

THE KNOWLEDGEABLE STATUS OF IMAAM ABU HANIFAH(R)

MUFTI SHU'AIBULLAH KHAN MIFTAHI

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FOREWORD

All praises are due to Allah, Lord of the Universe, and Salutations be upon Rasulallah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Allah *Ta'ala* has preserved this *Deen* from all discrepancies and throughout time will continue to do so by means of Scholars. Many trials will come and the '*Ulama* will provide solutions for, and act against these trails. One great trial today is an ideology and effort which can remove the general masses from the following of authentic Scholarship, whereas this is a command of Allah *Ta'ala* and something passed down from the first generation of Muslims up until today. Allah *Ta'ala* says, "O those who believe obey Allah, his Messenger and those of authority amongst you." *Sura Nisaa, verse 59, Mufasssireen* have mentioned that this refers to the Scholars (*Tafseer Tabari*). The *Sabaabah* followed Rasulallah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam), *Taabi'een* followed the *Sabaabah*, and the *Tab' Taabi'een* followed the *Taabi'een*. This chain of Knowledge goes on till today. The '*Ulama* have prescribed the complete way of following this *Deen* after studious and in-depth research of the sources of *Shariah*, namely the *Qur'aan*, *Hadith*, *Ijmaa'* and *Qiyaas*. This is not something any layman can do, nor is he capable of, or obliged to. They also understood the *Deen* better as they were closer to the era of Rasulallah (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Every layman cannot involve himself in the in depth and intricate study of all the sciences of *Deen*, this is why Allah *Ta'ala* has mentioned in *Sura Tawba, Ayah 122* that only a group may take up this task.

We at Darul Uloom New York in order to keep this pristine *Deen* in its original form, under the supervision of Shaykh Arshad Madani; Teacher of *Hadith* in the great seminary of India, Darul Uloom Deoband and the President of Jamiatul Ulama, have taken the task of translating a number of booklets. The booklets were given to us by the *Shaykh* and translated by the students of the third year of the Darul Uloom New York. We hope that this will prove beneficial for the general masses and remove the confusion that has been created.

We are of the opinion that the *Ahlu sunnah wal Jama'ah* are on the correct path and they comprise of those who follow Authentic Scholarship including the four *Imaams* of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), namely Imaam Abu Hanifah, Imaam Malik, Imaam Shafi'ee, and Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (رحمهم الله). Although they may differ in many cases, all are correct in their effort to understand, implement, and present *Deen*.

The original articles discuss in details, proof of specific *Masaa'il* that are generally followed by the *Hanafi* School of thought. This work is aimed towards educating the masses of the authenticity of their position and not to creation friction, strife, and debates. As we are human, we are prone to err therefore if anyone were to point out our mistakes, we would be ever grateful. *Inshallah* in the future we plan to reprint them emitting those errors. May Allah *Ta'ala* accept this effort and grant us all the true understanding of *Deen*. *Aameen*.

Translation Committee
Darul Uloom New York

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I begin in the name of Allah (سبحانه و تعالی), the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful. All praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of Existence. Also, praises and salutations be upon our beloved Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ), who was sent as a mercy, guide, and teacher for all of mankind. With Allah lies the knowledge of all things. He bestowed upon Rasulallah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ) a minor portion of His incalculable amount of knowledge. He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ), in compliance with the orders of Allah, taught the *Sahaabah* the correct path to traverse. Then, the *Tabi'een*, the students of the *Sahaabah*, distributed the knowledge, thereby paving the road for the rest of mankind.

Amongst the greatest of the *Tabi'een* was Imaam Abu Hanifah (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ), who made life easier for the common Muslim by systemizing the practices of our Noble Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ) and providing insight into the Book of Allah. His greatness is not only understood and recognized by the hundreds of millions of Muslims who have followed him and still follow him, but also by our predecessors who understood this *Deen* in a much better manner than we comprehend it today.

Unfortunately, not everyone has understood how great a person he was. Due to lack of knowledge, jealousy, or hatred towards him, they speak ill of this noble saint. Some say that he was unreliable in his knowledge. Others say that he had minimal knowledge regarding *Hadith* and their narrations. Are these statements true? With the help of Allah, this booklet will hopefully provide answers to some questions and doubts in the minds of those searching for the truth.

