IMAM ABU HANIFA (ra)

1. Nu'man bin Thabit ibn Zauti,- well known in Islamic History as 'Imam Abu Hanifa' and 'Imam Azam' - was the son of a Persian merchant.

He was born in Kufa, Iraq - in the Year 80 A.H.

2. His father - Thabit - was privileged to meet Hazrat Ali (ra) who had at the time, made Kufa his capital.

3. Kufa was founded in 17 A.H. by Hazrat Umar ibn Khattab (ra) the 2nd Khalif.

Kufa had become the 3rd most important centre of learning during Hazrat Umar's (ra) Khilafat.

A large number of Sahaba (ra) were sent to this new city to settle here by Umar (ra). These included Hazrat Abdulla ibn Ma'sood, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Ammar, Huzaifa & Abu Moosa etc. (ra).

Records indicate the presence of 1050 Sahaba in Kufa of whom 24 were the participants of Badr.

4. At the age of 20, Imam Abu Hanifa turned his attention towards the pursuit of advancing his Islamic knowledge.

5. Among his 1st and the most important tutors was Imam Hammad (Died 120 A.H.) whose educational lineage is linked with Hazrat Abdulla ibn Mas'ood (ra).

6. Imam Abu Hanifa is also a Tabi'ee = One who saw and benefited from at least one Sahabi.

7. Imam Abu Hanifa benefited from nearly 4,000 Shaikhs.

In those days, the Hajj season was the best means of spreading and deriving Islamic knowledge as Muslims from every corner of the Islamic world assembled in Makka. In his lifetime Imam Abu Hanifa is reputed to have performed fifty Hajj.

8. Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) had joined his father's business wherein he showed scrupulous honesty and fairness.

Once his agent had sold a consignment of silk cloth on his behalf but forgot to mention a slight defect to the customers. When Abu Hanifa learnt of this, he was greatly distressed because he had no means of the refunding the customers; so he immediately ordered the entire proceeds of the sale ( 30,000 Dirhams ) to be given in charity.

9. The Imam was also keenly interested in education.

He established a school at Kufa, which later became a famous College of Theology. Here he delivered lectures on Islamic Law and related subjects.
10. Fiqah or Islamic Law was systematically studied by his students under his expert guidance.

A large number of his devoted and highly intelligent students worked under him for 30 years, and it is the labour of these students that gave us the Hanafi School of thought.

11. Imam Abu Hanifa (ra) was the 1st of the Imams to advocate the use of "reason" in the consideration of religious questions based on the Qur’an and Sunnah.

12. He was also the 1st Imam to arrange all the subjects of Islamic Law systematically.

13. His most important work is the Kitab-ul-Aasaar which was compiled by his students - Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad.

14. In {164 A.H.} 763 A.C. Al-Mansoor - the Banu Abbas Khalifa of the Muslim Empire at Baghdad whose capital was Baghdad - offered Imam Sahib the post of Chief Qazi of the state, but the Imam declined to accept the post and chose to remain independent. In his reply to Al-Mansoor, the Imam excused himself by saying that he did not regard himself fit for the post offered. Al-Mansoor, who had his own ideas and reasons for offering the post, lost his temper and accused the Imam of lying.

"If I am lying," the Imam said, "then my statement is doubly correct.

"How can you appoint a liar to the exalted post of a Chief Qazi?"

Incensed by this reply, Al-Mansoor charged the Imam with contempt, had him arrested and locked in prison.

15. Even in prison, the Imam continued to teach those who were permitted to come to him.

16. It was here in prison that the Imam was administered a dose of poison in 150 A.H.

Realizing that the end was near, the Imam prostrated in prayer and passed away in this condition in the month of Rajab, 150 A.H.

The news of his death soon spread throughout Baghdad.

17. The whole town came out to pay their last homage to the greatest Imam of Islamic Law.

More than 50,000 people participated in the first Janaza Salaat.

People continued to flock and before the Janaza could be finally taken for burial, the Salaatul Janaza was offered 6 times in all.

For days, people came in large numbers to pay their respects at the grave side.

18. Among the four Imams, Abu Hanifa has the largest number of followers even today in all parts of the world {M.A.R.K.}. 
**Imam Abu Hanifa: The Juggernaut of Jurisprudence**

**Introduction**

It is the Sunnah of Allah (SWT) that He executes His will through some natural means, which only serves to strengthen the faith of those who examine these signs and ponder over them. History reveals that in Islam’s darkest times, this religion was safeguarded through beacons of light in the form of righteous individuals who upheld the true Islam. Adhering to the Sunnah of Muhammad ﷺ, they opposed injustice. They stood as pillars with their qualities of sacrifice, unflinching faith, morality, spiritual excellence, and intellect. We find that despite the attacks Muslims have faced, the Ummah always persevered and continued. By the will of Allah, it will continue to do so, as long as individuals hold fast to their Deen and follow the examples of those who suffered and triumphed before. The following article seeks to highlight one such individual, **Nouman bin Thabit**, more commonly known as Imam Abu Hanifa (RH). He was born in the city of Kufa in the year 80 AH (689 AD). He is nicknamed Imam al-A’zam (the greatest leader) and is considered to be the first of the four Imams of the Islamic schools of fiqh (jurisprudence) known as madhabs (Hanafi, Shafi’i, Maliki, Hanbali) that withstood the test of time and have been accepted by consensus of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama’ah (Sunni Muslims). It is a testament to the strength and comprehensiveness of his madhab that the Hanafi school of thought has the most adherents of the four schools.

