

THE STATUS OF IMAM ABU HANIFA IN HADITH AND ISLAMIC THEOLOGY**Md. Ruhul Amin**

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All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and salat wa salam on the noblest of messengers and the seal of the prophets Sayyiduna and Mawlana Muhammad, the unlettered and noble prophet, and upon his family and companions, all of them.

After praising Allah and sending salutations upon the prophet:

Abu Hanifa Nu'mān ibn Thābit ibn Zūṭā ibn Marzubān, He was born in 80 Hijri, commonly known by his kunya Abū Ḥanīfa, or reverently as Imam Abū Ḥanīfa by Sunni Muslims, was a Sunni Muslim theologian and jurist who became the eponymous founder of the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, which has remained the most widely practised law school in the Sunni tradition, predominating in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran (until the 16th century), Balkans, Russia, Circassia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Muslims in India, Turkey, and some parts of the Arab world. He is also called al-Imām al-A'zam ("The Greatest Imam") and Sirāj al-A'imma ("The Lamp of the Imams") by some of his Sunni followers.

Born to a Muslim family in Kufa, Abu Hanifa is known to have travelled to the Hejaz region of Arabia in his youth, where he studied in Mecca and Medina. As his career as a theologian and jurist progressed, Abu Hanifa became known for favouring the use of reason in his legal rulings (faqīh dhū ra'y) and even in his theology. Abu Hanifa's theological school is claimed to be what would later develop into the Maturidi school of Sunni theology.

The Islamic Ummah is united that Imam A'zam Abu Hanifah Nu'man ibn Thabit (may Allah mercy him) is one of the four followed imams — Malik, al-Shafi'i, Ahmad and Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy them all and be pleased with them).

Among those issues upon which all of the people of knowledge from both the early and latter times are agreed is that these four jurists, and their likes from among the mujtahid imams whose followers have gradually died out, only derived fiqh issues (masa'il) and Shari'ah rulings from the book of Allah Most High and the Sunnah of His Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and that which these two sources indicate towards such as consensus (ijma') and legal analogy (al-qiyas al-shar'i) etc.

The knowledge of the Book and the Sunnah are the basis of ijtihad and the process of deriving rules; it is because of this that the mujtahid jurists were leaders in the knowledge of the Noble Qur'an and the pure Sunnah because without these two core sciences it would not be possible for them to carry out ijtihad and derive rulings and masa'il.

If they did not have the knowledge of the Noble Qur'an and the pure Sunnah then how would they have been able to carry out ijtihad? How would they have been able to derive Shar'i rulings and from where did they bring these religious masa'il? Without the knowledge of the Book and the Sunnah, the religion cannot be visualized, and nor can the Shari'ah, its rulings and masa'il.

It is because of this that when any person is designated as a mujtahid, then everyone understands that this person has a large amount and great portion of the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah, such that he is able to perform ijtihad and has been designated as a mujtahid.

However, in spite of all of this, we see some people speaking ill regarding the imam of the fuqaha and mujtahids Imam Abu Hanifah Nu'man, the great tabi'i (may Allah mercy him). They falsely and lyingly say, "Surely, he had no knowledge of the pure Sunnah and the hadiths of the Noble Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and, even if he did, then it was very little."

These people, even though they were very few in previous times, were refuted by the imams of hadith and Sunnah and the great notable individuals of this science in every age and place. However, a group known for its excesses and extremism, and for calling others heretics and innovators, has increased in recent times. We see some individuals among them in various lands making denigrating remarks regarding this great imam and flaunting unsound treatises, baseless views and malicious lies saying he was ignorant of the science of hadith and the Sunnah (we seek refuge with Allah) while calling themselves the Ansar al-Sunnah, the Ahl al-Hadith, the Salafiyyah and the Muhammadiyyah, as the situation demands. The real people of Sunnah and hadith, the pious predecessors and beloveds of Sayyiduna Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) are innocent of the vileness of what they say and do.

The senior imams of hadith and those notable individuals of this science have refuted these disgraceful lies in every age, and wrote hadiths and their commentaries; and there are many that did this.

Many of them devoted books and specific treatises explaining the virtues (manaqib) of Imam Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy him) because of this. Among them were Imam Ibn Abi al-'Awwam al-Sa'di, [1] Imam Hafiz Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Maliki, the hadith scholar Imam Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Hadi al-Hanbali, Imam Hafiz al-Dhahabi, Imam Hafiz al-Zayla'i, Imam Hafiz 'Ali al-Qari, Imam Hafiz al-Kirman, Imam al-Kardari, Imam Ibn Hajar al-Makki, Imam Hafiz al-Suyuti, Imam Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Salihi, Imam Mawfaq ibn Ahmad al-Makki and others.

