

## **The Status of Imam Abu Haneefah** **in the Science of Hadith**

By Shaykh Abu ‘Umar ‘Irfan Kabeeruddin

There is really no need of addressing the topic of Imam Abu Haneefah’s knowledge of *Hadith* because there is a unanimous opinion (*Ijma’*) of the scholars that he was a *Mujtahid* [a legist formulating independent decisions in legal or theological matters based on the interpretation and application of the four *Usool* (Quran, *Hadith*, *Ijma’*, i.e. scholarly consensus, and *Qiyaas* (i.e. analogical reasoning) as opposed to a *Muqallid*]. Imam Abu Haneefah was not only a *Mujtahid*, but he was a *Mujtahid* of the highest rank. An individual will not become a *Mujtahid* unless he is an expert in the sciences of Quran, *Hadith*, Al-Aathaar (Traditions of the Companions), the Arabic Language, *Qiyaas* (Analogical Reasoning), and Islamic history. These requisites of becoming a *Mujtahid* are accepted requisites among all of the ‘Ulama.<sup>1</sup>

So as we can see, there is really no need of addressing the issue of Al-Imam’s<sup>2</sup> rank in the sciences of *Hadith*. However, due to ignorance and lack of thorough research in this topic, some people have spoken against Al-Imam. Therefore, first we will bring forth quotes from the elite *Muhadditheen* (*Hadith* experts) in regard to Al-Imam’s rank in the sciences of *Hadith*.

Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak (RA) who is a famous scholar of *Hadith* and Imam of the past said that, “If Allah did not help me with Abu Haneefa and Sufyan, I would have been like the rest of the people.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, he is thanking Allah for placing him in the position so that he was able to learn from Imam Abu Haneefah and Imam Sufyan, thus elevating him from the likes of the masses and making him one of the great scholars of the past.

In another place, Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak (RA) also said “Wallaahi (by Allah), Al-Imam was so severe in his pursuit of knowledge, staying away from forbidden things following the ‘Ulama of his place, took only from what is authentic from the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and he had a very strong recognition (*Shadeed ul Ma’rifah*) in regards to *Nasikh* (abrogating) and *Mansookh* (abrogated) of *Hadith* (the knowledge of those abrogated *Hadith*), and sought out the narrations of reliable narrators only and the last practice of the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The practice of the ‘Ulama of Koofah in following the truth, he took it and he made it his Deen. Some people have said harsh words against him. We will stay silent in regards to those people. And we will seek forgiveness from Allah from it.” From this quote of Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak, we can

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<sup>1</sup> See Muqaddimah of Aujaz al-Maasalik: Sharh of Al- Muwatta for Imam Malik, page 58, by Shaikhul Hadith Maulana Zakariyyah (died 1402).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Imam in this article refers to Imam Abu Hanifah (May the mercy of Allah be upon him).

<sup>3</sup> See Tabyeed-us-Saheefah fi Manaqib il-Imam Abi Hanifah An-Nu’maan, p. 113, by Shaikh ul Mashaaikh Jalaalud-din As-Suyuti; see also Tareekh Baghdad 337/13.

understand that not only was Al-Imam knowledgeable in *Hadith*, but he was even knowledgeable in a special department of *Hadith*, the *Nasikh* and *Mansookh*.<sup>4</sup>

Yahya Ibn Ma'een (RA) mentions from his teacher Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan (RA) that he said, "We have not heard better opinions than Abu Haneefa's. And we take most of his opinions."<sup>5</sup> The Imam of *Al-Jarh* and *At-Ta'deel* (*The knowledge of what was transmitted concerning the reliability of the individual narrators of Hadith*) Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan also said that "By Allah, Imam Abu Haneefah is the most knowledgeable person of this Ummah of what has come from Allah and his Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم)."<sup>6</sup> Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan is not only a great *Muhaddith* of the past, but he is one of the first Imaams in regards to the science of *Al-Jarh* and *At-Ta'deel*.<sup>7</sup> His opinions are taken by all the scholars in regards to narrators of *Hadith*. In order to illustrate Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattan's rank, we will mention an incident. Al-'Aini (RA) has mentioned in his book 'Umdatul Qaari that after the 'Asr prayer, Yahya ibn Sa'eed would sit leaning on the pillar in his Masjid and people like Yahya ibn Ma'een, Ahmad ibn Hambal, and Ali ibn Al-Madeeni would be standing in front of him. And they would stand and ask him about *Hadith* until Maghrib prayer. Yahya ibn Sa'eed would be answering their questions, and out of respect for him, they would not sit for the entire time and he would not tell them to sit either.<sup>8</sup> These great scholars (i.e., Yahya ibn Ma'een, Ahmad ibn Hambal, and 'Ali ibn Al-Madeeni) who are the teachers of Imam Al-Bukhari<sup>9</sup>, and whom Al-Bukhari took his Saheeh to in order that they may check it after it was completed,<sup>10</sup> were standing in front of Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan like students, showing Yahya's status in *Hadith*. And this same Yahya Ibn Sa'eed is the one who is saying that he has not heard of better opinions than those of Imam Abu Haneefah and that he takes most of Abu Hanifah's Fataawa and that Al-Imam is the most knowledgeable person of this Ummah.