After thanking Allah, I would like to express my gratitude to some people who have helped me in translating this concise but challenging booklet. First and foremost, I would like to thank my teacher, Mufti Mujibur Rahman (دَامَتْ بَرَكَاتُهُ), who was the means of this booklet reaching me and who also spent numerous hours helping translate, edit, and re-edit this booklet. May Allah give him the utmost reward and grant him *Jannatul Firdaus*. I would also like to thank all of my classmates for whatever help they provided. Lastly, I would like to thank anyone else who helped or supported me, whether morally or spiritually. May Allah reward them all, bless them in their studies, and grant them great success in this ephemeral life as well as the eternal *Hereafter*. I sincerely apologize for any inconsistencies or incorrect translations found in this booklet. I ask Allah for forgiveness for anything that has been transmitted inaccurately. I ask the reader to be forgiving for anything that is misunderstood due to poor translation. I ask Allah guidance for myself and of the entire mankind. *Jazakumullah Khair*.

Rakibul Haque Saad
Darul Uloom New York
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Some people have fabricated a lie against Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) out of enmity and hatred. They claim that he didn't have any knowledge regarding *Quran* and *Hadith*. Some say that he knew only 17 *Ahaadith*. Moulana Siddique Hasan Khan Bopali even went out of his way to say, "Abu Hanifah did not even have a proper understanding of the Arabic language."¹ (*Abjadul Uloom*, Volume 3, Page 100)

The truth is that all this is only out of hatred, enmity, and extremism. It doesn't even come close to reality. The expertise of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) in the field of *Quran* and *Hadith* has clearly been found and preserved in the texts of our noble predecessors. While these books are present, to say that Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) was ignorant regarding the *Quran* and *Hadith* is extremely insulting, an ill assumption concerning the *Salafus Saaliheen* (pious predecessors), and in fact an effort and plot to remove the reliance of people away from their sacred knowledge. Also, through this knowledge, the nobility, knowledge, and actions of people like Imaam Bukhari, Imaam Muslim (رحمة الله عليهما), and other great *Muhadditheen* (Scholars of *Hadith*) are recognized, as well as the sacrifices they went through during their service to this *Deen*. So, if through this knowledge, the nobility of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) is proven, and in spite of all this, they don't accept him and create propaganda against him, then it can be clearly determined that they are conspiring against great people. We will now look into some books and understand the knowledgeable stature of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه).

Imaam Shamsud Deen Dhahabi² (رحمة الله عليه) has written a 4 volume book called *Tadhkiratul Huffaadh*. In this book, he discusses those people who are upholding the knowledge of the Messengers, who are just, god-fearing, and turned to when information is needed regarding the status of a *Hadith* in terms of authenticity. (*Tadhkiratul Huffaadh*, Volume 1, Page 3)

'Allaamah Dhahabi (رحمة الله عليه) researched the Experts of *Hadith* and those who are dependable. He mentions Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) with high regards:

كان اماما ورعا عالما عاملا متعبدا كبير الشأن (تذكرة الحفاظ ج ١ ص ١٦٨)

¹ So too are some of the claims of Nasiruddin Albani and other contemporary figures followed today. (See *Sifat-al-Salat Al Nabi* by Albani)

² D 748 H. One of the greatest *Muhadditheen* amongst the latter 'Ulama, and a master in the field of *Asmaaur Rijal* (biography of narrators) and *Jarh and Ta'deel* (narrator criticism and approval).

“He was an Imaam, a god-fearing person, a practicing scholar, a person busy in worship, and a person with great status.” (*Tadhkiratul Huffaadh*, Volume 1, Page 168)

Imaam Dhahabi (رحمة الله عليه) and other great people have narrated from the famous Muhaddith Imaam Abu Dawood³ that he said:

رحم الله ابا حنيفة كانا اماما (تذكرة الحفاظ ا ١٢٩)

“May Allah have mercy upon Abu Hanifah, he was an (real) *Imaam*” (*Tadhkiratul Huffaadh*, Volume 1, Page 169)

‘Allaamah Suyooti⁴ (رحمة الله عليه) wrote a separate book regarding the virtues of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) called *Tabyeedul Saheefah*. In this, he narrates from Khalaf ibn Ayyoob that he said,

صار العلم من الله تعالي الى محمد صلى الله عليه و سلم ثم صار الى اصحابه ثم صار الى التابعين ثم صار الى ابي حنيفة واصحابه (ابو حنيفة واصحابه ص ٩)