**The City of Kufa**

Located near Najaf in Iraq, the city of Kufa had a history of socio-political turbulence following its establishment in 636 AD. It was also one of the three major cities in Iraq along with Basra and Baghdad. Sa’ad ibn Abi Waqas (RA), one of the ‘asharah mubashararah (10 companions promised paradise), was dispatched as a governor during the Caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA). The citizens of Kufa resisted his governance and accused Sa’ad (RA) of governmental abuse. Despite being found innocent of the charges, Umar (RA) recalled Sa’ad (RA) and dispatched Ammar ibn Yasser (RA) as governor and Abdullah ibn Masud (RA), a difficult sacrifice on the part of Umar (RA) who loved both of these Companions.
dearly. Kufa was a garrison city for the Muslims, a place where the military was stationed on the fronts of the growing Islamic empire. Ibn Masud (RA) was given the responsibility of mentoring the garrison and the city at large, fostering them in their learning and uplifting the community into practicing the Deen of the Prophet (SAW). The people of Kufa took to Ibn Masud (RA) very well and the city flourished in the Islamic sciences, particularly in the recitation of the Quran. Several of the modes of recitation originate from the disciples of Ibn Masud (RA) and from Kufa. However, political strife continued and Umar (RA) would go on to dispatch the last governor of his administration, Mughirah ibn Sh’uba (RA). When Uthman ibn Affan (RA) became the new Caliph in the year 644 AD, he rotated a new governor into Kufa named Waleed ibn Uqbah (RA), whereafter Kufa fell again into mass strife.

Kufa became a base for some rebels who would go on to revolt against Uthman (RA), assassinate him, and push Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA) to situate the leadership of the Caliphate in Kufa. Ali (RA) is eventually assassinated by the rebels in the Grand Masjid of Kufa. After the brief Caliphate of Hasan (RA), Muawiya (RA) established the Umayyad Dynasty and governed his Caliphate from Damascus, Syria. The people of Kufa had always been instigators against Umayyads. Most notably, the people of Kufa offered their city as a base for Husayn ibn Ali (RA), the grandson of the Prophet (SAW), and his family as a base to launch a revolt against the Caliphate of Yazid, the second Umayyad Caliph. Husayn (RA) and his family were intercepted by the army of Yazid and eventually massacred. Since that incident, the people of Kufa were under intense subjugation and oversight by the Umayyads which bred socio-political frustration in the city.

As the Umayyad Dynasty ruled from 661 to 750 AD, Iraq’s proximity as a front for the empire exposed it to an influx of factions, ideologies, and philosophies that caused division and confusion. One faction were the supporters of the Ahl al Bayt which were the descendants of Ali (RA) and the family of the Prophet (SAW). The second were the descendants of Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA), the cousin of the Prophet (SAW). His descendants, the Abbasids, were notable for their several revolts against the Umayyads, who they would eventually succeed against in 750 AD, during the time of Abu Hanifa (RH). The supporters of the Ahl al-Bayt would support the Abbasids. The Khawarij, also present in Kufa, who were responsible for the civil war that broke out between Ali and Muawiya (RA), were also the ones who murdered Ali (RA). Their creed deviated from the mainstream in that they believed that a Muslim who committed a major sin was excommunicated from the religion and was marked for death. The Qadariyah asserted that Muslims had absolute free will and were free from the paths Allah (SWT) determined for them. The Mu'tazila were “rationalists” who challenged the everlasting characteristics of Allah (SWT), asserting that his traits such as speech must have been “created”. In addition, Islam was being challenged in Kufa by the influx of Greco-Roman/Aristotelian philosophies. Upon even that, discussion of politics by the ulama was suppressed by the Umayyads, fearing that the ulama could take advantage of the Caliphate’s governmental abuse as a reason for the people to rebel. It was clear that Kufa was an unstable melting pot of different ideologies.

