

# **A Short Biographical Sketch of Imam Nawawi**

## **Birth and Birth place:**

The complete name of Imam Nawawi is Abu Zakaria Mohiuddin Yahya, son of Sharaf An-Nawawi, son of Murry, son of Hassan, son of Hussain, son of Muhammad, son of Juma, son of Hazam. Nawawi refers to Nawa, a place near Damascus, in the suburb of the city of Howran. One of his ancestors named Hazam had settled at this place. Imam Nawawi was born at Nawa in the year 631 A.H. His father, a virtuous and pious man, resolved to arrange for proper and befitting education as he had discovered the symptoms of heavenly intelligence and wisdom in his promising child at an early stage.

Shaikh Yasin bin Yousuf Marakashi, a saintly figure of Nawa says: "I saw Imam Nawawi at Nawa when he was a youth of ten years of age. Other boys of his age used to force him to play with them, but Imam Nawawi would always avoid the play and would remain busy with the recitation of the Noble Qur'an. When they tried to domineer and insisted on his joining their games, he bewailed and expressed his no concern over their foolish action. On observing his sagacity and profundity, a special love and affection developed in my heart for young Nawawi. I approached his teacher and urged him to take exceptional care of this lad as he was to become a great religious scholar and most pious saint of future. His teacher asked whether I was a soothsayer or an astrologer. I told him I am neither soothsayer nor an astrologer but Allah caused me to utter these words." His teacher conveyed this incident to Imam's father and he keeping in view the learning quest of his son, decided to dedicate the life of his son for the service and promotion of the cause of Islamic Faith. In a short period, Nawawi learnt to read the Holy Qur'an and by that time he nearly had attained puberty. Nawa had no academic or scholarly atmosphere and there were no religious academies or institutes where one could earn excellence in religious learning, so his father took him to Damascus, which was considered the center of learning and scholarship, and the students from far and wide gathered there for schooling. During that period, there were more than three hundred institutes, colleges and universities in Damascus. Imam Nawawi joined Madrasah Rawahiyah which was affiliated with the Ummvi University. The founder and patron of this Madrasah was a trader named Zakiuddin Abul-Qassim who was known as Ibn Rawahah. Madrasah was named after him. Noted and eminent teachers of the period taught in that Madrasah. Imam Nawawi says, "I studied in this institution for two years. During my stay in Madrasah Rawahiyah, I never had complete rest and lived on the limited food supplied by the institution." As a routine he used to sleep very little at night. When it became irresistible as a human being, he would lean and slumber for a while against the support of books. After a short duration he would again be hard at his scholastic pursuits.

## **His Teachers and Guides:**

During his stay at Damascus, he studied from more than twenty celebrated teachers. These teachers were regarded as masters and authority of their subject field and disciplines they taught. Imam studied Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence, its principles, syntax and Etymology from great scholars of his time. Abu Ibrahim Ishaq bin Ahmad Al-Maghribi, Abu Muhammad

Abdur-Rahman bin Ibrahim Al-Fazari, Radiyuddin Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Abu Hafs Umar bin Mudar Al-Mudari, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Isa Al-Muradi, Abul-Baqa Khalid bin Yusuf An-Nablusi, Abul-Abbas Ahmad bin Salim Al-Misri, Abu Abdullah Al-Jiyani, Abul-Fath Umar bin Bandar, Abu Muhammad At-Tanukhi, Sharafuddin Abdul-Aziz bin Muhammad Al-Ansari, Abul-Faraj Abdur-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Maqdisi, Abul-Fada'il Sallar bin Al-Hasan Al Arbali etc.

There were hundreds of Imam's students, among them some notables are: Alauddin bin Attar, Ibn Abbas Ahmad bin Ibrahim, Abul-Abbas Al-Ja'fari, Abul-Abbas Ahmad bin Farah, Rashid Ismail bin Mu'allim Al-Hanafi, Abu Abdullah Al-Hanbali, AbulAbbas Al-Wasti, Jamaluddin Sulaiman bin Omar Az-Zar'i, AbulFaraj Abdur-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Abdul-Hamid AlMaqdisi, Badr Muhammad bin Ibrahim, Shamsuddin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Ash-Shihab Muhammad bin Abdul-Khaliq, Hibatullah Al-Barizi, Abul-Hajjaj Yusuf bin Az-Zaki etc.

### **His Desire and Crave for Learning:**

Imam Nawawi had endless thirst for knowledge, and it can be guessed from his daily practice of studies. He used to read daily twelve lessons and write explanation and commentary of every lesson and also made important additions. Whatever the book he read, he put down the marginal notes and explanations on that book. His intelligence, hard work, love, devotion and absorption in his-studies amazed his teachers and they become fond of him and began to praise and admire him.

According to Imam Dhahabi, Imam Nawawi's concentration and absorption in academic love gained proverbial fame. He had devoted all his time for learning and scholarship. Other than reading and writing, he spent his time contemplating on the interacted and complex issues and in finding their solutions. Allah had also conferred upon him the gift of fast memory and depth of thought, and he who makes the right use of this boon, there remains no doubt in his sagacity and discernment. Imam Nawawi made full benefit of his God given qualities and potentialities and earned the highest degree of honor.

### **Imam's Simplicity and Niceness of Manners:**

The learned persons, elite of the society and the public greatly respected the Imam on account of his piety, learning and excellent character. He used simple dress and ate simple food. Devout scholars do not care about worldly chattels, they give preference to religious and academic pursuits, propagation of Faith etc.

They experience more heavenly delight and joy in such activities than those who seek satisfaction in luxurious foods, precious clothes and other worldly things. Imam Nawawi had a prominent place among the erudite notables of his age. He was God-fearing person having illustrious and glorious aims regarding propagation of Faith. Celebrated Sheikh Mohiuddin expresses his impression about Imam Nawawi as thus:

"Imam Nawawi had three distinctive commendable qualities in his person. If anybody have only one out of these three, people return to him in abundance for guidance.

First, having knowledge and its dissemination. Second, to evade completely from the worldly inclinations, and the third, inviting to all that is good (Islam) enjoining Al-Ma'ruf [i.e., Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do] and forbidding Al-Munkar [polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden]. Imam Nawawi had all three in him."

### **His works and his death:**

The learned Imam had a very short life but even during this short period, he had written a large number of books on different subjects. Every work of the Imam is a masterwork and a treasure of knowledge. Hundreds and thousands of people benefit from these works.

### **Some of the Prestigious Works of Imam Nawawi are:**

Commentary on Sahih Al-Bukhari, Al-Minhaj fi Sharh Sahih Muslim, Riyad-us-Saliheen, Kitab-ur-Raudah, Commentary on Mohaddhab, Tahdhib-ul-Asma was-Sifat, Kitab-ul-Adhkar, Arba'een, At-Taqreeb fi Ilmil-Hadith wal-Irshad fihi, Kitab-ulMubhamat, At-Tibyan, Al-Idah fi Manasikil-Hajj, Sharh Sahih AlBukhari (Naqis), Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud (Naqis), Tabaqat Ash Shafi'iyah, Muhimmatul-Ahkam, Manaqib-ush-Shafi'i, Bustan-ulArifeen, Al-Khulasatu fil-Hadith, Mukhtasar At-Tirmidhi, AlMasa'il Al-Manthurah, Al-'Umdah fi Tashihit-Tanbih and others.

After spending 28 years of age, Imam Nawawi returned to his hometown. Soon after his arrival at Nawa, he felt ill and died. Imam Nawawi is still living in the hearts of Muslims. His works are of everlasting value. May Allah bless him.