

The Life of
Imām
Bukhārī
rahimahullāh

Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat *hafizahullāh*



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The Life of Imām Bukhārī *raḥīmahullāh*
by Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat *hafīẓahullāh*
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Words to make the Scales Heavier on the Day of Qiyāmah

Rasūlullāh ﷺ said,

There are two sentences beloved to Ar-Raḥmān (the Most-Merciful), light on the tongue and weighty on the scales:

سُبْحَنَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ
سُبْحَنَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيْمِ

Subhānallāhi wa biḥamdihī, subhānallāhil ‘azīm

*I glorify Allāh and I praise Allāh;
I glorify Allāh the Magnificent. (Al-Bukhārī)*





Foreword

Every year, the final year students of the ‘Ālimiyyah course at the Islāmic Da’wah Academy reach the pinnacle of their studies by having the honour of studying the six famous collections of Ahādīth. From amongst them, the study of Ṣahīḥul-Bukhārī is undoubtedly the highlight, which is regarded as the most authentic book in Islām after the Glorious Qur’ān. It is also an opportunity for the students to be taught by my most honourable and beloved teacher and Shaykh, the world-renowned erudite ‘Ālim and spiritual reformer, Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat *hafizahullāh*. The honourable Shaykh adopts a unique approach in teaching this monumental book, going to great lengths to explain the Ahādīth in a simplified manner, so that students develop a thorough understanding of the message of our Beloved Nabī ﷺ. The honourable Shaykh also takes every opportunity to derive lessons from the Ahādīth in order to spiritually nurture his beloved students, prepare them to face the challenges of life after graduation and instil in them the qualities that will enable them to serve the Dīn in accordance to the methodology of our pious predecessors. Those who have participated in the lectures on Ṣahīḥul-Bukhārī and other lectures of the honourable Shaykh will bear testimony to the fact that they do not only leave one

with immense academic benefit, but also spiritual upliftment. Before commencing Ṣahīḥul-Bukhārī, the honourable Shaykh begins with introductory lectures on its great author, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ.

The booklet at hand is based on these introductory lectures. It was the desire of the honourable Shaykh to provide a brief insight into the praiseworthy traits and noble qualities of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ so that the Ummah may better understand the reasons behind his acceptance. Moreover, by following his exemplary life, they too can attain acceptance in the Court of Allāh ﷺ.

The biographies of our pious predecessors are indeed a source of guidance, a protection from trials and a means of rectification for those who study them. Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd ﷺ has stated:

مَنْ كَانَ مُسْتَنِدًا فَلَيْسْتَنَّ بِمَنْ قَدْ مَاتَ فَإِنَّ الْحَيَّ لَا تُؤْمِنُ عَلَيْهِ الْفِتْنَةُ

Whoever wants to adopt the way of another, then let him adopt the way of those who have passed away, as the living are not safe from trials.¹

Shaykh Ḥamdūn Al-Qaṣṣār ﷺ said, ‘Whoever looks into the lives of the pious predecessors will acknowledge his shortcomings and realise how far behind he is from the ranks of the righteous.’²

In the annals of Islamic history, there are few personalities, after the illustrious Companions ﷺ of our Beloved Nabī ﷺ, whose acceptance is unanimous amongst all schools of thought within the Ahlus-Sunnah, and love for whom is prevalent from the learned to the layman. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ is undoubtedly amongst this blessed group and his divine acceptance is clear to all. His unparalleled contribution to the science

1 Mirqātul-Mafātīh, part 1, p. 284

2 Ṭabaqātūs-Ṣūfiyyah, p. 112

of Ḥadīth led him to earning the title of ‘Amīrul-Mu’minīn fil-Ḥadīth’, ‘the leader of the believers in the field of Ḥadīth’. Amongst his works, he is best known for Ṣahīḥul-Bukhārī, a compilation of 7,357 authentic Ahādīth.

This booklet briefly touches upon the many facets of the life of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ beyond his academic brilliance, all of which indicate a life full of piety and practice upon his vast knowledge. The sincerity of the Imām, his sacrifices in pursuit of knowledge, excellent character and devotion to Allāh ﷺ are just a few of his noteworthy qualities. After reading this booklet, one will understand that such acceptance can only be earned when one humbles himself in front of the ‘Ulamā to benefit from them and makes effort for his spiritual rectification. It is hoped that learning about incidents from the life of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ will also inspire us to follow in his footsteps so that we too may be blessed by Allāh ﷺ with some of the virtue that He ﷺ gifted this noble Imām.