Before the four madhabs, Islamic law was determined by groups of scholarship primarily from the schools of Iraq and the Hijaz. Due to descendants of the Companions of the Prophet (SAW) living in the city, Medina had preserved the teachings and ways from the time of the Prophet (SAW), making it the
strongest center of Hadith studies in the world. The great scholar and contemporary of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH), Imam Malik ibn Anas (RH), is credited for compiling the scholarship of Medina into what is now called the Maliki madhab. His school is referred to as “Ahl al-Hadith” (the people of Hadith) or “Ahl al-Medina” (the people of Medina). The scholars of Iraq were known as “Ahl al-Raii” (the people of opinion). The school of Iraq was known for expanding the use of analogies and analysis with the sources of Islamic law such as the Quran and Hadith in order to refute the dissenters of Kufa. For a brief period, these schools would conflict in their methodologies but eventually reconciled their issues after Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) and his students met with Imam Malik (RH) and his students.

**Imam Abu Hanifa: His Parents**

The Prophet (SAW) was once sitting with the Companions and he put his blessed arm around Salman al-Farsi (RA), the Persian Companion. The Prophet (SAW) said, “Even if faith was left amongst the stars, one of this man’s descendants would grab it”. (Muslim, 2546)

> قال: كُنَّا جُلُوسًا عَنْدَ النَّبِي ِ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِذْ نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ سُورَةُ الْجُمُعَةِ فَلَمَّا قَرَأَ {وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ} قال رجلٌ مِنْ هؤُلاَءِ يا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَلَمْ يُرَاجِعْهُ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم حَتَّى سَأَلَهُ مَرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثًا - قال - وَفِينَا سَلْمَانُ الْفَارِسِيُّ - قال - فَوَضَعَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَدَهُ عَلَى سَلْمَانَ ثُمَّ قَالَ "لَوْ كَانَ الإِيمَانُ عِنْدَ الثُّرَيَّا لَنَالَهُ رِجَالٌ مِنْ هؤُلاَءِ.

*Here, the Prophet (SAW) is predicting a great mujaddid, reviver of Islam, to come from Persia. Many interpret this Hadith to refer to Imam Abu Hanifa (RH). “Abu Hanifa” is a kunniyat, a title attributed to some characteristic of a person. Imam Abu Hanifa’s real name was Nouman bin Thabit. “Hanifah” in the Kufic dialect means “ink” or “ink pot” and it refers to the ink pot the Imam would carry with him.*

Abu Hanifa’s parents met when his father had eaten a fruit out of another person’s garden. Thabit, fearful that the owner of the garden would have a right over him on the Day of Judgement, approached the owner and asked how he could make up for the stolen fruit. To test Thabit’s commitment to fulfilling the debt, he asked Thabit to marry his daughter. He described his daughter as mute, blind, deaf, and slow to understand things. Out of fear of Allah (SWT), he went ahead to meet the daughter. To his surprise, the daughter verbally responded, saying she is only deaf from that which is displeasing to Allah, mute and blind from that which is forbidden, and ignorant of idle knowledge. It is no surprise that the offspring of this marriage would build his life around the same qualities that was practiced by his parents.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was described as tall with dark skin. He is regarded as a Tabi’i, a member of the generation after the Sahabah, because it is understood that he met a few sahabah in his lifetime, including Anas ibn Malik (RA) in Basra. Throughout his life, he presented himself as a well-dressed and a wealthy man. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would grow up assisting his father in the silk trade, beginning at the age of 5. A unique aspect about the life of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) that few other scholars can claim was his success in both the secular and religious realms. He is reported to have said,
“You do not learn true tawakkul (trust in Allah) until you own a business”.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would never incorporate interest into his business dealings. He would never take Allah (SWT)’s name in vain by swearing upon his product. He would never unnecessarily increase prices on his customers. If there was a poor person in need of clothing and came to his shop, he would not look to make a profit off of their purchase. He would never sell a defective product, nor would he bargain or argue over products.

One example of the Imam’s strong principles was when a man asked for a product and Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) sent his son to retrieve it. The son praised the product with salawaat on the Prophet (SAW) and this betrayed the principles of Imam Abu Hanifa’s (RH) conduct; thus, the Imam turned away 300 dirhams for the item. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was gracious in his sadaqa, having his child give ten coins to the poor every day and 20 on Fridays. This is an example of how the Imam excelled as a parent by inculcating qualities like generosity in his son. Do not allow Imam Abu Hanifa’s (RH) success in business to make you consider him a covetous or greedy person. One quality that Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) exemplified was that he would not pester people who owed him money. A man who was struggling to repay the Imam would hide from him in the community out of shame and shyness. When Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) asked the man why he would do such a thing, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was dumbfounded and asked the man for his forgiveness for making him feel the way he did. The Imam’s treatment of those who owed him money shows us that a person should never obnoxiously hold a debt or a grudge over another person who is sincerely trying to fulfill that right. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) and all the great servants of this Ummah were known for how strictly they would be with themselves in adherence to the Deen, but when it came to other people, they would treat them with abundant love and compassion.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would also only maintain a certain reserve of money that Ali (RA) stated was necessary to maintain a dignified livelihood, the rest was given away in charity. These strong principles of his business conduct were present before he began his studies and afterward.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) gained a reputation for good conduct and carrying the Deen with him in his business. Imam Sha’bi (RH), who was known in the community for his affluence and easy-going personality, was naturally inclined to the brilliance that emanated from the young businessman. When the Imam asked Abu Hanifa who he learned from, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) responded by saying he did not have a teacher. Then Imam Sha’bi said, “Do not live your life like a headless man, focus on learning beneficial knowledge, sit within the school, I see with you beneficial qualities”. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would later comment that it was Imam Sha’bi recognizing his potential that motivated him towards studying.