We shall suffice here in this short introduction by mentioning what the researcher Imam Hafiz Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Dhahabi has mentioned in Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, an excellent book containing only details of the imams and notable hafiz [2] of hadith. Al-Dhahabi himself mentions regarding this book in his introduction:

"This Tadhkirah is of the names of those trusted (mu'addal) bearers of the prophetic sciences and those who refer to their [own] ijtihad in considering [narrations to be] reliable, weak, correct and fabricated. It is upon Allah that I hold fast to, upon Him I rely and to Him I turn to."

In this excellent and wonderful book, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, Imam Hafiz al-Dhahabi mentions Imam Abu Hanifah among those major hafiz of hadith of the fifth rank (al-tabaqat al-khamisah). He writes:

"Abu Hanifah, the great imam (imam al-a'zam), the jurist of Iraq, Nu'man ibn Thabit ibn Zuta al-Taymi (who were their masters) al-Kufi. He was born in 80 AH and saw Anas ibn Malik more than once when he came to them in Kufa. Ibn Sa'd has narrated this from Sayf ibn Jabir that he heard Abu Hanifah say this. He narrated from 'Ata'a, Nafi', 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hurmuz al-A'raj,

‘Adi ibn Thabit, Salamah ibn Kuhayl, Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, Qatadah, ‘Amr ibn Dinar, Abu Ishaq and many others. Zufar ibn Hudhayl, Dawud al-Ta‘i, Qadi Abu Yusuf, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, Asad ibn ‘Amr, Hasan ibn Ziyad al-Lu‘lui, Nuh al-Jami‘, Abu Muti‘ al-Balkhi and others learned fiqh from him. He learned fiqh from Hammad ibn Abu Sulayman and others. Waki‘, Yazid ibn Harun, Sa‘d ibn al-Sult, Abu ‘Asim, ‘Abd al-Razzaq, ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Musa, Abu Na‘im, Abu ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Muqri and others narrated from him. He was an imam, pious, knowledgeable, someone who practiced, someone who indulged in great worship and a man of great ranking; he would not accept the sultan’s gifts but would trade and earn a living.

“Dirar ibn Sard said, Yazid ibn Harun was asked, ‘Who is a greater faqih, al-Thawri or Abu Hanifah?’ He replied, ‘Abu Hanifah was a greater faqih and Sufyan was greater in remembering hadith.’ Ibn al-Mubarak said, ‘Abu Hanifah was the greatest faqih among the people.’ Al-Shafi‘i said, ‘People are children to Abu Hanifah in fiqh.’ Yazid said, ‘I never saw anyone more god fearing and more intelligent than Abu Hanifah.’ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Mihraz narrated from Yahya ibn Ma‘in who said, ‘There is no issue with him; he was not accused of anything. Yazid ibn ‘Umar ibn Hubayrah imposed on him to take up the judiciary but he refused to be qadi.’ Abu Dawud (may Allah mercy him) said, ‘Imam Abu Hanifah was an imam.’

“Bishr ibn al-Walid narrates from Abu Yusuf who said, ‘I was walking with Abu Hanifah when a man said to another, “This is Abu Hanifah, he does not sleep at night.” Imam Abu Hanifah said, “I swear by Allah, people do not speak of me regarding that which I have not done.”

He used to keep awake the night in prayer, du‘a and supplication.’ I (Imam Hafiz al-Dhahabi) say: I have devoted a chapter to the virtues of this imam. He died in Rajab, 150AH. May Allah be pleased with him.”

Imam Hafiz al-Dhahabi has written under the biography of Imam Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy him) in *Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala*:

“And he took an interest in seeking hadiths and travelled for this. As for fiqh and being precise in providing an opinion and its innermost points, he was at the top. And people are his children in that...”

With his chain of transmission he writes:

“Isma‘il ibn Hammad ibn Abu Hanifah informed us, ‘Nu‘man ibn Thabit ibn al-Marzaban was from among the free people of Persia. I swear by Allah, we were never enslaved. My grandfather was born in the eightieth year. Thabit went to ‘Ali when he was small and he prayed for barakah for him and his children. We hope to see Allah accept ‘Ali’s (may Allah be pleased with him) prayer for us...’