“Knowledge has come from Allah to Muhammad (صلي الله عليه و سلم), then to his Companions, then to their Followers, and then to Abu Hanifah and his Companions.”⁵ (*Abu Hanifah Wa Ashaabih*, Page 9)

‘Abdullah ibn Dawood Al-Harbi (رحمة الله عليه) said,

يجب علي اهل الاسلام ان يدعوا الله لا ابي حنيفة في صلاتهم قال وذكر حفظه عليهم السنن والفقهاء (تهذيب الكمال ج ٢٩ ص ٤٢٢)

“It is incumbent on those who are Muslim to make *dua* for Abu Hanifah in their *Salat*.” Then he mentioned the great works of Abu Hanifah and that he protected and compiled *Hadith* and *Fiqh*. (*Tabdheebul Kamaal*, Volume 29, Page 422)

Makki ibn Ibrahim⁶ (رحمة الله عليه) and Shaddad ibn Hakim (رحمة الله عليه) said,

³ D 275 H. Author of one of the 6 famous books of *Hadith*, *Sunan Abi Dawood*.

⁴ D 911 H. Author of hundreds of books, in every Islamic subject, and one of the most accepted ‘*Ulama* according to all. Some even say he was a *Mujtabid*.

⁵ In my humble research, I have found in other books the addition of Khalaf ibn Ayyoob ‘فمن شاء’.
فمن شاء فليرض ومن شاء فليسنخ.

“So whosoever wishes, he can be content and grateful and whosoever wishes, he can remain displeased and ungrateful.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 336)

⁶ D 215 H. One of the main teachers of Imaam Bukhari and the one from whom Imaam Bukhari narrates 11 of his 22 ثلاثيات (*Abaadith* in which there are only 3 narrators between Imaam Bukhari and Nabi [صلي الله عليه و سلم]). These *Abaadith* are regarded as the most authentic narrations in *Bukhari*. On another occasion he says,

كان أبو حنيفة زاهدا عالما راغبا في الآخرة صدوق اللسان احفظ أهل زمانه (مناقب الامام الاعظم ص ٩٥)

كان ابو حنيفة اعلم اهل زمانه (تاريخ البغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٥)

“Abu Hanifah was the most knowledgeable of his era.”⁷ (*Taareekhul Baghdad* Vol. 13 Page 345)

Muhaddith Yazid ibn Harun⁸ (رحمة الله عليه) said, “I have met a thousand people and I wrote (studied) *Hadith* from most of them but 5 noble people were such that I didn’t meet anyone who had more knowledge in *Fiqh* or more god-fearing than them. And out of those 5, the first in number (most knowledgeable) is Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه).” (*Jaami’ Bayaanil Ilm*, Volume 1, Page 29. *Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 363. *Tabdheebul Kamaal*, Volume 29, Page 439)

The teacher of Imaam Bukhari (رحمة الله عليه), Yahya ibn Adam (رحمة الله عليه) said,

كان النعمان جمع حديث بلده كله فنظر الى آخر ما قبض عليه النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم

“Nu’mān (Abu Hanifah) gathered ALL the *Abaadith* of his city (Kufa), and then thereafter analyzed the end of the life of Nabi (صلي الله عليه و سلم) in regards to which actions he performed (meaning his practices at the end of his life).”

Imaam Abu Yusuf⁹ (رحمة الله عليه) has said,

كنت ربما ملت الى الحديث فكان هو ابصر بالحديث الصحيح مني (تاريخ البغداد ج ١٣ ص ٤٣٠)

“Whenever I inclined towards any *Hadith* (for study and research), he (Abu Hanifah) was more aware of its being *Sahih*¹⁰ than me.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Vol. 13, Page 430)

“Abu Hanifah was an ascetic, a Scholar, inclined towards the Hereafter, truthful, and the greatest *Haafidh* of his era.” (*Manaaqib Imaam Al-A’zam*, Volume 1, Page 95)

⁷ It should also be noted that when Makki ibn Ibrahim says that Imaam Abu Hanifah is the greatest *Alim* of his era, he also takes into consideration the other great Imaams also present in his era. Some of them were: Imaam Malik, Sufyan Al-Thauri, Ibn ‘Uyaynah, Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak, and many others.