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.

**Specialization in Jurisprudence**

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) then transitioned into the subject of Fiqh where he studied under his beloved teacher Hammad ibn Ali 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-Nakhi (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, Hammad (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.

His Qualities

The Imam’s soundness of character, piety, and righteousness were renown. He was well known for his humility, respect, care, intellect, and for having considerable love for his community and his students. One of the most distinguished features of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was his devotion to Allah (SWT) in worship. Widely known for his Tahajjud salah and nightly vigils, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was known to consistently recite the entire Quran in one rakat. Asad ibn Umar (RH), one of his students, narrated,

“Most of the time, he used to recite the entire Quran in one Rak’at. His nightly crying, which could be heard outside his house invoked sympathy and pity of his neighbors”.

Many narrations address his unwillingness to sleep at night, stating that he would engage in forty day periods of nightly worship to Allah (SWT). Throughout his community, he was widely remembered for being someone of prayer. The consistent and intense devotion to worshipping Allah (SWT) is a characteristics of other great servants of Islam. They were people who, during the day, would be recognized for their great knowledge and efforts, but at night they would humble themselves and recognize their Lord in prayer.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) was very conscious of Allah (SWT) and his own personal conduct. As a successful businessman, he was presented with the material wealth of the dunya, but he gave much of his wealth away in charity and chose to pursue a life in servitude to Allah (SWT). Islam would permeate every inch of his life. A scholar narrated from a contemporary of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) that described him as,

“extremely particular about the unlawful. He avoided many lawful things due to doubt. I have not witnessed a single Faqih more cautious over his desires and ‘Ilm than him. All of his endeavours were directed toward the Hereafter”.

The way that Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) lived his life shows us the beauty of submitting to Allah (SWT). It shows us that Islam is a means to simplify one’s life and has provided us the resources and guidance in order to live a life of achievement, meaning, and contentment. The drive in order to live a life of submission to Allah (SWT) is knowledge of him. Like Imam Abu Hanifa (RH), every individual should attempt to cultivate a relationship with Allah (SWT) in order to live that life of consciousness.
Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) had a deep sense of serving those around him and his community at large. This was very visible in the way he would treat his students. After taking a student into his circles, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would see to it that the student be properly clothed and be given a house to live in. He would do the same for the student’s family. He would even deliver marriage proposals on behalf of his students. Outside of them, he would care for his neighbors and the residents of Kufa. One of his chief students, Imam Zufar (RH), would say that Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would make everyone around him comfortable, it did not matter if the person was rich, poor, ignorant, or scholarly. Imam Zufar said, “I have never seen a man more willing to listen to people’s concerns and advise them”.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would always visit the sick and pray the funeral prayer of the deceased. Many great scholars of the past were not hermites. They understood that serving Islam meant being servants of their community. They understood that they were the heirs of the Prophet (SAW) and it was their responsibility to be role models. They enjoyed helping others and engaging in the company of their peers. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) and the great servants of Islam should be role models for us. Emulating their conduct in their communities such as assisting the needy or visiting the ill should be a roadmap for us if we want to create a positive image of Islam and bring goodness into our society.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) exemplified several other traits in his life that can be benefited from. For example, he was the first to critique himself before passing judgement onto others. Whenever someone would abruptly interrupt his gatherings, he would not lash back at the heckler but would patiently wait them out. He would listen to the person and would take it as a judgment upon himself. Interruptions in his gatherings would be a reminder to him not to feel too superior and that he was not even close to the superiority of Allah (SWT). The Imam also did not partake in gossip or backbiting. In a discussion between Abdullah bin Mubarak and Sufyan al-Thawri (RH), Abdullah ibn Mubarak (RH) expressed his tremendous distaste with backbiting as Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would not do it. Sufyan al-Thawri (RH) responded by saying that the Imam was wise and would dare not sacrifice the rewards he accumulated by backbiting.

These are all the qualities of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH), a man who understood that he was blessed to be a Muslim and did not take it for granted. All of his traits stemmed from his willingness to submit to Allah (SWT), and that conscious of Allah (SWT) and his desire to uphold the teachings and character of the Prophet (SAW) enabled him to embody the Deen so beautifully that his intellect and study of the Islamic sciences benefits the entire Ummah to this day.