In the year 150 AH, when the news of Imam Abu Haneefah's death reached Ibn Jurayj<sup>11</sup> one of the most famous *Muhaddith* of the past, he said, "Knowledge has gone away."<sup>12</sup> When the death of Imam Abu Haneefah reached Shu'bah<sup>13</sup>, he said Inna lillahi

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<sup>4</sup> See the Muqaddimah (Introduction) of Aujaz ul-Masaalik, p. 58; see also *Ma'arifah 'Uloom il Hadeeth* for Al Hakim to see that this is a separate field in Hadith p. 141-145.

<sup>5</sup> See Muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan, Vol. 21, p. 14; Tabyeed us Saheefah p. 116; Al-Khairaat ul-Hisaan p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> Abu Hanifah An-Nu'man: Imamul Aimmat-il-fuqaha, by Wahbi Sulaiman, pg. 183.

<sup>7</sup> *Al-Jarh* and *At-T'adeel* simply means that the 'Ulama of Hadith speak about the narrators of Hadith whether they are reliable or not. This is just a brief explanation for the general readers to understand. See for more information *M'arifah 'Uloom il-Hadith* for Al-Hakim pg.99-106

<sup>8</sup> See 'Umdatul Qaari, Vol. 1, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> See Hadyus Saari, p. 665.

<sup>10</sup> See Fath-ul-Baari's *Muqaddimah* (Introduction) Hadyus Saari, p. 677.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Jurayj is one of the greatest Muhaddith of the past, he is also the teacher of Yahya Ibn Sa'eed Al-Qattaan. See 'Umdatul Qaari Sharh of Al-Bukhari's Saheeh by Al-Hafidh Badrud-Deen Abu Muhammad Mahmood Ibn Ahmad famous as Al-Badrul ul 'Aini pg.140 Vol.1.

<sup>12</sup> See Tabyeed us Saheefah, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal said that Shu'bah is a Ummah (nation) alone in this field, meaning in regards to Ruwaat (narrators) of Hadith Shu'bah is in a department and rank of his own. Sufyan Ath-Thauri said that Shu'bah is Ameerul Mumineen in Hadith. See 'Umdatul Qaari Vol.1 pg.130.

wa inna ilaihi raji'oon, and added, "The *Noor* (light) of '*Ilm* (knowledge) has been extinguished from Koofah. They will not see his likeness ever.<sup>14</sup> Remember that Koofah in those days was one of the strongholds of Islamic knowledge. And when Ibn Jurayj and Shu'bah say that the knowledge has gone away like this, they mean the knowledge of the science of *Hadith*. The proof of this is that Shamsuddeen Adh-Dhahabi has mentioned in Tadhkiratul Huffaadh that, "knowledge like *al mantiq* (logic), and the knowledge of debating, and philosophy were not present in the '*Ilm* (knowledge) of the Sahabah or Tabi'een, and al-Awza'ee, and Ath-Thawri, and Malik, and Abu Haneefah. Instead, their knowledge was Quran and *Hadith* and the likeness of that."<sup>15</sup> So you can see that from what Adh-Dhahabi is saying it is understood clearly that when '*Ilm* was mentioned in the time of Imam Abu Haneefah, it was meant as Al-Quran and *Hadith*.

Another famous Muhaddith of the past, Yazeed bin Haroon (RA) said, "I have got one thousand(1000) men and wrote from most of them, and I have not seen anyone who is Afqah (a bigger Faqeeh, i.e. jurist), neither Awra' (greater in fear of Allah), neither A'lam (greater in knowledge of Quran and *Hadith*) than five: First of them, Abu Haneefah."<sup>16</sup> Note that Yazeed bin Haroon is a great Muhaddith of the past and his high level of *Hadith* is well accepted amongst the scholars. When Yazeed ibn Haroon says that he got 1000 men, this type of talk amongst the Muhadditheen means that I benefited from 1000 scholars, and when he says I wrote from most of them, he means that he wrote *Hadith* from most of them, and out of 1000 of them, he chose five and the first in that line is Al-Imam.

Yahya Ibn Ma'een, said that Wakee' ibn Al-Jarraah used to give fatwa on the opinions of Abu Haneefa and he used to remember all the *Hadith* from Abu Haneefa.<sup>17</sup> And he himself heard many *Hadith* from Abu Haneefa. We know that Yahya ibn Ma'een and Wakee' Ibn Al-Jarraah are both from the great *Muhadditheen*, and Wakee' ibn Al-Jarraah is from the *Shuyookh* of Imam Ash-Shafi'e, and his giving fatwa on Imam Abu Haneefa's *fataawa and remembering Al-Imam's Hadith*, all of these also indicate towards Imam Abu Haneefa's high level in *Hadith*.

