

Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali was born in A.D. 1058 (A.H. 450) in or near the city of Tus in Khurasan to a Persian family of modest means, whose members had a reputation for learning and an inclination towards Sufism. His father died when he was young, having entrusted one of his Sufi friends with the education of his two sons. The friend undertook that task until the money bequeathed by the father ran out, whereupon the friend advised the two brothers to enter a madrasah where they would be afforded board and instruction.

Al-Ghazali appears to have begun his elementary education at approximately age seven, studying Arabic, Persian, the Koran and the principles of religion. He went on to intermediate and higher education at a madrasa, where he studied fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (Koranic exegesis) and hadith (Prophetic tradition).

Towards the age of 15, al-Ghazali moved to Jurjan (a flourishing centre of learning at that time, some 160 kilometres distant from Tus) to study fiqh under Imam al-Isma'ili. Such 'travel in search of learning' to study under famous masters was traditional in Islamic education. The following year, he returned to Tus, where he remained for three years, memorizing and endeavouring to understand what he had taken down from the masters, and continuing the study of fiqh. He



then moved to Nishapur, where he studied fiqh, kalam (scholastic theology), logic and, possibly, some philosophy under Imam al-Juwaini, the most illustrious Shafi'ite (one of the four Sunnite Schools of Law) faqih (jurist, scholar of Islamic religious law) of the day. At