⁸ D 206 H. Famous *Muhaddith*. A Narrator in *Bukhari* and *Muslim*. He mentions in another place,

كان ابو حنيفة تقيا نقياً زاهدا عالماً صدوق اللسان احفظ اهل زمانه سمعت كل من ادركته من اهل زمانه يقول انه ما راى افقه منه (اخبار ابي حنيفة واصحابه ص ٣٦)

“Abu Hanifah was god-fearing, pure (in character), an ascetic, a scholar, truthful, and the greatest *Haafidh* of his era. I heard from everyone I met from his era say that they didn’t find anyone more knowledgeable in *fiqh* than him.” (*Akhbaar Abi Hanifah Wa Ashaabih*, Page 36)

⁹ D 182 H. One of the two main students of Imaam Abu Hanifah also partially responsible for the spread of the Hanafi fiqh. قاضي القضاة (*Qadhi* of the highest council) of the Islamic Government. He was the teacher of *Hadith* of many, including Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Imaam Ahmad says regarding Abu Yusuf,

اول ما طلبت الحديث ذهبت الى ابي يوسف القاضي ثم طلبنا بعده فكتبتنا عن الناس (تاريخ البغداد ج ١٤ ص ٢٥٥)
“The first (time/one) I sought *Hadith*, I went to Abu Yusuf, the *Qadhi* (Judge). Thereafter we sought from others.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 14, Page 255)

All these statements clearly indicate that Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) was the greatest *Imaam*, *Alim*, *Faqih*, and *Muhaddith* of his time. He had expertise in the science of *Hadith* and in the science of *Asmaaur Rijal* (recognizing the narrators of *Hadith*). As a matter of fact, he was referred to by others in this science. Even after all this, to still say that he had no knowledge regarding *Hadith* would be to reach the pinnacle of ignorance. It should also be noted that he specifically chose the *Ahaadith* that he narrated out of thousands of *Ahaadith*, and these narrations have been gathered in different books. Furthermore, these students took these narrations and compiled them into books which are commonly known as *Musnad Abu Hanifah* and *Kitaabul Aathaar*. They are recognized amongst the ‘*Ulama as Sahib*. Lastly, I will end off with the saying of the famous historian Ibn Khaldoon¹¹ (رحمة الله عليه) who writes in his most discussed book, *Muqaddama Ibn Khaldoon*,

قد تقول بعض المبغضين المتسفين الي ان منهم من كان قليل البضاعة في الحديث فلماذا قلت روايته ولا سبيل الي هذا المعتقد في كبار الائمة لان الشريعة انما تؤخذ من الكتاب والسنة والامام ابو حنيفة انما قلت روايته لما شدد في شروط الرواية و التحمل وضعف رواية الحديث اليقيني اذا عارضها الفعل النفسي ويدل علي انه من كبار المجتهدين في علم الحديث اعتماد مذهبه بينهم و التعويل عليه (مقدمة ابن خلدون ص ٤٤٤)

“Some people, out of hatred and enmity, say that ‘some of them (*Mujtabideen*) had less knowledge regarding *Hadith*, that’s why they had fewer narrations.’ There is no tolerance for this type of belief regarding the *Imaams* because *Shari’ah* (Islamic law) is derived from *Quran* and *Sunnah* themselves. This fact becomes evident that those who are less educated in the field of *Hadith* and have a yearning to study the science of *Hadith* must do so from authentic Islamic laws, and understand the rulings from the roots of their origin. Those narrations which Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) did not mention were only excluded due to the fact that they did not meet his strict conditions which are established through *ijtihad*, contrary to the assumption that he abandoned the *Hadith* intentionally. His *Madhhab* (school of thought), being trustworthy and

¹⁰ A *Hadith* whose narrators are ثقة [did not commit any major sins nor did they do any undignified acts] and ضابط [preserved the *Hadith* well; either by memory or writing it down] and the chain of narrators is متصل (unbroken) and it is not شاذ (contradicting the narration of a more ثقة person or more ثقات) and it is not معلل (having hidden defect)

*It is incorrect to translate *Sahib* as authentic as this is a specific term amongst the terminologies of *Hadith* which is unique in its definition.