Ash- Sha'raani, a famous *scholar* of the past, said, "Allah blessed me that I looked at three Masaanid (collections of Hadith) of Al-Imam Abu Haneefa from a correct copy. Upon these were the *khutoot* of *Al-Huffaath*, (meaning the writing of the *Muhadditheen*) and I saw that Imam Abu Haneefa does not narrate except from the best of the *Tabi'een*, who are '*Udool* (people with honorable records) and *Thiqat* (reliable sources). And they (the *Tabi'een*) are from the best of the all generations (Khairul Quroon) like Al-Aswad, 'Alqama, 'Ataa, 'Ikrima, Mujahid, Makhool, Al-Hasan al Basri, and others like them.<sup>18</sup> Every narrator between Al-Imam and between the Messenger of Allah ( صلى الله عليه و سلم ) are '*Udool*, *Thiqat*, *A'laam* (extremely knowledgeable), and

<sup>14</sup> See Al Khayraat ul Hisaan p. 127 by Ibn Hajr Al- Haitami.

<sup>15</sup> See muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan, Vol. 21, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> See Al-Intiqaa, Yusuf ibn Abdul Barr; Also see Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man: Imamul-Aimmat-il-fuquha, by Wahbi Sulaiman pp. 182-183.

<sup>17</sup> See Muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan, Vol. 21, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> See Muqaddamah (Introduction) to Aujaz al-Masaalik, p. 59.

*Khiyaar* (superior people). And they are no liars among these narrators, neither anyone who has been accused of lies.” We can see from this how authentic the Masaanid of Al-Imam are. If the Masaanid of a person are this authentic, what about his *‘Ilm of Hadith*?

Makki ibn Ibraheem said that Al- Imam was the most knowledgeable person of his time.<sup>19</sup> We should point out that Makki ibn Ibraheem is not only one of the greatest *Muhaddith* of the past, but he is one of the special teachers of Imam Al- Bukhari. In the *Muqaddima* of Fathul Baari, Al Hafidh Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalani has mentioned five<sup>20</sup> different categories of Shuyookh of *Hadith* of Imam al Bukhari. In the first and highest category, he has placed Makki ibn Ibraheem. He is also the same Ustadh(teacher) of Imam Al Bukhari in 11 of the 22 *Ath- Thulaathiyaat* of Al Bukhari. *Ath- Thulathiyaat* are 22 narrations of Al-Saheeh Lil Bukhari that are the highest chains of Al Bukhari. Al- Bukhari usually has four, five or more narrators between him and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم), but in 22 narrations, he has three narrators between him and the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و سلم). These 22 are known as *Ath-Thulaathiyaat*. These are the highest chains for Al- Bukhari. Every person who has studied Hadith knows that in the *‘Ilm of Hadith*, the higher the chain is, the better it becomes. Out of these 22 *Ath-Thulaathiyaat*, Makki ibn Ibraheem is Al- Bukhari’s teacher in 11 of the *Ath- Thulaathiyaat*.<sup>21</sup> We should also point out that when Makki ibn Ibraheem says that Al-Imam was the most knowledgeable person of his time than remember who were some of the scholars of his time from the *Muhaddithoon*. Just to mention a few: Imam Malik, Al- ‘Auza’ee, Sufyan Ath- Thauri, Ibn ‘Uyanah, Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak and many others. Ibn Hajr says that you should not get doubt that Imam Abu Hanifah does not have knowledge besides in Fiqh. *Haashaa lillah(God forbid)*, that he was so knowledgeable in the sciences of the Sharia’h, from *Tafseer, Hadith, Arabic Adab*, and that whatever people said against him has come out of jealousy.<sup>22</sup>

One time, Imam Abu Hanifah was with Al- A’mash. Some questions were posed to Al- A’mash, and he told Al- Imam to answer them. So the Imam answered them. Al- A’mash asked from where Imam Abu Hanifah got these answers, so Al- Imam said that from the narrations which I have narrated from you, and he narrated many narrations with their chains. So Al- A’mash said whatever I narrated to you in 100 days, you narrated it to me in one small period of time. I did not know that you acted upon these narrations. Oh *Ma’sharal Fuqahaa*, (group of *Fuqahaa*), you all are *Al- Atibbaa* (doctors) and we(Muhaddithin) are the *As-Sayaadilah* (pharmacists). You, oh man (i.e, Imam Abu Hanifah), have taken both the sides (*Hadith* and *Fiqh*). Everyone knows the status of Al- A’mash in the science of *Hadith* and that he is one of the great scholars of Hadith of the past being from the Taabei’n. He is the one who is saying to Al- Imam that you have taken both the sides, one of them being *Hadith*, the other being *Fiqh*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Al Khairaat ul Hisaan, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> See Hadyus Saari, p. 665.

<sup>21</sup> See Muqaddimah of Laami’ ud-Daraarii, p. 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> A summary of what he said can be found in Muqaddimah Aujaz, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> See Al Khairaat ul Hisaan, p. 124.