It is often the case that a great personality is only truly recognised after their departure from this temporary abode. However, such was the standing of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ that the people of his time recognised his unique status during his lifetime, as expressed by the people of Baghdad in the following couplets:

الْمُسْلِمُونَ بِخَيْرٍ مَا بَقِيَتْ لَهُمْ

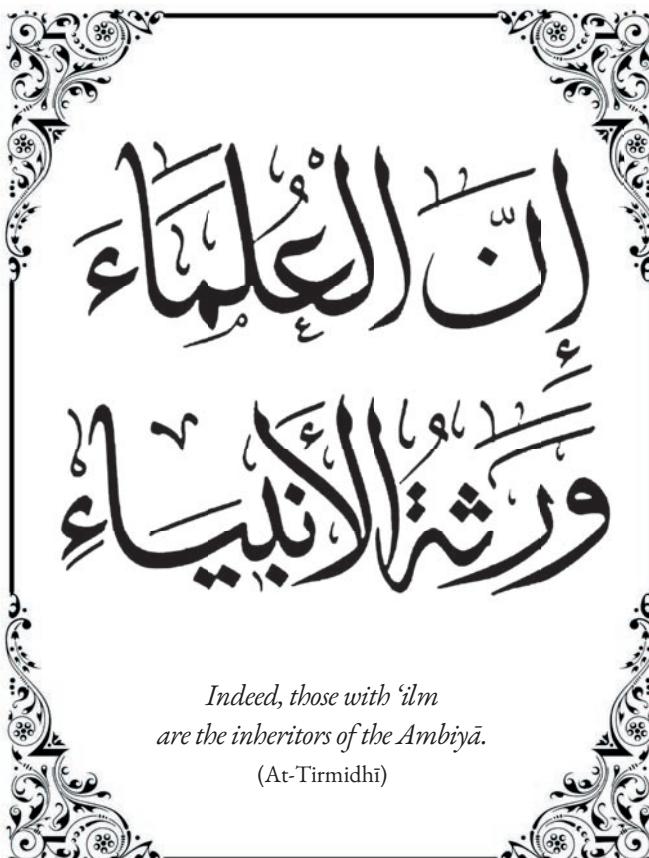
وَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ خَيْرٌ حِينَ تُفْتَنُ

*The Muslims are with goodness as long as you remain for them,
And there is no goodness after you when you no longer remain.*

Although Imām Bukhārī ﷺ has departed from this temporary world, he still remains in the hearts of the Muslims and goodness and blessings continue to spread from his service for Dīn.

It is hoped from Allāh ﷺ that He lengthens the affectionate shadow of the honourable Shaykh upon the Ummah for many years to come, accepts his great services and blesses this booklet just as He has blessed the compiler and the one discussed within. May Allāh ﷺ make it a means of immense benefit for the students of Dīn, the respected ‘Ulamā and the Ummah at large. Āmīn.

(Muftī) Ibrahim Bagas
Rajab 1447 / January 2026





The Lineage of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ

Muhammad, son of Ismā‘il, son of Ibrāhīm, son of Mughīrah, son of Bardizbah Al-Ju‘fī Al-Bukhārī.¹

A brief insight into his forefathers is detailed below.

Bardizbah

Bardizbah is the great-great-grandfather of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ who was a Persian and a follower of the Zoroastrian religion. Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī ﷺ mentions that Bardizbah is a Persian word which the people of Bukhāra used for a farmer and because the great-great-grandfather of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was a farmer, he came to be known as Bardizbah.²

Mughīrah

Bardizbah’s son, Mughīrah, was the great-grandfather of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. He accepted Islām at the hands of the Governor of Bukhāra, Yamān Ibn Akhnas Al-Ju‘fī. As a result, Mughīrah also came to be known as Al-Ju‘fī and, consequently, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was known as Al-Ju‘fī too.³

1 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 527

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

Ibrāhīm

Ibrāhīm was the son of Mughīrah and the grandfather of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. The books of history hold no information about Ibrāhīm. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī ﷺ has commented, ‘And as for Ibrāhīm, the son of Mughīrah, we are not aware of any information regarding him.’⁴

Ismā’il

Ismā’il ﷺ, the father of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, was from amongst the Muḥaddithīn. ‘Allāmah ibn Ḥibbān ﷺ in his work *Kitābuth-Thiqāt* writes that Ismā’il ﷺ narrates Ahādīth from Ḥammād ibn Zayd ﷺ and Mālik ibn Anas ﷺ, and the Muḥaddithīn of Iraq have narrated Ahādīth from him.⁵ He ﷺ was also blessed with the opportunity of meeting ‘Abdullāh ibn Mubārak ﷺ.⁶

‘Allāmah Dhahabī ﷺ states, ‘The father of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was from the devout and cautious ‘Ulamā.’⁷ His *taqwā* was of such a high calibre that when he was on his deathbed, leaving behind a considerably large amount of wealth, he said, ‘I do not have knowledge of a single ḥarām or doubtful dirham (silver coin) in my wealth.’⁸

There is no doubt that such pure ḥalāl earnings must have played an important role in Imām Bukhārī ﷺ becoming ‘Amīrul-Mu’minīn fil-Hadīth’ ﷺ.

Birth and Childhood

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was born after the Jumu‘ah ṣalāh on 13th Shawwāl 194 AH (816 CE) in the city of Bukhārā. It was through the Grace of

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 *At-Tārīkhul-Kabīr*, part 1, p. 323

7 *Tārīkhul-Islām*, part 11, p. 140

8 *Siyaru A’lāmin-Nubalā*, part 12, p. 447

Allāh ﷺ that he ﷺ was born on the best day of the week and in the first of the blessed months of hajj, Shawwāl.