“Muhammad Sa‘d al-‘Uwfi said, I heard Yahya ibn Ma‘in say, ‘Abu Hanifah was reliable (thiqah), he did not narrate a hadith except that which he remembered and did not narrate that which he did not.’ “Salih ibn Muhammad said, I heard Yahya ibn Ma‘in say, ‘Abu Hanifah was reliable in hadith.’ Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Mihraz narrated from Ibn Ma‘in, ‘There is nothing wrong with Abu Hanifah.’ And he said once, ‘He is according to us from among the people of truth and was never accused of lying. Ibn Hubayrah imposed on him to take up the judiciary, but he refused to be a qadi...’

“Shu‘ayb ibn Ayyub al-Sarifini said, Abu Yahya al-Himmani narrated to us, ‘I heard Abu Hanifah say, “I saw a dream that scared me. I saw I was digging up the grave of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). I came to Basrah and ordered a man to ask Muhammad ibn Sirin and he asked him. He said, ‘This man shall uncover the hadiths of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).’””

“The hadith scholar Mahmud ibn Muhammad al-Marwazi said that Hamid ibn Adam narrated to us that Abu Wahb Muhammad ibn Muzahim narrated to us that, ‘I heard ‘Abd Allah ibn Mubarak say, “If Allah had not aided me with Abu Hanifah and Sufyan, then I would have been like the rest of the people.””

“Ahmad ibn Zuhayr said that Sulayman ibn Abu Shaykh narrated to us that Hujr ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbar narrated to me who said, Al-Qasim ibn Ma‘n was asked, ‘Does it please you to be the servants of Abu Hanifah?’ He replied, ‘The people have not sat with anyone more beneficial than Abu Hanifah.’ Al-Qasim then said to him, ‘Come with me to him.’ When he (the man who asked) came to him, he stayed with him and said, ‘I have not seen anyone like him.’

“Muhammad ibn Ayyub al-Duris said Ahmad ibn al-Sabah narrated to us, ‘I heard al-Shafi‘i say that Malik was asked, “Did you see Abu Hanifah?” He replied, “Yes, I saw a man if he were to speak to you regarding this pillar that he will make it gold then it would happen through his proofs.””

“Asad ibn ‘Amr narrates, ‘Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy him) performed ‘Isha and the morning prayer with one wudu for forty years.’

“Bishr ibn al-Walid narrates from Qadi Abu Yusuf who said, ‘While I was walking with Abu Hanifah I heard a man saying to another, “This is Abu Hanifah, he does not sleep at night.” So Abu Hanifah said, “I swear by Allah, it is not spoken of me that which I have not done.” He used to keep awake the night in prayer, supplication and du‘a.’

“It has been narrated through two chains that Abu Hanifah recited the entire Qur’an in one rak‘ah...

“Ibn al-Mubarak narrates, ‘I have never seen a man commanding so much respect in his gathering, and nor more beautiful in manners and gentleness than Abu Hanifah...’

“Sharik narrates, ‘Abu Hanifah is someone who would remain quiet for a long time and was someone of great intelligence.’ Abu ‘Asim al-Nabil said, ‘Abu Hanifah would be called al-watd (the pole) due to performing so many salah.’ Ibn Ishaq al-Samarqandi narrates from Qadi Abu Yusuf who said, ‘Abu Hanifah used to complete the Qur’an every night in one rak‘ah.’

“Yahya ibn ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Himmani narrates from his father that he remained with Abu Hanifah for six months. He said, ‘I never saw him offer the morning prayer except with the wudu of the ‘Isha of the previous night. He would complete the Qur’an every night at dawn...’

“Nuh al-Jami‘ narrates from Abu Hanifah that he said, ‘What is from the Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace), then that will gladly be given priority (‘ala al-ra’s wa al-‘ayn); what comes from the Companions, we shall choose, and what is apart from that, then they are men and we are men.’

“Waki’ said, ‘I heard Abu Hanifah say, “Urinating in the masjid is better than some types of analogy.”’

“Abu Yusuf said that Abu Hanifah said, ‘It is not appropriate for a man to narrate except that which he has remembered at the time when he heard it.’

“Abu Mu’awiyah al-Dharir narrates, ‘Loving Abu Hanifah is from the Sunnah.’

“Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Zuhri narrates from Bishr ibn al-Walid who said, ‘Mansur called for Abu Hanifah and wanted him to take up the judiciary and he swore that he will definitely take it. Imam Abu Hanifah refused and vowed, “I will not.” Al-Rabi’ al-Hajib said, “You see the commander of the faithful taking an oath and you then also take an oath?” He replied, “The commander of the faithful is more capable of fulfilling the compensation for his oath than I.” He was sent to prison; he died there in Baghdad...’