Ibn Al-Qayyim said that Yahya ibn Adam said that Nu'maan (i.e. Al-Imam) gathered all of the Hadeeth of his city (Koofah)<sup>24</sup>. Then, he would look to the last action of the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Koofah was a centerpoint of knowledge of Hadith in those days. That is where big scholars of Hadith were at that point in time. Scholars like Ibn 'Uyayna, Sufyan Ath-Thauri, Hafs ibn Ghiyaath, Al-A'mash, Wakee', Ibn Al Mubarak, and others. If Al- Imam gathered all of the Hadith of Al Koofah. Then who would be his likeness in hadith?<sup>25</sup> Ma'mar said I have not seen a man that speaks well in Fiqh, capable of Qiyas, and in explaining Hadith has a better recognition than Abu Hanifah.<sup>26</sup> Sufyan Ath-Thauri said we are in front of Abu Hanifah like small birds in front of the falcon and that Abu Hanifah is Sayyidul 'Ulama(chief of the scholars)<sup>27</sup> As-Suyooti has mentioned from Al-Hasan ibn Sulayman that he said in the Tafseer of the Hadith "The Saa'h(the Hour of Resurrection) will not come until the knowledge becomes apparent" that the knowledge that is going to be apparent is the knowledge of Imam Abu Hanifah and his explanation of Al-Aathaar(traditions relating the deeds and utterances of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and his companions).<sup>28</sup> Ibn Khuldoon said what indicates that Al Imam is from the greatest Mujtahideen in the knowledge of Hadith is that his Madhab's reliability amongst the Scholars.<sup>29</sup>

Not only was the Imam a great scholar of *Hadith*, but he was also an Imam of *Al-Jarh* and *At-Ta'deel*. Imam At-Tirmidhi quotes Imam Abu Hanifah that the Imam said, "I have not seen anyone who is a bigger liar than Jabir al Ju'fi. And I have not seen anyone better than 'Ata ibn Abi Rabaah. Imam At-Tirmidhi mentioned this in his Kitaab ul 'Ilal Al-Kabeer. That a *Hafidh* of *Hadith* like Imam At- Tirmidhi mentions a quote about the Imam in his Kitaabul 'Ilal in regards to the soundness of narrators of *Hadith* indicates that the Imam was not only an Imam of *Fiqh* and *Hadith*, but one of the specialized sciences of *Hadith Al-Jarh* and *Al-Ta'deel*<sup>30</sup>.

Al- Bayhaqi narrated that the Imam was asked if *Hadith* could be taken from Sufyan Ath-Thauri. Al Imam said that he is reliable, and you can write *Hadith* from him except those narrations of his that are to Ishaq bin Al-Harith and the *Hadith* of Jabir Al-Ju'fi.<sup>31</sup> This is a clear proof that the Imam was an Imam of *Al-Jarh* and *Al-Ta'deel*. In those days when people came to ask these questions, these questioners were not regular people that came asking. Rather, it was 'Ulama (Abu Sa'eed in this case)who was asking if *Hadith* could be taken from Sufyan. Sufyan Ath- Thauri, the *Muhaddith* and *Mujtahid* of his time. Some scholars even mention Sufyan Ath- Thauri as *Ameer ul Mumineen* in

<sup>24</sup> Al Koofah one of the center points of Hadith at that time,how can it not be? when forty nine Sahabah entered it like Al- Hakim said in Ma'rifah 'Uloom il-Hadith pg.269 and Al-Hakim said that most of them are buried there.

<sup>25</sup> See Muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan Vol.21 Pg.16

<sup>26</sup> See for the rest of the quote Al-Khairaat ul-Hisaan pg.69 and Tabyeedh us Saheefah pg. 124

<sup>27</sup> See Muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan Vol.21 pg.28

<sup>28</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah pg.122

<sup>29</sup> See Muqaddimah of Aujazul Masaalik pg59

<sup>30</sup> See 'Ilal At-Tirmidhi Al-Kabeer vol.2 pg.966 Also see Sharh 'Ilal At-Tirmidhi for Ibn Rajab Vol.1 pg.369

<sup>31</sup> See pg.180 of Wahbi Sulaiman's book on Abu Hanifah(Abu Hanifah An-Nu'maan)

*Hadith*. How can Imam Abu Hanifah be weak in Hadith and people are asking him about Sufyan?

Suwaid Bin Sa'eed narrated from Sufyan ibn 'Uyanah that he said that the first one who made me sit down in regards to *Hadith* in Koofah was Imam Abu Haneefa. When I came to Koofah he said to the people that this person (i.e., Imam Sufyan) is the most knowledgeable with regards to the *Hadith* of 'Amr Bin Dinar. Not only was Al Imam the Imam of *Al-Jarh* and *At-Ta'deel*, but he was making people sit down to teach *Hadith*. And Imam Abu Haneefah was telling the 'Ulama around him that you can take *Hadith* from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah because he is the most knowledgeable person with regards to *Hadith* of 'Amr Bin Dinar.<sup>32</sup> Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah is from one of the greatest *Muhadditheen* of the past. From this we can see that not only was Imam Abu Hanifah a *Muhaddith* but he was making people *Muhaddith*.<sup>33</sup>

Al-Muhaddith Al-Faqeeh Muhammad Bin Yusuf As-Saalihi (died 942 after Migration) said Abu Hanifah was from the greatest *Huffadh* (some one who has memorized many *Ahaadith* by heart with its chains) of *Hadith*.<sup>34</sup> He has also established *Kathrah* of *Hadith* for Imam Abu Hanifah which means that Imam Abu Hanifah had with him many many narrations.. In one of his books ('Uqoodul Jumaan<sup>35</sup>) on the virtues of the Imam, the Shaykh established two separate chapters on these two points.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Imam Al-Hafidh Zakariyyah ibn Yahya Al-Ansaari mentioned in his *Manaaqib* with his *Isnaad* (chain of narrators) to Yahyah ibn Nasr ibn Haajib that he said I heard Imam Abu Haneefah saying that I have trunks full of *Hadith*. However I have not taken out for the people except a small amount which benefit can be taken from (benefit can be taken for the time being or else all *Ahaadith* are beneficial).<sup>37</sup>