He was still in his childhood when his honourable father passed away. His mother, an extremely pious and devout woman, shouldered the responsibility of his upbringing.⁹

During childhood, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ lost his eyesight causing much grief and anxiety to his mother. She continually supplicated to Allāh ﷺ with much humility and helplessness, begging Him incessantly for her child's eyesight to be restored. Finally, Allāh ﷺ accepted his mother's prayers. One night, she saw Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm ﷺ in her dream giving her glad tidings that Allāh ﷺ had restored her child's sight due to the abundance of her prayers. Upon waking up in the morning, she found that indeed Allāh ﷺ had cured her child.¹⁰

Thirst for Knowledge

Since childhood, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ had been blessed with a unique thirst and zeal for acquiring knowledge. 'Allāmah Dhahabī ﷺ states that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ had commenced his acquisition of Ahādīth from the year 205 AH.¹¹ This means that by the tender age of eleven, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ had already become a student of Ḥadīth.

Muhammad Ibn Abī Ḥātim ﷺ, the scribe of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, narrates from the Imām, 'I was inspired to memorise Ahādīth whilst I was still (a student at primary level) in maktab.' When asked how old he was at the time, the Imām replied, 'Ten or slightly younger.'¹²

After completing his elementary Islamic studies, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ started participating in the Ḥadīth lessons of the renowned

9 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 527

10 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 329

11 Tārīkhul-Islām, part 6, p. 140

12 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 324

Muḥaddithīn of the time, like Imām Dākhilī ﷺ. One day whilst narrating Aḥadīth, Imām Dākhilī ﷺ mentioned the chain of narration (sanad) of a particular Ḥadīth,

عَنْ سُفْيَانَ عَنْ أَبِي الزُّبَيْرِ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

Sufyān narrates from Abū Zubayr who narrates from Ibrāhīm.

Upon hearing this chain of narration, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ commented, ‘O Father of so and so! Abū Zubayr does not narrate from Ibrāhīm.’ Upon this remark, Imām Dākhilī ﷺ expressed his disapproval. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ responded, ‘Please refer to your original copy if you have it.’

After referring to his original copy, Imām Dākhilī ﷺ asked, ‘O child! What is the chain of narration (for this particular Ḥadīth)?’ Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied, ‘It is Zubayr ibn ‘Adiyy (not Abū Zubayr) who narrates from Ibrāhīm.’ Imām Dākhilī ﷺ amended his copy and remarked, ‘You are correct.’¹³ At the time of this incident Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was only eleven years old.

Youth

At the age of sixteen, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ had memorised the Ḥadīth compilations of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mubārak ﷺ and Imām Wakī‘ ﷺ. When he reached the age of eighteen, he began compiling the various verdicts and opinions of the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ and Tābi‘īn ﷺ.¹⁴

Extraordinary Memory

As Allāh ﷺ had decreed to take an extraordinary service from Imām Bukhārī ﷺ in the field of Ḥadīth, He ﷺ blessed him with an extraordinary memory. Ḥāshid ibn Ismā‘il ﷺ states, ‘Imām Bukhārī ﷺ

13 Ibid, part 2, p. 325

14 Ibid

used to go with us to the Muḥaddithīn of Baṣrah whilst he was still young. He would not write anything and a few days passed in this condition. We would say to him, “You come with us and do not write. What is your intention behind this?” After sixteen days, he said, “You have crossed the limit in your persistent questioning. Show me what you have written.” We took out what we had written which amounted to more than fifteen thousand Ahādīth. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ recited all of them from memory.’

They were so accurately preserved in the memory of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ that Ḥāshid ﷺ further says, ‘We began making corrections to our notes based on his memorisation.’¹⁵

Another incident illustrating the phenomenal memory of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ took place when he once visited Baghdaḍ. Upon hearing of his arrival, the local Muḥaddithīn gathered with the intention of testing his memory. They had chosen a hundred Ahādīth and modified them in such a manner that the chain of narration of each was mixed up with that of another. They then handed the altered Ahādīth to ten men, giving each one ten Ahādīth, and instructed them to present them to Imām Bukhārī ﷺ when they attend the gathering. They agreed a time with Imām Bukhārī ﷺ for the gathering and then attended.

When everyone had reached the gathering, the first person stood up and asked regarding one of the altered Ahādīth. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’ He continued presenting the Ahādīth one after the other until he completed his ten, whilst Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied each time, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’ The ‘Ulama who attended the gathering looked at one another saying, ‘The man (Imām Bukhārī ﷺ) has understood the ploy.’ And those who did not know the ploy deemed Imām Bukhārī ﷺ incapable and weak in

15 Ibid, part 2, p. 334

memory. Then another person stood up and asked regarding one of the altered Ahādīth. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’ He then asked regarding another Ḥadīth. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’ He continued presenting the Ahādīth one after the other until he completed his ten, whilst Imām Bukhārī ﷺ replied each time, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’ Then the third and fourth person, until all ten had stood up and presented the altered Ahādīth, whilst Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said nothing more than, ‘I do not recognise this Ḥadīth.’