“The jurist Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Saymari said, ‘He did not accept the position of qadi, so he was beaten, imprisoned and died in jail.’ Hayyan ibn Musa al-Marwazi said that Ibn al-Mubarak was asked, ‘Is Malik a greater jurist or Abu Hanifah?’ He replied, ‘Abu Hanifah.’ Al-Khuraybi said, ‘Only the jealous or ignorant disparages Abu Hanifah.’

“Yahya ibn Sa’id al-Qattan said, ‘We do not lie in front of Allah. We have not heard any better opinion than that of Abu Hanifah. We have taken the majority of his opinions.’

“Ali ibn ‘Asim said, ‘If the knowledge of Imam Abu Hanifah were to be weighed against the knowledge of the people of his era, then he would surpass them.’

“Hafs ibn Ghiyath said, ‘The speech of Abu Hanifah in fiqh is finer than a hair; only an ignoramus finds fault in it.’

“It has been narrated from A’mash that he was asked regarding an issue, so he said, ‘Only Nu’mān ibn Thabit al-Khazzaz would be able to answer that expertly. I think he was blessed in his knowledge.’

“Jarir said, ‘Mughayrah said to me, “Sit with Abu Hanifah, you will gain insight in fiqh. If Ibrahim al-Nakha’i were alive then he would have sat with him.”’

“Ibn al-Mubarak said, ‘Abu Hanifah is the greatest faqih amongst the people.’

“Al-Shafi’i said, ‘People are children to Abu Hanifah in fiqh.’ I (Imam Hafiz al-Dhahabi) say: leadership (imatat) in fiqh and its subtleties is resigned to this imam. And this is an issue in which there is no doubt.’

“And nothing will be correct in the minds,

“When even the day asks for proof that it is day.

“It is possible that his biography can be separated into two volumes. May Allah be pleased with him and mercy him. He died a martyr having been given poison to drink in 150AH; he was 70 years old. Upon his grave are a large dome and a splendid tomb in Baghdad. And Allah is the most knowledgeable.”

Our shaykh al-hadith, the imam of the hadith scholars, the a’rif of Allah, the hafiz, the researcher, ‘Allamah Muhammad Zakariyya al-Kandhalwi then al-Madani (may Allah mercy him) writes in his introduction to *Awjaz al-Masalik ila Muwatta Malik*,

“The fourth beneficial lesson regarding his (i.e. Imam Abu Hanifah) lofty rank in hadith: And there is no need for this lesson because the imam (may Allah be pleased with him) was a mujtahid by consensus, rather he was from among the senior mujtahids and no one has rejected that from those of the earlier and latter times. A man can only be a mujtahid after he has become an expert in the Noble Qur’an, the noble hadiths, the athars, [3] history, lexicography and analogy, as has been explained by the previous and contemporary imams of the principles of fiqh (usul). After all this, rejecting the imamat of an imam in hadith is nothing but scepticism.

“In spite of this, we feel it is appropriate to mention some of the statements of experts on this issue. Ibn al-Mubarak said, ‘He — may Allah be pleased with him — was, I swear by Allah, someone who would firmly grasp knowledge, avoid that which is forbidden, follow the ‘ulama of his city (Kufa), only permit taking that which has been correctly transmitted from the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and he knew extremely well those hadiths that are nasikh from those which are mansukh. [4] He would seek reliable hadiths and those that show the action of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace). He would hold on to that which he found the ‘ulama of Kufa on in following the truth and making it his religion. A group has slandered him and we have not answered, seeking forgiveness for him from Allah Most High.’

“Makki ibn Ibrahim said, ‘Abu Hanifah — may Allah be pleased with him — was the most knowledgeable person of his era. [I (Shaykh Zakariyya) say: the meaning of ‘ilm according to the people of hadith has already been covered — those who memorise the chains (isnad) and the texts (mutun)]. Mansur said to him, “From whom have you taken knowledge?” He replied, “From the companions of ‘Umar who took from ‘Umar, the companions of ‘Ali who took from ‘Ali and the companions of Ibn Mas‘ud who took from Ibn Mas‘ud (may Allah be pleased with them).” Mansur said, “You are confident.” Al-Suyuti has also narrated this and added some words: ‘... and the companions of ‘Abd Allah who took from ‘Abd Allah. There was, on the face of the earth in the time of Ibn ‘Abbas, no one more knowledgeable than he. He said, ‘You are confident of yourself.’

“Ibn Hajr said, ‘Avoid being under the delusion that Abu Hanifah did not have full knowledge apart from fiqh. Allah forbid. He was in the sciences of Shari‘ah — such as exegesis (tafsir) and hadith — the auxiliary sciences relating to literature etc and legal intuition an ocean that could not be surpassed and an imam who could not be contested. The speech of some of his enemies regarding him is different to this; it is rooted in jealousy. The proof of this lies in his being superior to his contemporaries and their accusing him of falsities.’