**His Methodology and School of Thought**
Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would have 36-40 of his students in his council, each a master of various Islamic sciences, such as language, Hadith, Tafsir, etc. The council would discuss a matter and debate on its answer, with each person giving their perspective based on their expertise, while Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would preside over these discussions. In fact, many opinions of the Hanafi madhab would be made by his students, particularly his two most famous students Qadi Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad al-Shaybani who would go on to further develop the Hanafi madhab.

The Imam’s personal methodology to answering legal questions was to first look into the Quran. If he could not find an answer directly, he would look to the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). If he still could not find an answer, he would look to the statements of the Sahabah. If they differed over the question then Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would accept the statement that he felt was most in line with his knowledge of the Quran and Hadith. However, if he still did not find a statement, then he would make his own ruling and would consult the inferences of people like Ibrahim al-Nakha’i or Hasan al-Basri.

**Later Life and Political Turbulence**

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) supported the uprising of Zayd ibn Ali (RH). He began a revolt against the Caliph Hisham Abdul Malik in the year 121 AH. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) supported him financially. In response, one of the governors of Kufa attempted to keep Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) loyal to the Umayyads by appointing the Imam as treasurer or the chief judge. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) denied the appointment and was imprisoned and tortured. He was released with the ultimatum that he would either take the position or be subjected to another bout of torture. Therefore, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) fled to Makkah, and it was this time in the Hijaz that the two great Imams, Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik (RH) met one another. Both of them engaged in vigorous discussion with another, each gaining tremendous respect for the other. Imam Malik’s students would ask about Abu Hanifa and he responded by saying,

“Don’t you know Imam Abu Hanifa? If he had tried to convince me that this pillar was made of gold instead of stone, I would have to believe it”.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would send his chief student Imam Abu Yusuf (RH) to study with Imam Malik and Abu Yusuf was able to instill Imam Malik’s methodology of Hadith into the Hanafi madhab. Imam Muhammad al-Shaybani (RH) would also study with Imam Malik for three years.

Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) would stay in the Hijaz for around six to seven years. In the year 132 AH, the Abbasids and the supporters of the family of the Prophet (SAW) would successfully overthrow the
Umayyads and Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) returned to Kufa. The new governor was named Abu Abbass al-Safaa and he was widely known for his hatred of the Umayyads. He gathered the scholars, assured them that the family of the Prophet (SAW) would be taken care of and that the freedom of speech for the scholars would be ensured. Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) responded optimistically by saying,

“All Praise be to Allah who allowed the truth to arise from the family of the Prophet (SAW) and who took away the injustice of the oppression. We will be in support of you so long as you support the book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW)”.

Things began well but another governor would succeed Abu Abbass al-Safaa named Abu Jafar al-Mansur. He was a paranoid leader who again offered Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) the chief justice position to keep him subservient to the government. After he declined, he was thrown into prison. He was excessively tortured and never cared for in prison. There are differences on whether he had succumbed to his wounds in prison or outside the prison and whether he was poisoned; nevertheless, he passed away at the age of 70 in the year 150 AH. In one narration, Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) passed away in the state of sujood.

The life of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) shows us how to be people who emulate the Deen in all aspects of our lives, even aspects that are not apparently Islamic such as our careers and transactions. We look to the life of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) in order to develop a holistic character, one that is very ardent in seeking the knowledge of this Deen but also one that is caring and kind to all. The life of the Imam teaches us to be conscious of Allah (SWT) from childhood to our last days.

We ask Allah (SWT) to allow us to benefit from the life of Imam Abu Hanifa (RH) and make us people like him and the great Saviors of Islam.

**IMAM MAALIK IBN ANAS (ra)**

1. Abu Abdullah Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn Abi Aamir (ra) was born in Madina in the year 93 A.H. (714 A.C)

   He came from a respectable family.

2. His ancestral home was in Yemen, but his great grandfather - Aamir - settled in Madina after embracing Islam.
3. His grandfather - Maalik - was an important Taabi-ee and a famous reporter of Ahadith.
4. He was greatly attracted to the study of Islamic Law and devoted his entire interest to the subject after completing his primary education.
5. Madina was the most important seat of Islamic learning as the immediate descendants of the Sahaba-e-Kiraam were inhabitants of the City.
6. For the purpose of his study, he sought out over 300 "Tabi’een" = those who saw the Sahaba/Companions of the Holy Prophet (saw), and acquired from them the knowledge of the Holy Prophet's (saw) Ahadith and Sunnah.

7. He spent his entire life in Madina where he studied Fiqah from 95 Shaikhs. It is these Shaikhs from whom he recorded the Ahadith in his Kitab-ul-Muatta.

This Kitab contains 1725 Ahadith of Rasulullah (saw).

8. He studied Qira'at & Hadith for nearly ten years under Hazrat Naafe' the slave of Hazrat Abdullah ibn Umar (ra). Hazrat Naafe' had served his master for nearly 30 years.