Al-Imam Al-Hafidh Abu Abdillah Adh-Dhahabi, one of the greatest *Hadith* scholars of the past, has written a book with regards to the ranks of the memorizers of *Hadith* (*Tabaqaat AL-Huffadh*). In this book, Imam Adh-Dhahabi made a special section for Imam Abu Haneefa and his two students Al-Qaadi Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad. This indicates that Adh-Dhahabi clearly counts Al-Imam to be from the *Huffadh* (great memorizers) of *Hadith*.<sup>38</sup>

AL-Hakim Abu Abdillah An-Naishapuri {RA} mentions in Ma'rifatu 'Uloomil *Hadith* section 49, which is about Al-Aimmah Ath-Thiqaat Al-Mashhooreen {The famous reliable Imams}: This section of the sciences is the knowledge of the famous reliable Imams from the *Tabieen* and those who followed them whose *Ahaadith* were

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<sup>32</sup> See pg. 180-181 of Wahbi Sulaiman's book on Abu Hanifah

<sup>33</sup> See *Muqaddimah of I'laa us Sunan* Vol 21 pg17

<sup>34</sup> See pg 174 of Wahbi Sulaiman's book on Abu Hanifah (the book has been mentioned before with its full name in this article)

<sup>35</sup> The full name of this book is like this 'Uqoodul Jumaan fi Manaaqibil Imamim A'dham Abi Hanifah An-N'umaan.

<sup>36</sup> See *Muqaddimah of Aujazul Masaalik* pg.59

<sup>37</sup> *Abu Hanifah An-Nu'maan* pg.168

<sup>38</sup> *Abu Hanifah An-Nu'maan* pg.181-182

collected for preservation, review, and seeking blessings by them and mentioning them from the east to the west. So under the people of Koofah he mentions Imam Abu Haneefah (RA). Some of the others he mentions with him are ‘Aamir Ash-Sha’bi, Sa’eed ibn Jubair, Ibraheem An-Nakha’ee, Abu Ishaq As-Sabi’ee, Mansoor ibn Al-Mu’tamir, Al’Amash, Sufyan Ath-Thauri, and many others. Note: this shows that Al-Haakim is counting Al-Imam from the reliable Muhadditheen of the past.<sup>39</sup>

See also how Ibn Rajab mentions AL-Imam with the likeness of Makhool, Az-Zuhri, Ayyoob As-Sakhtiyaani, Mansoor ibn Al-Mu’tamir, Shareek, Ath-Thauri, Al-Awzaa’ee, Malik, Mis’ar, Al-Layth ibn Sa’d, Ibn ‘Uyaynah, Ash-Shafie’e, Ahmad and others from the Muhaddithoon in his book Sharh ‘Ilalit Tirmidhi<sup>40</sup> in regards to the Rukhsah fil ‘Ard. This is a special topic in regards to Hadith, I won’t go into the details of it because it will become too lengthy but whoever knows Hadith knows what we are talking about. This indicates clearly the Imams status in Hadeeth because Ibn Rajab is only mentioning Muhaddithoon in this chapter as it deals with something that is in their field which doesn’t even appear in the books of Fiqh. See page 515 of the same book of Ibn Rajab also for more details.

We will finish off this section by quoting Yahya ibn Ma’een once more. Yahya ibn Ma’een said that the Imam is reliable, *Thiqah* and he said that “I do not know anyone that has made *Tad’eef* of him”,<sup>41</sup> that is, no one has declared Imam Abu Haneefah to be weak in *Hadith*. Yahya ibn Ma’een is one of the Imams of the science of *Al-Jarh* and *Al-Ta’deel* of the past. His name is all over the books of Hadith. His word is taken in regards to the credibility of a narrator. Yahya ibn Ma’een says that I do not know anyone making *Tad’eef* of al Imam, i.e. declaring him to be weak. Yahya ibn Ma’een will not just say this unless he has done thorough research on this issue. This shows that up to that period, no one had made *Tad’eef* of Al- Imam. So if someone comes later, and makes *Tad’eef* of Al- Imam, these opinions will not be reliable because Yahya ibn Ma’een and the likeness of those scholars are much more knowledgeable in regards to *Hadith*, and their words are more reliable in regards to *Ar-Ruwaat(narators)*. These eminent *Muhaditheen* are closer to the period of Al- Imam and they will be able to speak more correctly with regards to Al- Imam. With regards to *Al-Jarh* and *Al-Ta’deel*, it is all about *Naql* (transmission). Any scholar that comes later, whether it is Ad-Daara Qutni, or Al- Qaadi ‘Iyad, and Al-Khateeb, will have to go with the opinions of the Imams of the past, Imams like Yahya ibn Ma’een and others with regards to *Ar-Ruwaat* of *Hadith*. Scholars who appeared after the period of these eminent *Muhaditheen*(*Yahya and others*) cannot give their own opinions. Anyone who knows anything about *Al-Jarh* and *At-Ta’deel* will know these rules related to the science of *Hadith*. So if anyone came later and made *Tad’eef* of Al- Imam, this is not reliable.