“Abu Yusuf said, ‘I never saw anyone more knowledgeable in explaining hadiths than him. He had greater insight in sahih hadiths than me.’ It is in Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi regarding him, ‘I never saw a greater liar than Jabir al-Ja‘fi and nor anyone more superior than ‘Ata ibn Abu Rabah. Al-Bayhaqi has narrated regarding Abu Hanifah that he was asked about taking knowledge from Sufyan al-Thawri, he replied, “Write from him for he is reliable except those hadiths from Abu Ishaq narrating from Jabir al-Ja‘fi.”

“Al-Khatib has narrated from Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah that he said, ‘The first to sit me down for hadith in Kufa was Abu Hanifah.’ Sufyan said, ‘He is the most knowledgeable of the people with regards to the hadiths of ‘Amr ibn Dinar.’ From this, his high worth in hadiths can also be

understood. And why not? He was consulted regarding al-Thawri and would sit Ibn ‘Uyaynah down. It is narrated from Hasan ibn Salih that ‘Abu Hanifah — may Allah be pleased with him — would thoroughly investigate the abrogator (nasikh) from the abrogated (mansukh), he knew the hadiths of the ‘ulama of Kufa, he stringently followed that which the scholars did, and he knew well that which reached him through the ‘ulama of his city.’

‘Yahya ibn Adam said, ‘Nu‘man gathered all of the hadiths of his city, he even saw the final hadiths narrating the Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) passing away.’ Al-Khatib has narrated from some of the imams of zuhd (ascetics) that they said, ‘People should supplicate for Abu Hanifah in their prayers for protecting the Sunnah and fiqh for them.’ He also said, ‘People are jealous and ignorant regarding him. According to me, he is better than them all.’ ‘Mu‘ammar said, ‘I have not seen a man speaking so well in fiqh, having such vastness in the acquisition of knowledge and explaining hadiths with greater insight than Abu Hanifah; and nor [have I seen] anyone who would be so cautious that anything doubtful enters the religion of Allah than Abu Hanifah.’ Yahya ibn Ma‘in was asked, ‘Has Sufyan narrated from him?’ He said, ‘Yes, he was reliable and truthful in fiqh and hadith. He was trustworthy in [matters relating] to the religion of Allah.’ He was asked again and said, ‘He was reliable, I have never heard of anyone considering him weak. This is Shu‘bah who writes that he would narrate hadiths, was experienced and surpassed him.’ Hammad ibn Zayd said, ‘We used to go to ‘Amr ibn Dinar. When Abu Hanifah would come, he (‘Amr) would turn to him and we would begin asking Abu Hanifah. We would ask him and he would narrate to us.’ Isra’il ibn Yunus said, ‘What a great man is Nu‘man. There was none who had retained every hadith in which there is fiqh more than he, scrutinised hadith more than he, and was more knowledgeable of the fiqh inside them than he.’

‘Abu Yusuf narrates, ‘I did not differ with him in anything ever except that I pondered over it and found the tract that he followed was more safe in terms of the hereafter. Sometimes, I would be inclined to a hadith and he had more insight in sahih hadiths than me.’ He added, ‘When he had made up his mind with regards to an opinion, I would visit the shaykhs of Kufa to see if I could find a hadith or athar supporting his view. Sometimes, I would find two or three hadiths, which I would take to him and from among that which he would say was this, “This is not sahih, or not ma‘ruf.” So I would say to him, “What do you know of it? Not withstanding, it agrees with your opinion.” He would say, “I know the knowledge of the ‘ulama of Kufa.”’

‘Abu Hanifah was with A‘mash who was asked about some juristic issues. A‘mash said to Abu Hanifah, ‘What do you say regarding this?’ He replied and A‘mash said, ‘Where did you get this from?’ Abu Hanifah said, ‘From your hadiths which I have narrated from you.’ He then narrated to him a number of hadiths along with their chains of narration consecutively. A‘mash said to him. ‘That’s enough. What I narrated to you in a hundred days you narrate to me in an hour. I did not know you were acting on these hadiths. Oh community of jurists (fuqaha), you are the physicians and we are the pharmacists. And you fellow, you have taken both.’

‘Hafiz has derived (takhrij) from his hadiths many musnad [5] hadiths, many of which that have reached us are mentioned in the musnad compilations of our shaykhs.’