Naafe' was once sent by Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (ra) to impart knowledge in Egypt.

9. Although he is the author of numerous books, his most important work is the Kitab-ul-Muatta, which deals with the subject of Islamic Law based on Ahadith and Sunnah. The Kitab-ul-Muatta is the earliest surviving book of its kind - written around 150 A.H. - and it is used in all Islamic institutions as one of the text books in the final year studies by graduating Ulama.

10. Imam Malik had the highest regard for the Holy Prophet (saw) as well as for his Ahadith. He never tolerated indiscipline whilst Hadith-e-Rasul was under discussion.

He even rebuked Al-Mansoor for talking loudly when some Ahadith were being discussed.

11. The Imam always made Wudu or Ghusal, wore fresh clean attire and applied perfume before conducting lessons on Ahadith.

12. He delivered lectures on Islamic Law, and issued fatwas (Islamic Rulings) for nearly 62 years. Approx. 1,300 people have reported Ahadith from him.

13. He had the honour of occupying the home of Hazrat Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (ra) and conducting lessons from the same spot where Rasulullah (saw) spent his time for I’tikaaf, in the Masjid-un-Nabi.

14. Imam Malik was famous for his piety and integrity, and courageously stood up prepared to suffer for his conviction.

For example, in 135 A.H., When the governor of Madina demanded and forced people to take the oath of allegiance in favour of Khalifa Al-Mansoor, the Imam issued a Fatwa that such an oath was not binding because it was given under duress.

15. Since this fatwa was not in the interest of the ruler, the governor arrested the Imam and had him publicly flogged for the "crime".

Al-Mansoor, learning of this outrage, apologized to the Imam and dismissed the errant governor.
16. Imam Malik (ra), was offered 3,000 gold coins (dinars) by Mansoor, as travelling expenses to Baghdad and subsequent residence in the Capital, but the Imam politely refused the offer saying that he preferred to live in Madina near Rasulullah (saw).
17. Imam Malik never intended the formation of a school of thought bearing his name. It was his disciples & followers who later developed a Fiqah School based on Imam Malik's rulings.
18. Malikis are found mostly in North & West Africa - Tunis, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt.
19. This Great Leader of Islamic Law died in Madina on the 11th Rabi-ul-Aakhir 179 A.H. at the age 86 years. He lies buried in the Jannatul Baqi in Madina. (M.A.R.K.)

IMAM MALIK IBN ANAS (ra) - ADDITIONAL FACTS

1. Madina was the most important centre of knowledge as scholars flocked to the City to pay their respects to Rasulullah (saw).
2. The home of Imam Malik too was a centre of Ilm-e-Nabawi.
3. Among his first tutors was Imam-ush-Shua'raa Hazrat Naafe' bin Abdur Rahman (died - 169 A.H.) from whom he mastered the Qur'an.
4. Later, whilst still a youngster he joined the Hadith classes of Naafe'.
5. Physical description: Tall, heavily built, fair but reddish, wide eyes, beautiful nose, very little hair on the forehead, heavy long beard which reached his chest. trimmed moustache above/edge of the lip.

He considered the shaver of moustache as Makrooh and a Mussla (disfigurer).

6. He wore expensive clothing and used much Ittar.
7. He wore a silver ring with a stone and engraved was 'Hasbun'Allahu wa Ne'mal Wakeel'.
8. On his door was written 'Maa Sha Allah'. This house originally belonged to Abdulla ibn Mas'ood (ra).
9. He started teaching at the age of 17.
10. It was only after seventy Ulama certified him as an authority, did he commence issuing Fatwa.
11. His seat in the Masjid-e-Nabawi was the same seat that was occupied by Hazrat Umar (ra).
12. He never answered the call of nature within the perimeter of the Haram, except during illness or some Uzar.
13. He never rode during his entire life on an animal in Madina.

He used to say, "How can I ride an animal whose feet tramples the ground in which lies resting of the Master (saw).

14. During his advancing years, he never went out of Madina - hoping to be buried therein.
15. During Hadith lessons if anyone raised his voice, he would reprimand him and quote the Qur'anic verse ... adding that the command was applicable even now.
IMAM MAALIK IBN ANAS (ra) - POLITICAL ERA

1. During the Khilafat of Mansoor Abbasi, oppression was on the increase.

   Muhammad Zun-Nafs az-Zakiyah in Madina and his brother Ibrahim in Basra were compelled to raise the flag of rebellion against the the injustice directed mostly towards the Sayeds.

   Imam Malik issued a fatwa in favour of these two and against the government.

2. This led to his arrest by the governor of Madina and subsequent flogging - seventy lashes.

   Later when Mansoor learnt of this, he expressed regret and sent an apology to the Imam and requested the Imam to come to Baghdad, but the Imam refused.

   When Mansoor came for Hajj, he visited Madina as well and treated the Imam with great respect.