¹¹ D 808 H. One of the most famous historians of all time, famous amongst the Muslims and non-Muslims for his *Muqaddama* (a book on Islamic History).

reliable amongst the ‘*Ulama*, bears testimony to the fact that he was amongst the elders of the *Mujtahideen* in regards to his knowledge of *Hadith*.’ (Muqaddama Ibn Khaldoon, Page 444)

In conclusion, to say that Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) did not have knowledge regarding *Hadith* is false propaganda and a blatant lie. As for the report that *Abaadith* weren’t abundantly narrated from him, it should be noted that having knowledge about *Hadith* and narrating it are two different things. Despite the fact that *Muhadditheen* (Scholars of *Hadith*) may have immense knowledge concerning *Abaadith*, they may scarcely narrate *Hadith*. There can be many reasons for this. Who doesn’t know, that out of all the Companions of Nabi (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ), Abu Bakr and Umar (رضي الله عنهما) spent the most time, and were closer to Nabi (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ سَلَّمَ) than anyone else? They were also above and beyond the rest in knowledge and practice. Regardless of all this, Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) narrated only 142 *Abaadith* and Umar (رضي الله عنه) only 549.

In comparison to them, *Sahaabah* like Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه), have narrated 5,764 *Abaadith*. The reason for this is that Abu Bakr and Umar (رضي الله عنهما) did not have the opportunity to narrate *Abaadith* due to other responsibilities, or due to the fact that they were very cautious about narrating *Abaadith*. This was the same case with Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه). He also had very strict conditions for narrating *Abaadith*. Therefore, out of cautiousness, he narrated only a few *Abaadith*. In reality, this is only due to his virtue and excellence (in status), and not because of any defect or flaw.

Was Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) Dha’eef¹² in Hadith?

Some have spread rumors amongst people that Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) was *Dha’eef* in *Hadith*. Maulana Siddique Khan Sahib writes, “Some *Muhadditheen* have

¹² The *Hadith* which doesn’t fulfill all the conditions of *Sahih*.

The ruling of *Dha’eef* is that according to the vast majority of *Muhadditheen*, one can practice on a *Dha’eef Hadith* in *Fadhaail* (virtues) as long as it fulfills certain criteria which have been explained by Hafiz Ibn Hajar. See the last chapter of *Al-Qawhul Badee’* by Imaam Sakhaawi for further details.

*It is incorrect to translate *Dha’eef* as weak as this is a specific term amongst the terminologies of *Hadith* which is unique in its term definition.

For extensive detail on Imam Abu Hanifah, one can refer to two books we have greatly benefitted from,

مكأنة الامام ابي حنيفة في الحديث للشيخ عبد الرشيد نعماني و مكأنة الامام ابي حنيفة بين المحدثين للدكتور محمد قاسم عبده الحارثي
(*Makaanatul Imaam Abi Hanifah fil Hadith* by Sheikh Abdur Rasheed Nu’maani & *Makaanatul Imaam Abi Hanifah Baynal Muhadditheen* by Dr. Muhammad Qasim ‘Abdah Al-Haarithi)

claimed that Abu Hanifah was *Dha'eef*, and this is true as it becomes apparent by looking at his *Madhab* (school of thought).” (*Abjadul Uloom*, Volume 3, Page 100)

This rumor is the result of hatred, enmity, and prejudice, because in the books of *Asmaaur Rijaal* (those responsible and great elders who report the narrations of *Hadith*), they (*Asmaaur Rijaal*) have mentioned clearly his reliability, trustworthiness, dependability in *Abaadith*, and the excellence of his memory in preserving *Abaadith*. To present some references:

1) Imaam Yahya ibn Ma'een¹³ (رحمة الله عليه), an Imaam (leading Scholar) in *Jarh* and *Ta'deel* (narrator criticism and approval), says,

كان أبو حنيفة ثقة لا يحدث بالحديث إلا بما يحفظه، ولا يحدث بما لا يحفظ (تهذيب الكمال ج ٢٩ ص ٤٣٤، تهذيب التهذيب ج ١٠ ص ٤٤٩)

“Abu Hanifah was reliable in the field of *Hadith*. He would only narrate those *Abaadith* which he memorized and would not narrate those which he had not memorized.” (*Tahdheebul Kamaal*, Volume 29, Page 434. *Tahdheebul Tahdheeb*, Volume 10, Page 449)

2) He (Ibn Ma'een) (رحمة الله عليه) narrates on another occasion,

لا بأس به (تهذيب الكمال ج ٢٩ ص ٤٣٤، تهذيب التهذيب ج ١٠ ص ٤٤٩)