When they had finished, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ turned to the first person and said, ‘As for the first Ḥadīth you presented, you read it in this manner, whereas the correct form is this. The (correct form of the) second Ḥadīth you presented is this.’ He then corrected the third and fourth Ḥadīth until he completed all ten Ahādīth consecutively. He returned every text to its correct chain of narration and every chain of narration to its respective text. He did the same with the others. Upon witnessing this, the people acknowledged his extraordinary memory and declared his virtue.

Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar ﷺ remarks, ‘Here, we have no choice but to accept the excellence of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. Changing the wrong to right was not such an astonishing feat, for he was a great Muḥaddith and Hāfiẓ of Ḥadīth. What was really astonishing is that after hearing the erroneous narrations of Ḥadīth only once, he was able to memorise the mistakes in order of what they presented.’¹⁶

Journeys in Search of Ḥadīth

To undertake travel for the sake of seeking Ahādīth is an extremely meritorious act. The Ṣahābah ﷺ, the Tābi‘īn ﷺ and thereafter the

16 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, pp. 542-543

‘Ulamā of the Ummah all had great enthusiasm and zeal for undertaking journeys in search for Ahādīth. In this regard, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ narrates in his Ṣaḥīḥ in كِتَابِ الْعِلْم (the Book of Knowledge), under the chapter لِتَرْوِيجِ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْم (Travelling in Search for Knowledge) that Sayyidunā Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh ﷺ travelled to meet Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn Unais ﷺ the distance of a month’s journey, in search of just one Ḥadīth.¹⁷

Ibrāhīm ibn Ad’ham ﷺ, an illustrious personality from the Mashāiyikh, states that Allāh ﷺ removes tribulations from this Ummah due to the blessings of the travels of the Aṣhābul-Ḥadīth (the people of Ḥadīth).¹⁸

This noble practice was also observed with great dedication by Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. He undertook his first journey in the year 210AH,¹⁹ at the age of 16. He set out to perform ḥajj with his mother and his elder brother, Ahmad. Upon completing the pilgrimage, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ remained behind in Makkah Mukarramah to acquire Ahādīth, whilst his mother and brother returned to Bukhārā.²⁰ After a two year stay in Makkah, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ travelled to Madīnah Munawwarah and acquired Ḥadīth from renowned Muḥaddithīn. After his stay in Madīnah Munawwarah, he proceeded to Baṣrah to spend time with the well-known Muḥaddithīn of that city and benefit from their knowledge too.²¹

Imām Ḥākim ﷺ has mentioned fifteen places visited by Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, wherein he stayed in the company of the local renowned Muḥaddithīn of their time. The fifteen places are: Makkah

17 Ṣaḥīḥul-Bukhārī, kitāb: الخروج في طلب العلم chapter: الْعِلْم

18 Fathul-Mugīth bi Sharhi Alfiyatil-Ḥadīth, part 3, p. 286

19 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 528

20 Ibid, part 2, p. 527

21 Tahdhībul-Asmā’i wal-Lughāt, pp.56-57

Mukarramah; Madīnah Munawwarah; Shām (Greater Syria); Bukhārā; Marw; Balkh; Hirāt; Naysābūr; Rayy; Baghdād; Wāsiṭ; Baṣrah; Kūfah; Miṣr (Egypt) and Al-Jazīrah (Upper Mesopotamia).²² In addition, ‘Allāmah Khaṭīb Baghdādī ﷺ, mentions that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ travelled to Khurāsān, Jibāl and all the cities of Iraq²³ to acquire Ahādīth. ‘Allāmah Dhahabī ﷺ has mentioned ‘Asqalān; Ḥimṣ and Dimishq (Damascus) too.²⁴ Imām Bukhārī ﷺ himself says, ‘I am unable to enumerate how many times I visited Kūfah and Baghdād to spend time with the Muḥaddithīn.’²⁵

In essence, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ travelled to almost all the key cities of the Islamic world and acquired the Ahādīth of Rasūlullāh ﷺ from 1,080 Mashāyikh.²⁶

Sacrifice in the Acquisition of Knowledge

Foregoing comfort and undergoing hardship can be regarded as a prerequisite in the acquisition of the knowledge of Dīn. This is evident from the saying of Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr ﷺ, ‘Knowledge cannot be acquired along with physical comfort.’²⁷ Imām Abū Yūsuf ﷺ has also stated, ‘Knowledge is such a thing which will not give you even a portion of itself until you do not give your whole self to it.’²⁸ Accordingly, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ endured much hardship during his pursuit for knowledge.

‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣ Al-Ash’qar ﷺ, a companion of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ says, ‘We used to study Ahādīth with Imām Bukhārī ﷺ in Baṣrah.