The final section will be listing some of the students of Al-Imam from the Muhadditheen. Al-Hafidh Shamsuddeen Adh-Dhahabi said that Al-Imam Abu Hanifah

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<sup>39</sup> See Ma’rifah ‘Uloom il-Hadith for Al-Hakim pg.323,326-329

<sup>40</sup> Sharh of ‘Ilal At-Tirmidhi for Ibn Rajab Vol.1 pg.508

<sup>41</sup> See Al-Khairaat ul-Hisaan pg.71

had so many students from the Muhaddithoon and Fuqaha that they can not be counted.<sup>42</sup> Ahmad Ibn Hajr Al-Makki Ash-Shafi'ee said<sup>43</sup> many elders from the Mashaaikhs, who were Imams, Mujtahideens and the established 'Ulama have been the students of Al-Imam than he mentioned some of the great ones like Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak, Al-Laith ibn Sa'd and the great Imam of Darul Hijrah Malik. Hafidhul 'Asr As-Suyooty mentions some of Al-Imam's greatest students in his book Tabyeedh us Saheefah (eighty eight 88)<sup>44</sup> but this number is really not even close to all the students of Al-Imam. Some of the Imams have said that the number of students that became apparent for Imam Abu Hanifah never like that did a number became apparent for any of the famous Imams of Islam.<sup>45</sup> Here are a few names with their brief conditions, scholars of Hadith that were the students of Abu Hanifah.

- 1) Ibraheem ibn Tahmaan<sup>46</sup>: Imam Ahmad, Abu Hatim and Abu Dawood has made his Tauthiq (established his reliability). Ibraheem is the teacher of Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak and others. Abu Zur'ah said that I was by Imam Ahmad and Imam Ahmad was leaning back (reclining and sitting) when Ibraheem was mentioned so Imam Ahmad sat up and said it is not appropriate that the pious people will be mentioned and he will sit reclining.<sup>47</sup>
- 2) Ishaq bin Yusuf Al-Azraq: He is the teacher of the likeness of Imam Ahmad and Ibn Abi Shaibah and Yahya ibn Ma'een<sup>48</sup>.
- 3) J'afar ibn 'Aun: He is the teacher of Imam Ahmad, Imam Ishaq and 'Abd bin Humaid and others.<sup>49</sup>
- 4) Hafs bin Abdur Rahman An-Naishapuri: He is the teacher of scholars like Abu Dawood At-Tayaalisy. Whenever Ibn Al-Mubarak would visit Naishapur he would visit him.<sup>50</sup>
- 5) Abu Muti' Al-Hakam ibn Abdullah: He is the teacher of a great scholar of Hadith of the past Ahmad Ibn Manee'. Ibn Al-Mubarak used to respect him greatly because of his Deen and his knowledge. He is also a narrator of the book Al-Fiqhul Akbar from Imam Abu Hanifah.<sup>51</sup>
- 6) Hamza ibn Habib Az-Zayyaat: One of the famous seven Qaris of the Holy Quran<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See the Ta'leeq that is upon Tabyeedus Saheefah pg.109

<sup>43</sup> See Muqaddimah Aujazul Masaalik pg.65

<sup>44</sup> This is how Shaikhul Hadith Maulana Zakariya RA has mentioned in Muqaddimah of Aujazul Masaalik pg 66. I looked in Tabyeedus Saheefah myself and counted them, I found them to be more than 88.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Khairaat ul-Hisaan pg.53

<sup>46</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah and the Ta'leeq upon it pg 88-89

<sup>47</sup> This story of Imam Ahmad sitting up indicates towards Ibraheem's piety but him being a scholar of Hadith is established by the point all the six famous Imams (Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasai and Ibn Majah) all have narrated Hadith of his.

<sup>48</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah and the Ta'leeq upon it pg 89

<sup>49</sup> See Tabyeedus Sahifah with its T'aleeq upon it pg 89

<sup>50</sup> See Tabyeedus Sahifah with its T'aleeq upon it pg 90

<sup>51</sup> See Tabyeedus Sahifah with its Ta'leeq pg 91

<sup>52</sup> See above reference (reference 51)