“There’s nothing wrong with him.” (*Tahdheebul Kamaal*, Volume 29, Page 434. *Tahdheebul Tahdheeb*, Volume 10, Page 449)

In the terminology of Imaam Yahya ibn Ma'een, and in the field of *Jarh* and *Ta'deel*, generally لا بأس به refers to the authenticity of a narrator, as is well known to those who study this science. (*Tahdheebur Raawee*, Volume 1, Page 186, *Fathul Mugbeeth* Volume 1 Page 396)

¹³ D 233 H. One of the greatest *Muhadditheen* who ever lived. Teacher of Imaam Bukhari. Memorized over a million *Abaadith*. According to some, he was the greatest Imaam of *Jarh* and *Ta'deel*.

He had a great teacher whose name was Yahya ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattan, who was also a student of Imaam Abu Hanifah. He says regarding Imaam Abu Hanifah,

لا نكذب الله ما سمعنا احسن من رأى ابي حنيفة ولقد اخذنا باكثر اقواله (تاريخ البغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٥)

“We won't lie to Allah, we haven't heard better opinions than those of Abu Hanifah and we have adopted most his rulings.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 345)

I would also like to add another similar quote of his in which he says,

ما سمعنا احسن من رأى ابي حنيفة. ومن ثمة كان يذهب في الفتوي الي قوله (تاريخ البغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٥-٣٤٦)

“We have not heard any opinion better than that of Abu Hanifah.” From then on, he would pass his judgments based on his rulings. (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 345-346)

انه والله لاعلم هذه الأمة بما جاء عن الله ورسوله (مقدمة كتاب التعليم ص ١٣٤)

“I swear by Allah, he (Imaam Abu Hanifah) is the most knowledgeable of this *Ummah* regarding that which came from Allah and His Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم). (*Muqaddama Kitaabul Ta'leem*, Page 134)

3) On another occasion, Imaam Yahya ibn Ma'een (رحمة الله عليه) was asked for his opinion of Imaam Abu Hanifah; he replied,

ثقة ما سمعت احدا يضعفه هذا شعبة يكتب له ان يحدث ويأمر وشعبة شعبة (الانتقاء ص ١٢٧)

“He is trustworthy. I never heard anyone declare him to be *Dha'eef*. Shu'bah ibn Al-Hajjaj (رحمة الله عليه) wrote to Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه), ‘Narrate *Hadith* and give rulings regarding them’, and Shu'bah is Shu'bah.” (*Al-Intiqaa*, Page 127)

The meaning of this is that a careful *Muhaddith* like Shu'bah, who would never narrate from any *Dha'eef* narrator, commanded Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) to teach *Hadith*. You can imagine what level Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) must have been on.

4) The teacher of Imaam Bukhari, Ali ibn Al-Madeeni¹⁴ (رحمة الله عليه) said,

ابو حنيفة روي عنه الثوري وابن المبارك و هو ثقة لا بأس به (الجواهر المضية ص ٢٩)

“Sufyan Ath-Thawri and Ibn Al-Mubarak narrated from Abu Hanifah. He is reliable and does not have any fault in him.” (*Al-Jawaahirul Mudhee'ah*, Volume 1, Page 29)

5) Imaam Ibn Al-Mubarak¹⁵ (رحمة الله عليه) himself verified and called Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) reliable. In this regard, Ibn 'Abdul Barr (رحمة الله عليه) wrote in his book, *Al-Intiqaa*, with a chain of narrators, that he narrated from Isma'eel ibn Dawood (رحمة الله عليه) that Imaam Ibn Al-Mubarak (رحمة الله عليه) used to speak about all the virtues of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه); and he would consider him reliable and trustworthy. He would also praise him.” (*Al-Intiqaa*, Page 140)

¹⁴D 234 H. One of the greatest *Muhadditheen*. Imaam in عِلل الحديث (the science of hidden defects in *Hadith*). Teacher of Imaam Bukhari. He (Imaam Bukari) says,

ما استصغرت عند احد كما استصغرت عند علي ابن المديني

“I have never thought of myself as insignificant in front of anyone as I have thought of myself in front of Ali ibn Al-Madeeni.”

¹⁵ D 168 H. He was a *Muhaddith*, *Faqih*, and *Mujaahid*. Haafidh Ibn Al-Hajar writes about him, “All good was gathered in him.” Also a famous student of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه).