3. Haroon ar-Rasheed

   Haroon ar-Rasheed was a patron of the Ulama. He had great regard for Imam Malik. He personally, with his two sons, journeyed to Madina to listen to the Muatta. He invited the Imam to come to his camp in order to give lessons but the Imam refused. So Haroon brought his sons to the Imam.

4. His death

   Imam Malik was 86 years and had become quite weak, but he still continued to give lesson and issue fatwas.

   It was Sunday when he became ill and for the next 22 odd days it got worse. He passed away on the 11th Rabi-ul-Aakhir, 179 A.H.

   He had taught and issued fatwas for 62 years.

IMAM MAALIK IBN ANAS (ra) - ORIGIN OF MALIKI FIQAH

The Fuqaha-e-Saba' of Madina are:

1. Saeed ibn Musayyib, Died 94 A.H.
2. Ubaidullah ibn Utba ibn Mas'ud, Died 98 A.H.
3. Urwa, Died 94 A.H.
4. Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, Died 108 A.H.
5. Abu Bakr bin Abdur-Rahman bin Haris ibn Hisham, Died 94 A.H.
6. Sulaiman ibn Yasaar, Died 109 A.H.
7. Kharija Zaid, Died 109 A.H.

These 7 were the centre of Ilm-e-Fiqah and Hadith in Madina.

Their unanimous ruling was the basis of any verdict in the court of Madina in matters of Fiqah.

The basis of Imam Malik's Fiqah and Fatwa originates from this Fiqah of Madina.

Allama ibn Qayyim (ra) states that the promotion of Deen, Fiqah, and Ilm in the Ummah is due to the students of Ibn Mas'ud, Zaid bin Thabit, Ibn Umar and Ibn Abbas (ra).

Ibn Mas'ud stayed in Madina but was later ordered to reside in Kufa.

Therefore the above 7 were instrumental in the promotion of Ilm in Madina.

And it is from these persons that the Shaikhs of Imam Malik benefitted, in particular Hazrat Rabi'atur Raai who is the most important Shaikh of Imam Malik (ra).

Imam Malik based his rulings in his Fatwas from the Fiqah of the above and this eventually became the "Maliki Fiqah.

IMAM SHAFI'EE (ra)

1. Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Idrees Shafi'ee (ra) was a descendant from the Quraish tribe.

   He is the Only Imam who is related to Rasulullah (saw).

2. Imam Shafi’ee (RAH) was born in Ghazza, Syria in 150 A.H. (765 A.C.)

   He lost his father during infancy and was raised by his mother under very poor circumstances.

3. He completed Hifz of the Qur'an at the tender age of 7 years, and at the age of 13 memorized the Kitabul-Muatta of Imam Malik (ra).

4. He spent some time among the Beduins outside Makka, to acquire a good knowledge of the Arabic language.

5. At the age of 20, (170 A.H./785 A.C.) he went to Madina and became a student of Imam Malik (ra) who was greatly impressed with the young student who had memorized the Muatta.

6. He stayed with Imam Malik for some time; thereafter he returned to Makka.

7. He also came into contact with other learned men (81 Shaikhs) from all of whom he acquired the knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah.

8. In 184 A.H./799 A.C., Imam Shafi’ee was arrested and taken to Baghdad to appear before Haroon Ar-Rasheed on "trumped up" charges of treason. It was due to the recommendation of
Imam Muhammad (the state Qazi and student of Imam Abu Hanifa) that Imam Shafi’ee was discharged. He was then 34 years old.

9. Imam Shafi’ee remained in Baghdad as a student of Imam Muhammad for over three years to add further to his knowledge of Islamic Law.

10. He returned to Makka where he stayed for 9 years delivering lectures on Islamic Law. It was during this period that Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal came into contact with Imam Shafi’ee.

11. In 199 A.H., he went to Egypt where he was received with much honour and respect. He remained here until his death.

12. Imam Shafi’ee was the author of over 100 books, the most important of which is the Kitab-ul-Umm. It contains the rulings of the Imam on all subjects of Islamic Law.

13. He left behind a large number of dedicated students in Makka, Baghdad and Egypt.

14. The Shafi’ee School of Thought emerged from these students who propagated the views and rulings of the Imam through their writings and preachings.

15. Imam Shafi’ee (ra) never committed a major sin nor spoke a lie, nor did he swallow an unlawful morsel of food in his entire life.

He never at any time performed Jumma without Ghusal.