22 Ibid

23 Tārīkh Baghdād, part 2, p. 322

24 Tadhkīratul-Huffāz, part 2, p. 97

25 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 528

26 Ibid, part 2, p. 529

27 Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, kitāb: أوقات الصّلوات الخمس Hadith: 605

28 Al-Jāmi‘ li Akhlāqir-Rāwī wa Ādābis-Sāmi‘, p. 452

Once, we noticed that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was absent for a number of days so we searched for him and found him in a house without any clothes. He had run out of money and had nothing left with him. So we got together and collected some money, then bought him some clothing and gave it to him to wear. Thereafter, he came with us to study Ḥadīth.²⁹

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said, ‘When I once visited (my teacher) Ādam ibn Abī Iyās ﷺ, my monthly income (from investments) was delayed to the extent that I began to eat grass.³⁰ His sense of dignity and respect for knowledge was such that at the time he did not make mention of his hardship in front of anyone. Later, when narrating the incident before his students, he said, ‘On the third day, a man I did not recognise came to me and gave me a bag of gold coins.³¹

As a result of such hardships in the pursuit of knowledge, Allāh ﷺ granted Imām Bukhārī ﷺ such acceptance that people continue to remember him till this day.

First Written Works

It was during his stay in Madīnah Munawwarah that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ accomplished the first of his written works at the age of eighteen; his book, *فَضَائِا الصَّحَابَةِ وَالْتَّابِعِينَ وَأَقَوِيَّلُهُمْ*, which was a compilation of various verdicts and opinions of the Ṣahābah ﷺ and Tābi‘īn ﷺ.³² At the same age, he also penned another book titled, *اللَّئِيْنُ الْكَبِيْرُ*, which consists of biographies of approximately forty thousand narrators of Ḥadīth, from the Companions ﷺ till the era of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. He compiled this monumental work during moonlit nights, sitting in the proximity

29 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 332

30 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 531

31 Ibid

32 Siyaru ‘Alāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 400

of the blessed grave of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. In praise of this book, ‘Allāmah Tājud-Dīn As-Subkī ﷺ mentions that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ has not been surpassed in authoring a book of this kind and calibre, and whoever authors a book after him on the history, names and appellations of the Muhaddithīn, will be dependent on it.³³

Taqwā and Prudence

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was blessed with taqwā of such a high calibre that he himself says, ‘I have never backbited anyone since I became aware that backbiting is ḥarām.’³⁴ He would also say, ‘I am hopeful of meeting Allāh ﷺ in such a state that He will not hold me accountable for backbiting anyone.’³⁵

The extreme caution exercised by Imām Bukhārī ﷺ with regards to abstaining from sins was from among the means by which his special memory was preserved, for engaging in disobedience to Allāh is destructive to the memory. Imām Shāfi‘ī ﷺ also referred to this point in his famous couplets:

شَكُوتُ إِلَى وَكِيعٍ سُوءَ حِفْظِي
فَأَرْشَدَنِي إِلَى تَرَكِ الْمَعَاصِي
وَأَخْبَرَنِي بِانَّ الْعِلْمَ نُورٌ
وَنُورُ اللَّهِ لَا يُهْدِي لِعَاصِيٍّ

*I complained to Waki‘ (my teacher) about my poor memory,
and he advised me to leave sins.*

33 Ar-Risālatul-Mustatrafah li Bayāni Mashhūri Kutubis-Sunnatil-Musharrafah, pp.128-129

34 Ibid, part 2, p. 532

35 Ibid, part 2, p. 533

*He informed me that knowledge is a light (from Allāh),
and the light of Allah is not given to the disobedient.³⁶*

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ also exercised great prudence in his affairs. Once some merchandise came into his possession which was sent to him by Abū Ḥafṣ. In the evening, some traders gathered by him and offered to buy it for a sum that would yield a profit of five thousand dirhams. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said to them, ‘Return (to your homes) for the night (and come back later).’ The next day, another group of traders came, offering a sum that would yield double the profit: ten thousand dirhams. Despite the permissibility of selling to the second group, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ rejected their offer and said, ‘During the night I made an intention of selling the goods to the first group.’ He gave it to the first group and said, ‘I did not desire to act contrary to my intention.’³⁷

Self-Respect and Integrity

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was very particular about maintaining self-respect and integrity which is an important requirement for a person of knowledge. Pride and arrogance are evil traits, but a sense of honour and dignity is praiseworthy. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was very cautious regarding anything that may tarnish his reputation or the reputation of the ‘Ulamā in general.

Once, whilst undertaking a journey in search of Ḥadīth, Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was travelling by ship. He had with him a bag containing a thousand gold coins. A fellow passenger on the ship began to serve the Imām and show much affection to him, which resulted in the Imām trusting him and informing him of the large sum he had with him. Sometime later, the man pretended to sleep and upon awakening

36 Dīwānul-Imāmish-Shāfi‘ī, p.87

37 Hudās-Sārī, part 2, p. 531

started wailing and ripping his clothes. The people asked him, ‘What has happened to you?’ He said, ‘I had a bag containing a thousand gold coins and it has been stolen from me.’ Immediately the search began with the passengers. Realising the danger, Imām Bukhārī  threw the bag into the sea without anyone noticing. When they searched Imām Bukhārī  and did not find the bag with him, the people lamented the man.