He says about Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه), (تاريخ بغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٦), “He (Imaam Abu Hanifah) was the most juristic (Master in field of *fiqh*) of all people. I have never seen anyone more juristic than he.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 346)

He says on another occasion, (عقود الجمال ص ١٨٩), “When we don't find the verdict of Rasulallah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), the verdict of Abu Hanifah is as if it is the verdict of Rasulallah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).” (*Uqoodul Jumaan*, Page 189)

6) The quote of Imaam Abu Dawud regarding Imaam Abu Hanifah (May Allah have mercy upon Abu Hanifah, he was an [real] *Imaam*). Those who have knowledge know that calling anyone an *Imaam* is a great and high level of affirmation. (*Fathul Mugeeth*, Volume 1, Page 169)

7) Imaam Shu'bah¹⁶ said, “Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) was جيّد الحفظ (had an excellent memory).” (*Al-Khairaatul Hisaan*, with reference from the preface of *I'laa us Sunan*, Volume 1, Page 198)

Only some examples of the sayings of a few great *Muhadditheen* have been mentioned from which we can understand that Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه) was not *Dha'eef*. On the contrary, he was reliable and trustworthy to the point that he was affirmed and recognized as holding the status of *Imaam* by Imaam Abu Dawood. It is also known that his memory was reliable as understood from the saying of Imaam Shu'bah, “He has an excellent memory.”

The status and authority mentioned by these great *Imaams* are only a small example of that which could be quoted, otherwise there are many more *Muhadditheen* who wrote extensive books of virtues and praises for Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه).

For example:

- 1) Imaam Ibn 'Abdil Barr Al-Maaliki wrote *Al-Intiqaa*.
- 2) Imaam Ibn Hajar Makki Ash-Shaafi'ee¹⁷ wrote *Khairaatul Hisaan*.
- 3) Imaam Suyooti Ash-Shaafi'ee wrote *Tabyeedus Saheefah*.
- 4) Imaam Shamsud Deen Adh-Dhahabi wrote a booklet and a chapter of another book (*Manaaqib Abi Hanifah Wa Ashaabibi* and *Tadhkiratul Huffaadh*)
- 5) 'Allaamah Muhammad ibn Yusuf As-Saalihee Ash-Shaafi'ee¹⁸ wrote '*Uqoodul Jumaan Fee Manaaqibin Nu'man*.

Besides these, there are many other books and articles which mention him, his praises, his character, and his authenticity. Yes, some have disapproved and deemed this great and honorable *Imaam* as *Dha'eef*¹⁹, but this has no significance amongst the people of true knowledge. On the contrary, the same ones who disapproved of him were criticized because most of them either disapproved due to their being ignorant of

¹⁶ D 160 H. Known for being امير المؤمنين في الحديث (Leader of the Believers in *Hadith*).

¹⁷ D 974 H. Great *Faqih*. Student of Sheikhul Islam Zakariyya Al-Ansaari.

¹⁸ D 942 H. Famous *Muhaddith*.

¹⁹ The majority of these criticisms can be found in *Taareekhul Baghdad*, but after in-depth research, it can be concluded that these sayings are mostly *Dha'eef* or even موضوع (fabricated). InshaAllah, in the future, we wish to publish a detailed analysis of both types of narrations; but for now, one can refer to the two books mentioned in footnote 13.

the knowledge of Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه), or due to jealousy. Therefore, Muhaddith ‘Abdullah ibn Dawood (رحمة الله عليه) said,

ما يعيب ابا حنيفة الا احد رجلين جاهل لا يعرف فضل قوله او حاسد لم يقف علي علمه فحسده (تهذيب الكمال ج ٤٩ ص ٤٤١, تهذيب التهذيب ج ١٠ ص ٤٥)

“No one criticizes Abu Hanifah except two groups of people; an ignorant person who isn’t aware of his stature, and a jealous person who is unaware of his knowledge, thus he envies him.” (*Tahdheebul Kamaal*, Volume 49, Page 441. *Tahdheebut Tahdheeb*, Volume 10, Page 45)