Abu al-Mahasin al-Dimashqi al-Shafi'i has established that the imam possessed a vast number of hadiths and was among the eminent hafizs; he has written individual chapters on both issues in 'Uqud al-Juman. Al-Suyuti has narrated that while explaining the hadith, "The Day of Judgment will not come until knowledge appears," Hasan ibn Sulayman said, "It is the knowledge of Abu Hanifah and his explanation of the hadiths." Al-Suyuti also narrates from Ibn al-Mubarak who recited the following poem:

The imam of the Muslims, Abu Hanifah, has surely decorated the lands and those in them,
With traditions and understanding of hadiths, the effects of which are like characters on a page,
There is none like him in the lands of the east and the lands of the west, and nor in Kufa,
I saw those who belittle him foolish, they are in opposition of the truth equipped with weak proofs.
Al-Suyuti has mentioned him like this, and these verses are part of a long poem that historians have narrated from Ibn al-Mubarak. We have omitted the rest for the sake of brevity.

Al-Sha'rani said:

"Allah Most High has favoured me with studying the musnads of Abu Hanifah from a correct manuscript containing the writings of hafizs of hadiths, the last of whom was Hafiz al-Dimyati. I saw him only narrating hadiths from the best of the Followers (Tabi'), those who were honest and reliable and from the khayr al-qurun as testified by the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) such as Aswad, 'Alqamah, 'Ata, 'Ikramah, Mujahid, Makhul, Hasan al-Basri and their group (may Allah be pleased with them). All narrators between him and the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) were honest, reliable, and outstanding eminent personalities. There was none among them who was untruthful or had been accused of lying."

It shall soon come in the writings of Ibn Khaldun that he said:

"This is proof that he was from among the major mujtahids in the science of hadith, that his madhhab was held with esteem among them..."

Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Musali mentioned at the end of Kitab al-Du'afa:

"Yahya ibn Ma'in said, 'I have seen none who I can prefer over Waki'. He used to issue fatwas according to the view of Abu Hanifah. He had memorised all of the hadiths and had heard many hadiths from Abu Hanifah. It was his — may Allah be pleased with him — habit that whenever a hadith scholar would enter Kufa he would pursue the hadiths that he would have.' Al-Mawfaq has narrated hadiths with his chain until 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abu Razmah and has mentioned the knowledge of Abu Hanifah in hadith and said, 'A hadith scholar would come to Kufa and Abu Hanifah would say to his companions, "See, does he have any hadiths that we don't?" He said, "Another hadith scholar would come to them so Abu Hanifah would say the same."'"

It is in Jami' Usul fi al-Awliya in the imam's counsel to his son, Hammad:

"He selected five hadiths from five thousand; they are the four famous ones which Abu Dawud selected after him, and the fifth is, 'The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe.' Al-Mawfaq said, 'He — may Allah be pleased with him — selected hadiths from forty thousands hadiths.' It has been narrated from Yahya ibn Nasr, 'I heard Abu Hanifah say, "I have chests of hadiths; I have only taken some of them from which benefit can be derived.'" Hasan ibn

Ziyad said, ‘Abu Hanifah would narrate four thousand hadiths; two thousand from Hammad and two thousand from the rest of his shaykhs.’

‘Abu Yusuf said, ‘When a question would come to Abu Hanifah, he would say, “Which athar do you have regarding this?” When we had narrated the athars, and he had mentioned what he had, he would examine. If the athars in support of one of the two views were more, then he would take that which is more, and if they were close then he would choose except if the analogy was wrong according to him, then he would leave it in favour of juristic preference (istihsan).’

‘Waki’ said, ‘Surely, that level of cautiousness in hadith was found in Abu Hanifah that is not found in others.’ Al-Mawfaq has narrated regarding Makki ibn Ibrahim al-Balkhi, the imam of Balkh and al-Bukhari’s shaykh, ‘He entered Kufa and remained in the company of Abu Hanifah and heard hadith and fiqh from him. He narrated much from him and loved him so much that Isma’il ibn Bishr said, “We were in Makki’s gathering when he said, Abu Hanifah narrated to us. Then a stranger called out, ‘Narrate to us from Ibn Jurayj, don’t narrate from Abu Hanifah.’ Makki then said, ‘We don’t narrate to idiots. I forbid you from writing from me. Go from my gathering.’ He did not narrate anything until the man was taken away from his gathering. Then he said, ‘Abu Hanifah narrated to us...’ and continued.”’ There is another narration that the man said, ‘I repent and have made a mistake.’ But Makki refused to narrate to them. Ibn al-Mubarak said, ‘Abu Hanifah had the upper hand in the ability to remember (hifz), understanding, and being meticulous and extremely cautious.’ Khalf ibn Ayyub said, ‘I used to frequent the gatherings of the ‘ulama. At times I would hear something the meaning of which I did not understand which would distress me. When I would come to the gathering of Abu Hanifah, I would ask him about that which I did not know and he would explain it to me. Nur would enter my heart from his explanation and clarification.’