- 7) Kharijah ibn Mus'ab As-Sarakhsi: He is the teacher of Sufyan Ath-Thauri and Abu Dawood At-Tayaalisy.<sup>53</sup>
- 8) Dawood At-Ta'aa: He is the teacher of Sufyan ibn 'Uyanah, Wakee', and Abu Nu'aim. Yahya ibn Ma'een established his reliability. It has been said about Dawood that if he was in the past nations than certainly Allah would have told us his stories. Ibn Al-Mubarak said that when Dawood would read the Quran than as if he would hear the answer from his Rabb (lord).<sup>54</sup>
- 9) Zaid ibn Al-Hubaab: He is the teacher of Imam Ahmad, Abu Kuraib, Ahmad ibn Manee' and others. Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal praised him by calling him a person of Hadith. Ibn 'Adiy said for him (Zaid) is a lot of Hadith,<sup>55</sup> he is from the reliable scholars of Kufah such a scholar that you do not doubt in the truthfulness of people like him.<sup>56</sup>
- 10) Shu'aib ibn Ishaq: He is the teacher of Imam Ishaq ibn Rahawayh, Abu Kuraib, Hisham ibn Ammar and others. Yahya ibn Ma'een, An-Nasai and others said that he was Thiqah (reliable).<sup>57</sup>
- 11) Adh-Dhahhaak<sup>58</sup> Abu 'Asim An-Nabeel: He is teacher of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hambal, Imam Ishaq ibn Rahawayh, 'Ali ibn Al-Madeeni. Yahyah ibn Ma'een and others have said he is Thiqah. Al-Bukhari said that I have heard Abu 'Asim saying that ever since I understood that backbiting is Haram I have not backbitted anyone. He is one of the special teachers of Al-Bukhari, and he is the teacher of Al-Bukhari in six of the twenty-two (22) Ath-Thulathiyat.<sup>59</sup> It has been said that his title became An-Nabeel (the noble) because one day the elephant came to Al-Basrah so people went outside to see it but Abu 'Asim did not go to see, so Ibn Juraij (his teacher) asked him why he is not going out so at this he said I do not find for this (going out to see the elephant) any benefit, so Ibn Juraij said you are An-Nabeel.<sup>60</sup>
- 12) Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak: One of the greatest Imams of the past. People like Sufyan Ath-Thauri, Ma'mar ibn Rashid, Ibn 'Uyanah, Fudhail, Mu'tamir ibn Sulaiman, Ishaq ibn Rahawayh, Yahya ibn Ma'een and others narrate Hadith from him. Sh'ubah a great Muhaddith himself said about Ibn Al-Mubarak that the likeness of him has never come upon us. Abu Ishaq said that Ibn al-Mubarak is Imam of the Muslims. It is said about Ibn Al-Mubarak that he use to spent on the poor people every year hundred thousand Dirhams. Some have even said that he is from the Al-Abdaal.<sup>61</sup> He was Mujaabud Da'waat.<sup>62</sup> Abu Wahb said that

<sup>53</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 91

<sup>54</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 91-92

<sup>55</sup> He has a lot of Hadith with him

<sup>56</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 93

<sup>57</sup> See above book pg 94

<sup>58</sup> See above book pg 94-95

<sup>59</sup> Ath-Thulaathiyat are those 22 narrations in which Al-Bukhari has only three people between him and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). More details about it has already passed on pg.4 of this article.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Juraij said this in happiness that this student is so dedicated that useless, worldly things do not excite him.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Abdaal- That group of the pious people that this world has never been empty of them. It is said that whenever one from them dies another comes in his place.

- Abdullah passed by a man who was blind, the man requested him for Du'a so Abdullah made Du'a for him and Allah returned the eyesight of this man. Abu Wahb says and I was seeing this.<sup>63</sup>
- 13) Abdur-Razzaq Al-Hafidh Sahibul- Musannaf: He is the teacher of Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal, Imam Ishaq, Ibn Ma'een and others.<sup>64</sup>
  - 14) Abdul-'Aziz ibn Khalid: Abu Hatim said about him that he is a Shaikh.<sup>65</sup>
  - 15) Abdul-Kareem ibn Muhammad: He is the teacher<sup>66</sup> of Ibn 'Uyanah, Imam Abu Yusuf Al-Qadhi, Muhammad ibn Idrees Ash-Shaafe'e Al-Imam, Qutaibah ibn Sa'eed and others.<sup>67</sup>
  - 16) Abdul-Warith ibn Sa'eed: He is the teacher of Sufyan Ath-Thauri, Abu 'Asim An-Nabeel, 'Ali ibn Al-Madeeni and others. Abu Zur'ah, An-Nasai, Ibn S'ad and others have said that he is reliable.<sup>68</sup>
  - 17) 'Ali ibn Mus-hir Al- Qurashi Abul Hasan Al-Koofi Al-Hafidh: He is the teacher of people like Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Shaibah, 'Uthmaan Ibn Abi Shaibah, Hannaad Ibn As-Sarii and others. Some said that he is the same person that Sufyan took the knowledge of Abu Hanifah from.<sup>69</sup>
  - 18) Al-Fadhl ibn Dukain Abu Nu'aim: He is not only the teacher of Imam Al-Bukhari but Al-Bukhari took a lot of Hadith from him. Imam Ahmad said about him that he his Thiqah(reliable), he is very cautious in the Hadith and he is a expert of it.<sup>70</sup>
  - 19) Makki Ibn Ibraheem: He is one of the special teachers of Ameerul Mu'mineen in Al Hadith Al-Bukhari.<sup>71</sup> Al-Khalili said he is reliable and this is a unanimous opinion. He is the teacher of Imam Ahmad, Yahya ibn Ma'een and others. Some said narrating from him that I have done Hajj sixty 60 times. He entered Koofah 140 years after migration and stayed with Abu Hanifah, he loved Imam Abu Hanifah greatly. Some said that he was a business man than Al-Imam Abu Hanifah advised him to leave this so he did.<sup>72</sup>
  - 20) Wakee' Ibn Al-Jarraah Abu Sufyan Al-Koofi Al-Hafidh: Imam Ahmad said about him that I have not seen any one better in regards to memorizing knowledge than Wakee'. It is mentioned from Yahya Bin Ma'een that I have not seen any one better than Wakee', when it was said to him not even Ibn Al-Mubarak so he said for Ibn Al-Mubarak there is superiority but I have not seen anyone more reliable than Wakee'. He was very pious, he use to finish the Qur'an every night.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Someone whose Du'a is always excepted immediately.

