

Imam Abu Hanifa (ra): A Hadith Master (Hafiz)

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The great hadith scholar 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak said:

"If Allah had not benefitted me through Abu Hanifa and Sufyan al-Thawri, I would have been just like any ordinary person." (Tabyid al-sahifa 1617)

Ibn Ma'in has been reported saying:

"I would never place anyone above Waki'. He would issue his legal rulings [fatawa] according to the opinion of Abu Hanifa and would memorize all the hadiths from him. He has heard a great deal of hadiths from Abu Hanifa." (I'la' al-sunan 19:315)

The above two statements indicate that Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) was a narrator of many hadiths; not just a few, as some claim!

Muhammad ibn Sama'a states:

"The Imam has mentioned more than seventy thousand hadiths in his books, and has selected the Athar from forty thousand hadiths."

The great hadith scholar Zufar 'Uthmani, after quoting this statement, writes that the trueness of it is indicated by what the Imam's students have narrated from him. For instance, Imam Muhammad narrated from him in his six books known as the Zahir al-riwaya and in the other books known as al-Nawadir; Abu Yusuf in his Amali and Kitab al-kharaj; 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak in his books; and Waki' and other students in their books.

These rulings (masa'il) are in such abundance that their numbers are uncountable and their limits unreachable. If those rulings which are either explicitly or implicitly in conformance with linked (marfu') or unlinked (mawquf) narrations are summarized, they would certainly reach this great number (i.e. forty thousand). This is without taking into consideration the rulings the Imam derived through his own inference (ijtihad).

'Allama Zufar 'Uthmani further states that all of these rulings (masa'il) are in actual fact **"hadiths,"** which the Imam narrated in the form of legal rulings and not as **"formal narrations."** It is virtually impossible that his inference (effort to derive religious rulings – ijtihad) would conform so closely with such a large number of hadiths if he was said not to have any knowledge of them!

The 'Allama also states that there are many hadiths which Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) formally narrated through his personal chains. They are those which his students have transmitted from him, like Imam Muhammad in his Kitab al-athar, Muwatta, Hujaj and other works; Abu Yusuf, Ibn al-Mubarak, Hasan ibn Ziyad in their works; Waki' ibn al-Jarrah in his Musnad; Ibn Abi Shayba and 'Abd al-Razzaq in their Musannafs; Hakim in his Mustadrak and other works; Ibn Hibban in his Sahih, Thiqat, and other works; Bayhaqi in his Sunan and other works; Tabarani in his three Mu'jams; Daraqutni in his works; and other hadith scholars in their collections. If we were to compile all these narrations

together in one place, they would constitute a very large volume of hadiths! [see I'la' al-sunan 18:316]