muslims should have a unity of purpose in the service of Allah (SWT), the Creator of this universe.
- iii) Muslims should conform to truth and have the courage to fight against their own inclination by forsaking pleasure and enduring pain by exercising self-discipline.
- iv) Muslims should avoid bid'a (all innovations in matters of religion) and conform to life established practice, for authority is always better than anarchy.
- v) They should be alive to the evils of procrastination and show steadfast zeal and determination in their work.
- vi) As human beings, we should acknowledge our inability to accomplish anything without the help of Allah, but we should not use it as a pretext to laziness.
- vii) The doctrine for salvation by faith with 'Al ahazali' for the 'fear and hope' (Khawf wa Raj'a) means that Muslims should not feel secure (with Allah's punishment) and satisfied merely with their good conduct in life, but should also place their hope (Raja) in Allah who is all Merciful.
- viii) Muslims should lead a life of devotion and prayers.
- ix) Muslims should continuously observe and watch over their hearts (Muraqabah). He who persists in watching and observing his own heart and banishes there from everything will find Allah and His grace.
- x) A consecration to the knowledge of Allah brings us closer to Him.

### **Lessons Muslims youth can learn from Imam Ghazali's rules of conduct**

The following are the ways how the modern youth would adopt the ten rules of conduct by Imam Muhammed Al-Ghazali:

- Muslim youth must have good and sincere intention in all their undertakings.
- Trust in Allah and unity of purpose should be the basis of anything a Muslim youth wishes to do.
- Muslim youth must uphold truth and work towards eradication and condemnation of falsehood.
- Muslim youth should resist themselves from selfish desires.

- Muslim youth should stick to the sunnah of the prophet Muhammed and shun away from all the innovations (bid'aah)
- Muslim youth should be active and responsible in their duties without undue delay.
- Muslim youth should place all their dependence on Allah.
- Muslim youth should strive hard in acts of worship (ibaadah) and should always steadfast on the religion as this is the only way a Muslim can come close to Allah.
- Muslim youth should strive to seek the inner and outer knowledge of Allah.

### **Contributions of Imam Ghazali**

Imam al Ghazali made several contributions to the growth of Islam, philosophy, education and theology.

#### **Contributions on Theology**

The following are contributions made by Imam Al-Ghazali on Theology:

- i) He was a professor of Islamic theology in Nishapur, Nizamia Academy.
- ii) People came to him to for advice on Islamic theology.
- iii) He discussed and held debates on various issues related to Islam Theology.
- iv) He travelled widely in the Middle East in order to teach theology and rid the society from evils.
- v) He established a madrassa in his home town and taught Fiqh, Qur'an, Hadith and Sufism.
- vi) He authored several books on theology. For example, al Munqidh Minal Dhalal (deliverance from error)
- vii) He became a Sufi and contributed to Sufism by establishing a ministry of Sufism. Thus, he contributed to the monastic life in Islam.

#### **Contributions to children's education**

The following are contribution made by Imam Al-Ghazali to Children's Education:

- i) Children should be given knowledge in order to actualize their potential.
- ii) Children should be taught Qur'an and Hadith at the elementary stage of education.
- iii) Parents and teachers should give their children a good impression and be role models to their children, since they are a trust from Allah (SWT).
- iv) Children should be taught not to love money.

- v) Education for the boys should start early enough because boys mature earlier than girls.
- vi) Education should be aware of the changing interest caused by growth and development.
- vii) A child must observe cleanliness, fast for a few days and avoid wearing silk, gold and silver.
- viii) Children must learn to respect and obey the parents, teachers and elders and behave well towards other students.