<sup>63</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 95-96

<sup>64</sup> See above book pg 96

<sup>65</sup> See above book pg 96-97

<sup>66</sup> In this section teachers and students mean that when someone has narrated a Hadith from someone else so the narrator becomes the student in this manner.

<sup>67</sup> See above book Pg 97

<sup>68</sup> See above reference pg 97

<sup>69</sup> See above reference pg 98

<sup>70</sup> See above reference pg 98-99

<sup>71</sup> Detail about Makki Ibn Ibraheem has already passed on pg 4 of this article.

<sup>72</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 103

<sup>73</sup> See the above reference pg 105

- 21) Yazid bin Zurae'Al-Hafidh<sup>74</sup>: He is the teacher of Ibn Al-Mubarak, Ibn Mahdi, Musaddad, and Ali ibn Al-Madeeni and others. Abu Hatim said about him that he is Thiqah and an Imam. His father left behind five hundred thousand he did not take a grain from it because his father was a governer working for the government.<sup>75</sup>
- 22) Yazid Bin Haroon Abu Khalid Al-Waasiti:<sup>76</sup> One of the greatest scholars of Hadith of the past. The teacher of Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, Imam Ishaq, Yahya bin Ma'een, Ibn Al-Madeeni and many others. Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaibah said I have not seen any one who is more perfect in memorizing than Yazid. Abu Hatim said that Yazid is reliable and he is an Imam, his likeness is not asked about.<sup>77</sup> 'Ali ibn Shu'aib said that I have heard Yazid saying that I have memorized twenty-four thousand Hadith with its chains. I am not saying this to boast.<sup>78</sup>
- 23) Al-Qaadhi Abu Yusuf Ya'qoob Bin Ibraheem:<sup>79</sup> The teacher of Imam Muhammad, Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, Bishr ibn Al-Walid, Yahya ibn Ma'een and others. His father was poor so his teacher Sayyidul 'Ulama Al-Imam Al-A'dham Abu Hanifah use to give him money continuously so he can keep studying.<sup>80</sup> Yahya bin Ma'een said that Abu Yusuf is Sahib (holder) of Hadith and Sahib(holder) of Sunnah. Ibn Hibban said in Kitab Al-Thiqaat about Abu Yusuf that he is our Shaikh who is perfect. Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal said that the first person I went to, to seek Hadith was Abu Yusuf Al-Qadhi.<sup>81</sup> Dawood said that if there was no other student for Al-Imam Abu Hanifah besides Abu Yusuf even than this would have been sufficient for Imam Abu Hanifah to have honor in front of all of mankind.<sup>82</sup> Imam Abu Yusuf use to pray two hundred (200) Rak'aat every day after being made the judge.<sup>83</sup>

As you can see that these are just a few Mahaddithoon of the past that were the students of Abu Hanifah, not only were they scholars of Hadith but some of them even were Mujtahidoon and great Imams of the past. You can also see that these twenty-three (23) scholars were also the teachers of some of the greatest scholars of the past. How can Abu Hanifah be the Shaikh of so many great Hadith scholars of the past and he himself be weak in the science of Hadith? This is nothing but a false claim against Al-Imam Abu Hanifah.

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<sup>74</sup> See the above reference pg 106

<sup>75</sup> Doubt comes into this type of wealth because in a high position like being a governor sometimes people except a lot of things in a manner of bribe. Other things are there also that can bring doubt in the wealth like this.

<sup>76</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 106-107

<sup>77</sup> In other words, you do not have to ask if he is reliable or not because he is so reliable.

<sup>78</sup> I am saying it because it is the reality not to showoff or boast.

<sup>79</sup> See Tabyeedus Saheefah with its Ta'leeq pg 108-109

<sup>80</sup> How Al-Imam Abu Hanifah spent for the sake of Allah and how he showed kindness to his student. May Allah reward him for all of these.

<sup>81</sup> Imam Ahmad's status in Hadith is famous, and he is going to Abu Yusuf for Hadith in the beginning.

<sup>82</sup> Just Imam Abu Yusuf as a student is enough for any teacher.

<sup>83</sup> Increasing one's A'maal in situations like this is established from the Salaf.

We finish off with what Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalaani said that “To leave this kind of discussion(talking about the Imams of the past) is better because Al-Imam and his likeness have hurdled the bridge. The opinion of some is not effective in regards to others from them (some Imams in regards to others). Instead they are in the rank that Allah has raised them to in such a manner that they have been made leaders that are followed, this should be enough as a confirmation.<sup>84</sup>

May Allah safeguard all of us from speaking ill of any great scholar of the past, and may he give us the ability to follow in the footsteps of these great personalities so that we may be successful Ameen.

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<sup>84</sup> See Al-Jawaahir wad-Durar fi tarjamah Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn Hajar pg.946-947 by Shamsud Deen Muhammad Ibn Abdur-Rahman As-Sakhaawi died 902AH