When they disembarked, the man asked Imām Bukhārī  in private, ‘What did you do with the bag?’ Imām Bukhārī  replied, ‘I threw it into the sea.’ The man said, ‘How did you allow yourself to let go of a thousand gold coins?’ Imām Bukhārī  said to him, ‘O foolish man! I have spent my entire life and wealth in acquiring Ḥadīth and people regard me as reliable. Should I not save myself from being labelled a thief?’³⁸ Imām Bukhārī  must have felt that if he had attempted to argue his case, he would have been branded a thief, as the people did not know him. And if he was to be labelled a thief, then the hundreds of thousands of Ahādīth he had acquired would have gone to waste in a single moment.

Once, Imām Bukhārī  gave someone a sum of 25,000 dirhams as a loan. As the debtor did not want to repay the debt, he fled from Bukhārā. The news reached Imām Bukhārī  whilst he was in Firabr that the man had come to Āmul, approximately 25km away. Imām Bukhārī  was advised to go to Āmul and hold the man accountable. However, when the debtor received news that Imām Bukhārī  was in Firabr, he fled 400km away to Khwārizm. Someone advised Imām Bukhārī  to ask Abū Salamah Al-Kushānī, the governor of Āmul, to write to the governor of Khwārizm to apprehend the man and thus try to retrieve his debt from him. Imām Bukhārī  replied, ‘If I was to

38 Al-Fawā'idud-Darārī fī Tarjamatil-Imāmil-Bukhārī, pp. 51-52

write a letter to the governor (requesting a favour), he too will expect from me a religious verdict ruled in his favour when needed. I cannot sell my Dīn in return for worldly gain.’³⁹

Selflessness and Humility

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was very selfless and gave preference to others. Muḥammad ibn Abī Hātim ﷺ states, ‘When I would sometimes accompany Imām Bukhārī ﷺ on a journey, we would share a room. During the night, I would see him wake up fifteen to twenty times. Every time he would wake up and light his oil lamp. He would then take out his manuscripts of Ahādīth and make some annotations on them, then return to bed. He would not awaken me, so I said to him, “Why do you put all of this burden upon yourself and not wake me up?” He ﷺ replied, “You are a young man. I do not wish to spoil your sleep.”’⁴⁰

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was also a very humble person. Once, he was having a guest house built on the outskirts of Bukhārā and many people gathered to assist in the construction. The Imām would carry bricks himself. When a student would say to him, ‘O Imām Bukhārī! You have enough people to do the work’, he would answer, ‘This is what will be of benefit to us (in the Hereafter).’⁴¹

Spending in the Path of Allāh ﷺ

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ spent a lot of wealth in the pursuit of knowledge. He had inherited a great fortune from his father Ismā‘il ﷺ, which he in turn invested in business partnerships where he provided the capital and the other partners conducted the business. He states, ‘I used to

39 Siyaru A‘lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 446

40 Tārīkh Baghādād, part 2, p. 332

41 Siyaru A‘lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 450

earn 500 dirhams every month (from investments), which I would spend in the pursuit of knowledge. The recompense from Allāh ﷺ is better and more lasting.⁴²

Imām Dhahabī ﷺ narrates from some sources that Imām Bukhārī ﷺ would sometimes face days when he would not have even a piece of bread to eat and would suffice on only two or three almonds, and at other times he would have large amounts which he would spend in charity. He would spend upon a single poor student of Ḥadīth, giving him between twenty to thirty dirhams, without anyone knowing about it.⁴³ Such was his sincerity and generosity towards others.

Self-Control and Piety

Once a female servant of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ tripped and knocked over an inkpot in front of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ. He said to her, ‘How are you walking?’ She replied, ‘How am I supposed to walk when there is no space here?’ Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said, ‘Go! For I have freed you.’ It was said to him, ‘O Abū ‘Abdillāh! She angered you (and you freed her)?’

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said, ‘(Yes, she displeased me with her behaviour) so I made myself happy by doing what I did.’⁴⁴

Adherence to the Sunnah

A key reason why Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was granted abundance of blessings in his knowledge was that he would act upon whatever he learnt from the Ahādīth of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He would give so much attention to emulating Nabī ﷺ that he even carried bricks during the construction of his guesthouse⁴⁵ because Rasūlullāh ﷺ had lifted stones at the time

42 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 531

43 Siyaru A’lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 450

44 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 531

45 Siyaru A’lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 450

of the construction of Masjid Nabawī. Rasūlullāh ﷺ used to practise archery and Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه also made a special point to do likewise. He would often ride horses too and practise archery on horseback. His scribe and assistant would say, ‘For as long as I have accompanied him, I do not remember seeing his arrow miss the target except on two occasions. He would always hit the target and would not be surpassed (in archery).’⁴⁶

His adherence to the sunnah of our Beloved Nabī ﷺ can be understood from a dream of Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim رضي الله عنه in which he had the honour of seeing Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He says, ‘I saw Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه in a dream walking behind Nabī ﷺ. Whenever Nabī ﷺ would lift his foot, Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه would place his foot on that place (where Rasūlullāh ﷺ had placed his).’ This dream indicates the thorough adherence of Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه to the Sunnah.