‘Hafs ibn Ghiyath narrates, ‘I heard from Abu Hanifah his books and his hadiths. I never saw anyone with a more intelligent pen than he, and nor anyone more knowledgeable regarding that which is corrupt and right in matters relating to rulings than he.’ Muhammad ibn Sa’d said, ‘I have heard from those who attended to Yazid ibn Harun, and with him was Yahya ibn Ma’in, ‘Ali ibn al-Madini, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Zuhayr ibn Harb and a group of people, when a questioner came and asked him regarding an issue. Yazid said to him, “Go to the people of knowledge.” Ibn al-Madini then said to him, “Are the people of knowledge and hadith not besides you?” He said, “The people of knowledge are the companions of Abu Hanifah. You are the chemists.”’

The erudite ‘allamah, hadith scholar and researcher Shaykh Latif al-Rahman al-Bahraichi al-Qasmi (may Allah protect him with goodness and blessings) has been working on an encyclopaedia of the hadiths of the Prophet transmitted by Imam Azam Abu Hanifah Nu‘man (may Allah mercy him and be pleased with him) which will consist of, insha Allah, all of the imam’s narrations that are present in all of his musnad compilations that have been printed and are in manuscript form, and likewise all of his narrations that are in various collections of pure hadiths, the books of rijal, rankings (tabaqat), biographies (tarajim), history, life history (siyar) etc.

It was while working on this that we stumbled upon three short manuscripts relating to the narrations of Imam Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy him):

1. *Kitab al-Arba 'in al-Mukhtarah min Hadith al-Imam Abi Hanifah Rahim Allah (Book of Forty Selected Narrations from the Hadiths of Imam Abu Hanifah May Allah Mercy Him)* by the *imam*, the *'allahah*, the hadith scholar, the *faqih* Shaykh Yusuf ibn Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Hadi al-Salihi al-Hanbali, who was famously known as Ibn al-Mabrad and died in 909AH (may Allah mercy him);
2. *'Awaliy al-Imam Abi Hanifah (The 'Awaliy^[6] of Imam Abu Hanifah)* by Imam Hafiz Shams al-Din Abu al-Hajjaj Yusuf ibn Khalil ibn 'Abd Allah al-Dimashqi al-Hanbali, who died in 648AH (may Allah mercy him);
3. *Al-Ahadith al-Sab'ah 'an Sab'ah min al-Sahabah alladhina Rawa 'anhum al-Imam Abu Hanifah Rahim Allah (The Seven Hadiths from Seven Companions may Allah be pleased with him from whom Imam Abu Hanifah May Allah Mercy Him Narrated)* by Imam Shaykh Nasir al-Sunnah Abu al-Makarim 'Abd Allah Ibn Husayn al-Nisapuri al-Hanafi.

Because these manuscripts have never been published before, in fact the majority people of knowledge have also never heard of them, we decided to publish them separately before including them in the above mentioned encyclopaedia of hadith to make their benefit widespread, and earn the reward of propagating the pure Sunnah, serving the noble hadiths and defending one of the most eminent personalities of the Prophet's Ummah: the imam of the imams, fuqaha and mujtahids Abu Hanifah Nu'man ibn Thabit (may Allah mercy him and be pleased with him). We have also placed them in one book due to their brevity and their all being related to Imam Abu Hanifah (may Allah mercy him) as they are all his hadiths.

Madrasa Imam Abu Hanifa Rh:-

This madrasa was established by scholars in Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic Caliphate, in 1066 before the Nizamiya Madrasa with public support. This madrasa has the distinction of being the first madrasa in the capital city of Baghdad. Although some historians consider Madrasah Nizamiya to be the first Madrasah in the history of Islam, this is not true. Allama Abdul Sabuh Qasmi has extensively discussed this in his research paper. He wrote in the Peshawar University Journal:

"Some have contended that Nizamiyah college was the first college in the history of Islam, but this is not correct. Besides the Dar al-Ilm of Al-Rashid and Al-Mamun, a number of Madrasahs existed in different parts of the Islamic empire. Nishapur was another center of Islamic studies and a number of other colleges were founded before the establishment of Nizamiyah college.(7)

At that time, in addition to religious education, the Madrasah was called Madrasah of the Plaintiffs due to its emphasis on Ijma, Qiyas, i.e. logic.

