

The Best of the Madhabs of Fiqh

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[Translated by Abbas Abu Yahya]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The Best of the Madhabs of Fiqh According to Shaykh Muhammad Naasir-Ud-deen Albaanee

Statements of the Four Imaams

- Aboo Hanifah -Rahimullaah- (d. 150 A.H.) said:

‘When the hadeeth is authentic then that is my Madhab.’¹

- Malik ibn Anas -Rahimullaah- (d. 179 A.H.) said:

‘There is none after the Prophet -sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam- except that you can take his statement and leave it; except for the Prophet’s -sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam- statements’²

- Shafi’ae -Rahimullaah- (d. 199 A.H.) said:

‘When the hadeeth is authentic then that is my Madhab.’³

- Ahmad -Rahimullaah- (d. 241 A.H.) said:

‘Whoever rejects a hadeeth of the Messenger of Allaah –sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam–, then he is on the brink of destruction.’⁴

Shaykh Muhammad Naasir-ud-deen Albaanee was asked

¹ [Ibn Abideen in ‘al-Hasheeyah’ (1/63) – Sifat as-Salah p.46]

² [Ibn AbdulHadi in ‘Irshaad as-Saalik’ (1/227), Ibn Hazm in ‘Usool al-Hakaam’ –Sifat as-Salah p.49]

³ [Nawawi in ‘al-Majmoo’ – Sifat as-Salah p.50]

⁴ [Ibn al-Jawzi p.182 – – Assal Sifat as-Salah 1/p.32]

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Questioner: If we accept that it is permissible for a student of knowledge to take a Madhab only as a study and not to be biased to it when the evidence occurs, then which Madhab is the best and leads a student of knowledge to what is intended?

The Shaykh answered: ‘Ash-Shafi’ae and Ahmad, they are both so much closer to the Sunnah. As for Ahmad, it is because he had broader research than all of the Imaams. This reality is known by everyone who has studied the Sunnah. As for Shaafi’ee, although not having a great share in gathering the Sunnah he was stronger than Imaam Ahmad in knowledge of the Arabic language and its sciences.

Also, he was stronger regarding the principles of Fiqh, he was the first to compile a book about the Usool (Principles of Fiqh) and it is a book well-known by the name ‘ar-Risalah’.

This is why a student of knowledge seeks aid with the Fiqh of Shaafi’ee and the hadeeth of Ahmad and he gathers the two goods from these two men. It is established from Imaam Shaafi’ee -Rahimahullaah – and this is from the fairness of the Imaams and their excellence and their fear of their Lord – where Imaam Shaafi’ee said:

‘O Ahmad you are more knowledgeable than me about hadeeth. When an authentic hadeeth comes to you then teach it to me, whether it is from the Hijaz, Shaam or Misr.’

Perhaps he mentioned another country as well. In this is a point or a delicate indication by Imaam Shaafi’ee of him not blindly following Imaam Maalik the Imaam of the land of Hijrah.

Maalik used to give precedence to the Ahadeeth from al-Hijaz above that of all the Ahadeeth from other places. He does have a point of view, in that al-Hijaz was land of the elite of the Companions, whereby the Messenger -alayhi as Salat wa sallam- was in Madeenah and the senior Companions were resident there, and those who died from them were there, like Aboo Bakr, Umar and Uthmaan -RadiAllaahu anhum. However, historically it is known that many of the Companions travelled to other countries and they transported with them in their hearts what they had received from their Prophet -sallAllaahu alayhi wa Ahlihi wa sallam- so this knowledge which was in their hearts should not be abandoned. This is why Shaafi’ee said you are more knowledgeable than me about hadeeth. Why? Because Shaafi’ee stayed in Makkah but he had journeyed to Misr and benefited from new knowledge from there, which he did not have from before and that is why he had two Madhabs, old and new.

So, due to him just travelling from one area to another his circle of knowledge increased and eventually he had two Madhabs. So what can a person say about Imaam Ahmad who had travelled the lands, east, west, north and south in the path of gathering knowledge from the scholars who narrated with Asaneed (chains) from the Companions who spread out into different countries due to Islamic conquests.

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O Ahmad when an authentic hadeeth comes to you then teach it to me you are more knowledgeable of it than me whether it is from the Hijaz or Shaam or Misr.

However, from the point of extracting rulings, understanding of the texts and Ayaat then by the testification of everyone who has studied Imaam Shafi'ee's biography is that he is more knowledgeable than Imaam Ahmad. This is why, when a person wants to study, he who wants to study a Madhab with the aim as has preceded in the question and the answer to it is, that he chooses both the Madhab of Imaam Shaafi'ee and the Madhab of Imaam Ahmad. In addition to this, is another matter that regarding Imaam Shaafi'ee.....whereby his followers have a distinction which is not found in the followers of the other Imams.

His followers are more and have more of a concern with following the principle of all the Imams which is when the hadeeth is authentic then it is my Madhab. There is a very large group from the Shafaeyah who are prevalent from the Shafaeyah because they opposed Imaam Shaafi'ee in many issues, whereas you hardly see a person from the scholars who came later from the Hanafees or Malikees who would oppose their Imams as an extension from their statement which is a principle: 'When the hadeeth is authentic then that is my Madhab.'

The one who studies the Madhab of Shaafi'ee benefits from this new studies which occur from the followers of Imaam Shaafi'ee since they place in front of their eyes his statement:

'When the hadeeth is authentic then that is my Madhab.'

Another distinction found in the Shafaeyah is that they have very many Imams of hadeeth more than the Imams of hadeeth in the Hanafee Madhab who you can easily count.

Those from the Hanafees who have knowledge of hadeeth are very few, whereas from the Shafaeyah there are many scholars of hadeeth. You find in the Shafaeyah many books of Takhreej (references) of the hadeeth of the Madhab of Shaafi'ee, many books. Whereas, you do not find in the Hanafee Madhab except one book which is 'Nasb ar-Rayya lihadeeth al-Hidayyah'.

In reality this distinction raises the matter of the Madhab of Shaafi'ee and places it in the forefront for the one who wants to study a Madhab from the four Madhabs.

The Hanafee Madhab has a distinction which other people like, which is it uses opinions a lot. This is what a lot of people in modern times like, those who make the Deen conform with desires and requests which differ in different times and places. So, they like this Madhab more, and are not impressed with other Madhabs especially the Madhab of Imaam Ahmad which gives precedence to the Sunnah above everything else.'

[Silsilah al-Huda wa Noor tape no. 39]