‘Allaamah Ibn Abdil Barr Al-Maaliki relates,

والذين رووا عن ابي حنيفة ووثقوه واثنوا عليه اكثر من الذين تكلموا فيه (جامع بيان العلم ج ٢ ص ١٤٩)
“Those *Muhadditheen* who have narrated from Abu Hanifah and authenticated him are far greater in number, in contrast to those who criticized him.” (*Jaami’ Bayaanil ‘Ilm*, Volume 2, Page 149)

Lastly, I would like readers to ponder over another quote of ‘Allaamah Ibn Abdil Barr Al-Maaliki (رحمة الله عليه). He says,

الصحيح في هذا الباب ان من صحت عدالته و ثبتت في العلم امامته و بانث ثقته وبالعلم عنايته لم يلتفت فيه الي قول احد الا ان يأتي في جرحته ببينة عادلة تصح بها جرحته (جامع بيان العلم ج ٢ ص ١٨٦)
“The correct thing in this chapter is that the person whose being just is established correctly and is reliable in his knowledge, then the word of just anyone regarding him will not be paid attention to. But if they were to criticize him, they would have to give reliable witness regarding this criticism.” (*Jaami’ Bayaanil ‘Ilm*, Volume 2, Page 186)

Decide for yourself, after pondering over this quote, the weight the criticism of ignorant, jealous, here say speech holds in the eyes of the educated mass (*‘Ulama*) in regards to Imaam Abu Hanifah (رحمة الله عليه), whose authenticity is known and has been established in every locality in every era? If we were to accept and criticize without any research, then no *Imaam* or *Muhaddith* would be free from criticism. For every *Imaam*, you will find some people who have criticized him in some way or the other; whether based on a reasonable complaint or not; to the extent that some people have declared Imaam Bukhari (رحمة الله عليه) as *Matrook*²⁰ because he was a *Mudallis*²¹, and some have been blasphemous enough to accuse him of holding the view of *Khalqul Quran*²². Ibn

²⁰ Someone from whom the *Muhadditheen* do not narrate due to his being accused of lying in transmitting *Hadith*.

²¹ A narrator who has the habit of concealing the identity of his teacher or teacher’s teacher.

²² A view that the *Quran* was created. This view amounts to *Kufr*.

Ma'een (رحمة الله عليه) declared Imaam Shaafi'ee (رحمة الله عليه) to be *Dha'eef*. All these things are not hidden from the experts of this science. If we accept these things, no one will be safe. With these lines, I conclude my article. I make dua that Allah grants us all sound intelligence and proper understanding. *Aameen*.²³

~ وآخر دعوانا ان الحمد لله رب العالمين ~

²³ I would like to add a few more sayings of some great Scholars regarding Imaam Abu Hanifah(R): Imaam Shafi'ee (رحمة الله عليه) says,

من اراد ان يعرف الفقه فليلزم ابا حنيفة واصحابه فان الناس كلهم عيال عليه في الفقه (تاريخ بغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٦)

“Whoever intends to understand *fiqh*, he should become acquainted with Abu Hanifah and his Companions. Verily, people are all dependent on him in *fiqh*. (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 346)

On another occasion he says,

من اراد ان يتبحر في الفقه فهو عيال على ابي حنيفة انه ممن وفق له الفقه (تاريخ بغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٦)

“Whoever intends to achieve an in-depth understanding in *fiqh* is dependent on Abu Hanifah. Undoubtedly, he is from amongst those who have been blessed with the understanding of *fiqh*.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 346)

He also says,

الناس عيال في الفقه علي ابي حنيفة ما رأيت اي ما علمت احدا افقه منه (تاريخ بغداد ج ١٣ ص ٣٤٦)

“People are dependent on Abu Hanifah in *fiqh*. I have not seen, in other words, I do not know anyone more knowledgeable in *fiqh* than him.” (*Taareekhul Baghdad*, Volume 13, Page 346)

Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (رحمة الله عليه) says,

انه من اهل الورع والزهد وايتار الآخرة بمحل لا يدركه احد ولقد ضرب بالسياط ليالي القضاء للمنصور فلم يفعل

فرحمة الله عليه ورضوانه (عقود الجمان ص ١٩٣)

“Verily, he is from amongst those who are pious, ascetic, and prefer the Hereafter to such a level that no one can hope to achieve. He was whipped so that he would assume the position of high court supreme judge but he didn't accept. So, may the mercy and pleasure of Allah be on him.” (*Uqoodul Jumaan*, Page 193)