This resulted in gaining such proximity to Rasūlullāh ﷺ that Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Al-Firabrī رضي الله عنه, a very close student of Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه, narrates, ‘I saw Rasūlullāh ﷺ in a dream. He asked me, “Where are you going?” I replied, “I intend to visit Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il (Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه).” Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, “Convey to him my salām.”’⁴⁷

Abstinence

Throughout a large part of his life, Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه did not partake of any gravy with bread. Once he became ill and his urine sample was given to the doctors for testing. After examining the urine, they said, ‘This urine is similar to that of Christian monks who do not consume gravy.’ Imām Bukhārī رضي الله عنه concurred and said, ‘I have not eaten gravy for forty years.’ The doctors were asked how it should be treated. They

46 Ibid, part 12, p. 444

47 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 550

said, ‘The treatment for it is (consumption of) gravy.’ Imām Bukhārī  refused until the ‘Ulamā and Mashāyikh insisted on him doing so. He agreed to their request and began eating bread with sugar.⁴⁸

Devotion to Worship

It was the habit of Imām Bukhārī  to perform thirteen raka‘āt of ṣalāh in the latter part of the night at the time of tahajjud. During Ramaḍān, his worship would increase. On the first night of Ramaḍān, his students would gather by him and he would lead them in Tarāwīh Ṣalāh. He would complete the Qur’ān once in Tarāwīh Ṣalāh by the end of the month. During Tahajjud Ṣalāh, he  would recite between half and a third of the Qur’ān every night, ensuring that the Qur’ān was completed every three nights. So, between the Tarāwīh and Tahajjud Ṣalāh, he would accomplish eleven completions. In addition, Imām Bukhārī  would recite the Qur’ān during the day and complete it daily at the time of iftār, increasing the total for the month to forty-one completions. He would say, ‘Upon every completion (of the Qur’ān), there is an accepted du‘ā.’⁴⁹

Once Imām Bukhārī  was invited for a meal to an orchard belonging to one of his students. After he led the people in Zuhra Ṣalāh, he stood up to perform optional ṣalāh. Upon completing his ṣalāh, he lifted up his upper garment and said to one of his associates, ‘Look! Do you see anything under my garment?’ After checking, it transpired that a wasp had stung the Imām in sixteen or seventeen places which had become swollen. Someone said to him, ‘Why did you not terminate your ṣalāh upon the first time it stung you?’ He replied, ‘I was in the middle of a sūrah and I desired to complete it.’⁵⁰

48 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 533

49 Ibid, part 2, p. 534

50 Siyaru A‘lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 442

Sincerity

Once a man sitting in the gathering of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ took out a straw of grass from his beard and threw it onto the floor of the masjid. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ kept an eye on it. When the people were unaware, he stretched out his hand, picked it up and discreetly put it in his sleeve. Later when he left the masjid, he took it and threw it on the ground.⁵¹ Such was the sincerity of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ and his desire to conceal his good deeds from others.

Acceptance of Du‘ās and Preference for the Hereafter

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ was from amongst those individuals whose du‘ās were readily accepted by Allāh ﷺ. Despite this, he ﷺ used to pray profusely for the needs of the Hereafter, but never for personal worldly gain. Imām Bukhārī ﷺ states, ‘I (only) made du‘ā to my Rabb ﷺ twice (for worldly gain). (On both occasions) Allāh ﷺ accepted my du‘ās. Thus, I never want to make du‘ā (for worldly gain) after that, for it may reduce my good deeds or hasten for me (recompense for my good deeds) in this very world (instead of receiving in the Hereafter).’⁵²

Demise

The demise of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ took place in the year 256 AH⁵³ in the small town of Khartank, in the vicinity of Samarqand.⁵⁴ He passed away on the night of ‘Īdul-Fiṭr and was buried the next day (the day of ‘Īdul-Fiṭr). Imām Bukhārī ﷺ lived for exactly 13 days short of 62 years.⁵⁵

51 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 534

52 Siyaru A‘lāmin-Nubalā, part 12, p. 448

53 Ibid, part 12, p. 468

54 Ibid, part 12, p.664

55 Ibid, part 12, p. 468

Imām Dhahabī  narrates that ‘Abdul-Wāhid ibn Ādam At-Ṭawāwīsī  said, ‘I saw Nabī  in a dream with a group of Ṣahābah , waiting at a place. I greeted Nabī  with salām, to which he replied. I then asked, “What is it you are waiting for, O Rasūlullāh  (in my dream).’⁵⁶

Abū Manṣūr Ghālib ibn Jibrīl  says, ‘Imām Bukhārī  stayed with us for a few days and fell ill. His illness increased in severity to the extent that a messenger was sent to Samarqand to request the transportation of Imām Bukhārī . When he arrived, Imām Bukhārī  got ready to travel. He wore his leather socks and put on his turban. He had walked approximately twenty steps towards the animal whilst I was holding onto his upper arm together with another associate of mine when he said, “Let go of me, for I am feeling weak.” He then read a few supplications, lied down and passed away, whilst sweating profusely.’