His Specialization in Theology

One of Abu Hanifa's first areas of focus was the subject of Aqidah. Aqidah is the study of Islamic theology, which was threatened by the deviant ideologies festering in Kufa at the time. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would champion the field, debating against the figures of the aberrant creeds. One of the most noteworthy stories of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) that highlighted his knowledge was his confrontation with an orator from the Romeo-Christian land. The man posed three questions: Where is Allah (SWT) facing, what was before Allah (SWT), and what is Allah (SWT) doing right

now? In his response to the first question, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) lit a candle and asked the man where the light of the candle was facing. He declared, similar to how the light of the candle was not directed one way and filled up the room, the same was true of the nur (blessed light) of Allah (SWT). On the next question, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) had the questioner count back from ten. He encouraged the questioner to continue after number one and the questioner responded that he could not. Abu Hanifa said in the same way, we do not entertain a “before” to Allah (SWT) because it is out of our comprehension. Before answering the last question, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) requested to give his answer from a higher elevation than the questioner since it was the Imam who was speaking. The questioner obliged and Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) responded to the last question saying Allah (SWT) had disgraced the questioner by giving the higher physical state to the one who protected his Deen. Aqidah was the main focal point of Imam Abu Hanifa’s (RH) life before turning to fiqh. His crown text in the subject of Aqidah was *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, a text which many later books of Aqidah use as reference and still referred to by current scholarship. Imam Abu Hanifa’s (RH) work in the subject influenced Imam Tahawi (RH) who composed the famous *Aqidah Tahawiyyah*, an encompassing summation of the Aqidah of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama’ah.

His Specialization in Jurisprudence:-

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) then transitioned into the subject of Fiqh where he studied under his beloved teacher Hammad ibn Ali Abi Suleyman (RH), who was his senior by only nine years. Abu Hanifa (RH) and Hammad (RH) loved one another and were very close. Hammad (RH) traces his sanad (chain of transmission) to Ibrahim al-Nakha’i (RH), to Alqama (RH), to Abdullah ibn Masud (RA), to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). When Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) first attended the halaqa of Hammad (RH), he would sit in the back, but after recognizing the commitment Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) had to the study of fiqh, Hammah (RH) called him up to the front row. Eventually, Hammad (RH) would have Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) sit right next to him in class. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would evolve into becoming his teacher’s personal assistant, assisting him night and day by carrying his groceries and books. The Imam would tend to the household and garden of his teacher. He would also take questions from the public to his private quarters.

In one instance, Hammad (RH) had to depart to Basra for two months in order to settle the inheritance of a deceased family member. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) sat in his stead in Kufa and responded to approximately sixty questions. While he was in Basra, Hammad (RH) would cry out of missing his student. Upon his return, Hammad (RH) informed Abu Hanifa that he only agreed with forty of Imam Abu Hanifa’s (RH) responses. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) then vowed to never leave his teacher until he died. This is the commitment the students of Ilm in the past would have for their teachers. They would not just attend class and forget the people who gave them their knowledge. The students would serve the teachers anyway they could out of gratefulness and to benefit from their teacher’s presence.

Hammad (RH) passed away at the age of 49 when Abu Hanifa was 40. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) naturally ascended to his position in the community unanimously.

Finally it can be said that Imam Abu Hanifa was a great Imam of Fiqh as well as a great scholar and Imam of Hadith.

References

- 1 . Ibn Abi al-‘Awwam’s *Fadail Abi Hanifah wa Akhbaruahu wa Manaqibuhu* was also recently published by Al-Maktabah al-Imdadiyyah, Makkah al-Mukarramah, with additional footnotes by Shaykh Latif al-Rahman al-Bahraichi.
- 2 . Mufti Husain Kadodia writes on Sunni Forum that a *hafiz* is a hadith scholar who has memorised many hadiths and is accepted by the people of his time as a *hafiz* (*Qawa‘id fi ‘Ulum al-Hadith*, page 28).
- 3 . Athar: That statement or act which is attributed to the Companions.
- 4 . In other words that hadith that has abrogated another. The one that abrogates is known as the *nasikh* while the one that has been abrogated is known as the *mansukh*.
- 5 . A hadith traced up, ascribed or attributed to the author thereof by the mention uninterruptedly, in ascending order, of the persons by whom it has been transmitted, up to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).
- 6 . Citing several hadith scholars, Shaykh Latif al-Rahman al-Bahraichi writes on page 132 of this book that in the terminology of the scholars of hadith, the *‘awaliy*, which is the plural of *‘aliyah*, are those hadiths that have a high chain of narration with few links.
- 7 . A. S. Qasmi: Libraries in the early Islamic World, U.O.P. Journal, Jan 1958, pp3 .