### Contributions to teacher's education

The following are contributions made by Imam Al-Ghazali to Teacher's Education:

- i) He stated that teaching is a great responsibility and he who undertakes it performs a noble task which is rewarded by Allah (SWT).
- ii) The teacher should not overburden the child but perform his duties as required by his profession.
- iii) The teacher should not criticize the subjects taught by other teachers but should teach the learners the inter relationship between the subjects.
- iv) Teaching should be linked to concrete situations to facilitate easy understanding.
- v) After the lesson, the teacher should allow the learners to have reactions to the lesson by asking questions.
- vi) Students should be taught various skills in order to be functional in the day to day life.
- vii) He explained that education should cultivate in man obedience to the teachings of religion in order to attain salvation in the hereafter.
- viii) The teacher should not criticize the less gifted children but should respect and help.
- ix) The teacher must be very tender to his pupils and treat them like his own children.
- x) Teachers should introduce concepts in bits and ensure the students have mastered the previously taught concepts.
- xi) Memorization, repetition and inculcation should be at an early stage but incorporated with understanding.

### Contributions to the development of Islam

The following are contributions made by Imam Al-Ghazali to the Development of Islam:

- i) He advocated for the removal of all unislamic practices and customs in the society.

- ii) He curved out a detailed analysis of moral and spiritual growth, that is, the fulfilment of a Muslim.
- iii) He wrote his famous book, 'The Revival of Religious Sciences.'
- iv) He suggested for reformation of the society from its deep malice, he criticized the *Ulama* (scholars) for debating on insignificant issues and called them to devote their energy to duties.
- v) He stressed on the study of Sunnah of the Prophet and modelling the Muslims according to his life.
- vi) He led the foundation of scientific and scholastic systems which is emulated in the Muslim world today.
- vii) He taught that a believer must be free minded and avoid imitations but have a sincere belief in Allah
- viii) He came up with moral conduct that could guide Muslims to be good believers. He taught that moral teaching helps in curbing evils, just like medicine helps in controlling and curing diseases.

#### **Al Ghazali's economic contributions**

The following are contributions made by Imam Al-Ghazali to Economy:

- i) He emphasized that subsistence living is adequate but warned against its dangers.
- ii) He condemned hoarding, *riba* and other malpractices in trade.
- iii) Ethical behaviour should be upheld in market places.
- iv) He advised Muslims to avoid extravagance and miserliness.
- v) He declared production and supply of necessities to be an obligatory duty.
- vi) He taught that any economic system of a government should consider: individual and social life, religion, family life property and intellect.
- vii) He cited the differences between necessities, comfort and luxury.
- viii) He identified justice, peace and stability as pre conditions of any economic progress.

### Why was Imam al Ghazal referred to as the ocean of knowledge?

The following are the reasons why Imam al Ghazal is known as the Ocean of Knowledge:

- a) He was a distinguished student of Nadhamiyya academy who latter appointed as an assistant professor.
- b) He studied several fields of studies such as theology, Islamic law, natural science, philosophy, logic and mysticism
- c) Through his vast knowledge, he was held in a high esteem position by many other aged doctors of that time.
- d) He was an eloquent speaker whose lectures were overcrowded by many as 300 students and scholars
- e) He wrote several books such as: aims of philosophers, criterion of action, proof of the truth, the correct balance among others.
- f) Al-Ghazali is one of the greatest Islamic Jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers from Persia.

### Death of Imam al Ghazali

Imam al ahazali spent his last days in devotion, Qur'an recitations, prayer and fasting, and the company of Sufis. He died at Tabran in 1111C.E at the age of 55 years. Ibn al Jawzee narrated in his book, *Al-Thabat 'Inda al-Mamat* (Firmness at the Time of Death) from al-ahazali's brother Ahmad: "On Monday [11th Jumadul-Akhira] at the time of the dawn prayer my brother Abu Hamid made his ablution, prayed, then said: 'Bring me my shroud.' He took it, kissed it and put it on his eyes, saying: 'We hear and obey in readiness to enter the King's presence.' Then he stretched his legs, facing the Qibla, and died before sunrise." – may Allah sanctify his soul! Imam al-Ghazzali's life was spent in self-

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sacrificing service to Allah (SWT) and humankind. He left behind him a fine example for all Muslims to follow.