He continues, ‘When we had buried him, a rich fragrance more pleasant than musk emanated from the soil of his grave which remained for days afterwards. Also from the side of his grave, long white pillars (of nūr) reached the sky. People started to visit the grave in astonishment and would take soil from it. We could not keep the grave safe, despite appointing people to guard it. We were left helpless, so we then raised a secure wooden fence around the grave so no one could reach it, but then the people would take the soil that was around the grave as they could not reach the grave. As for the fragrance, it emanated continuously for many days and became the talk of the town. This incident came to the

attention of those who opposed Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, and some of them came to his graveside and showed their remorse upon the despicable ways they had exhibited.⁵⁷

Imām Bukhārī ﷺ in the Eyes of Renowned Muḥaddithīn

- Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ﷺ stated, ‘Khurāsān has not produced (another personality) similar to Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl Al-Bukhārī ﷺ.’⁵⁸
- Imām Muslim ﷺ once said to Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, ‘I bear witness that there is none comparable to you in the entire world.’⁵⁹
- Imām Muslim ﷺ once came to Imām Bukhārī ﷺ, kissed his forehead and then said, ‘Allow me to kiss your feet, O teacher of teachers, leader of the Muḥaddithīn, and the ṭabīb (specialist) in the irregularities of Ahādīth.’⁶⁰
- Ḥāfiẓ Rajā ibn Murajjā ﷺ states, ‘He is a sign from the Signs of Allāh ﷺ who walks on the surface of the earth.’⁶¹
- The renowned Muḥaddith, Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzaymah ﷺ said, ‘There is none more knowledgeable regarding Ahādīth beneath the expanse of the sky than Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl (Imām Bukhārī ﷺ).’⁶²
- Imām Bukhārī ﷺ said, ‘Muḥammad ibn Salām ﷺ (a teacher of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ) said to me, “Look into my collection and whatever error you find in it, indicate it so I do not narrate it.” So I revised the books.’ Imām Muḥammad ibn Salām ﷺ marked

57 Ibid, part 12, pp. 466- 467

58 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 342

59 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 542

60 Ibid, part 2, p. 548

61 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 346

62 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 542

those Ahādīth which were agreed upon by Imām Bukhārī ﷺ with the words: “The young man agrees”, and marked those Ahādīth which were considered weak, with the words: “The young man does not agree”. Some of his students (after seeing these markings) asked the Imām, ‘Who is this young man?’ He replied ‘He is the one who has no comparison, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il.’⁶³

These statements of praise and recognition are from those who were either the seniors of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ or his contemporaries. The statements made by the ‘Ulamā who came after him are too numerous to count. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī ﷺ writes, ‘If I was to open the doors of the tributes of the ‘Ulamā who came after him, paper would run out and life would come to an end, for it is an ocean which has no shore.’⁶⁴

May Allāh ﷺ grant Imām Bukhārī ﷺ the best of rewards, elevate his status and unite us with him and the chosen servants of Allāh ﷺ in the Hereafter.

May Allāh ﷺ grant us the ability to follow in the footsteps of Imām Bukhārī ﷺ in acquiring, practising and disseminating the knowledge of Dīn, so that we may also gain acceptance in the Court of Allāh ﷺ. Āmīn.

63 Tārīkh Baghdađ, part 2, p. 345

64 Hudas-Sārī, part 2, p. 543

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Everything Depends on 'Ilm

One of the signs of Qiyāmah is the extinction of 'ilm. Allāh ﷺ will take away 'ilm by taking away the people of 'ilm i.e. the 'Ulamā. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ إِنْ تَرَأَّعًا يَنْتَرِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ
بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ

Indeed, Allāh will not take away 'ilm just like that, by taking it away from the hearts of the people; He will take away 'ilm by taking away the 'Ulamā... (Al-Bukhārī)

Allāh ﷺ will take away 'Ulamā, and 'ilm will remain no more. When that happens, ma'rifah (the recognition of Allāh ﷺ) will become extinct, for ma'rifah can only come about through 'ilm. And when ma'rifah will become extinct, there will not be a single person to remember Allāh ﷺ; and when that happens this world will come to an end. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّىٰ لَا يُقَالَ فِي الْأَرْضِ اللَّهُ اللَّهُ

The Hour will not come as long as 'Allāh, Allāh' is uttered on the surface of the earth. (Muslim)

So in actual fact, the madāris and 'Ulamā are a blessing for everyone in the whole world, be they Muslim or otherwise.

-Extracted from Inspirations by Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat ḥafizabullāh



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