16. He was an extremely generous personality who on numerous occasions gave away all he possessed to the poor and needy.

17. He died in Cairo, Egypt, on Friday evening after Maghrib, 29th Rajab, 204 A.H. (20th Jan, 820 A.C.) after a short illness, at the age of 53-54 years. { M.A.R.K. }

IMAM SHAFI'EE (ra) - ADDITIONAL FACTS

1. Abu Abdulla Muhammad ibn Idris ibn Al-Abbas bin Usman bin Shafi'.
2. His ancestry joins the Prophet at Abd Manaaf.
3. His title is 'Naasirun Sunnah'. He was honoured as Al-Imaamul Mujaddid in that he is the Mujaddid of the 2nd century.
4. His birth place is Ghazza/Asqalaan - a place two stages from Jerusalem. He was born in Rajab 150 A.H.
5. He was two years old when his parents moved to Makka and made it their home.
6. His mother was a Yemeni of the famous Bani Azd tribe.
7. His ancestor - Shafi' - was the flag bearer of the Banu Hashim in Badr.

He was taken prisoner and released after ransom. Thereafter he embraced Islam.

Another report states that he met the Prophet (saw) as a youngster and became a Muslim.

However his father - Saa'iib - was the flag bearer.....

8. Imam Shafi’ee completed Hifz at 7 and memorised Muatta at 10 years.
9. At 15 with the permission of his SHAIKH - Muslim bin Khalid Zanji (the Mufti of Makka) - he started issuing fatwas.

10. Earlier he spent his time in Arabic literature and poetry.

   One day at Mina, he heard a voice behind saying: "Aliaka bil Fiqah" - (GRASP THE FIQAH).

11. Muslim bin Khalid who had noticed his remarkable intelligence, etc., advised him to study Fiqah.

   He spent three years with the Shaikh, until the age of 13.

12. Later he went to Madina to study under Imam Malik.

   Besides Imam Malik, he studied Hadith under 81 Shaikhs.

   In Makka his tutor was Sufyan bin Ainiyyah.

   Imam Shafi’ee said about these two: "Had it not been for Imam Malik and Sufyan, then Ilm Would not have remained in Hidjaz."

13. He spent 8 months with Imam Malik, then returned to Makka.

14. He came into contact in 184 A.H. with Imam Muhammad - state Qazi - at Baghdad and stayed with him for over 3 years. Taking into account future visits to the Imam, he spent 10 years with Imam Muhammad.

   Comments: "I never came across a greater Alim of Kitabullah than Imam Muhammad (ra).

15. Imam Muhammad made this comment:

   [a] The door of Fiqah was shut to the people, Allah opened it because of Shafi’ee.

   [b] Imam Shafi’ee is the Mujaddid of Deen.

16. Imam Malik made this comment:

   No Scholar more brilliant than Muhammad ibn Idris Shafi’ee ever came to me as a pupil.

17. Fiqah Shafi’ee

   The Imam had mastered both Maliki and Hanafi Fiqah. Keeping both before him, he formulated the basis of the Shafi’ee Fiqah.

   His pupils compiled his works, Fatwas, teachings, etc., and promoted the Shafi’ee School of Fiqah.
IMAM AHMAD IBN MUHAMMAD HAMBAL (ra)

1. Abu Abdullah Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hambal Shaibani Al-Maruzi was of pure Arab descent whose ancestry joins Hazrat Ebrahim (as).
2. He was born in Baghdad in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, 164 A.H. He lost his father when he was only three years old.
3. Baghdad being the Capital of the Muslim State was an important centre of learning during the Banu Abbas Era.
4. Imam Ahmad Hambal (ra) completed Hifz of the Qur'an at an early age.
5. In 180 A.H., when he was 16 years old, he began to pursue the knowledge of Ahadith under the Imam Abu Yusuf (the most important pupil of Imam Abu Hanifa (ra)).
6. He stayed with him for 3 years, during which time he recorded so much information, that the volumes filled 3 book shelves.
7. Later he also attended the classes of Imam Muhammad (another prominent pupil of Imam Abu Hanifa (ra)).
8. After accumulating knowledge from numerous scholars in Baghdad, he journeyed to Kufa, Basra, Makka, Madina, Yemen, Syria, Jazira in order to increase his knowledge of Ahadith.
9. After meeting with over a hundred Shaikhs, he is reputed to have made a collection of over a million Ahadith.
10. It was in 187 A.H. that he met Imam Shafi’ee (ra) in Makka for the first time. Later when Imam Shafi’ee came to Baghdad, Imam Hambal also joined him during the Imam's residence here and mastered from him Fiqah.
11. Imam Shafi’ee (ra) too on the other hand relied very much on the knowledge of Ahadith and Sunnah which Imam Ahmad Hambal (ra) possessed.
12. It was in 204 A.H., only after he had reached the age of 40, that Imam Ahmad Hambal (ra) started conducting lessons and delivering lectures.
13. Being a prominent figure, his lectures attracted a huge gathering of at least 5,000 students among whom nearly 500 took down notes daily.
14. Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, and Imam Tirmizi (ra) were also amongst his noteworthy students.
15. The Mu'tazila controversy regarding the "immortality and creation of the Qur'an" was the cause of much trial in the life of the Imam, who suffered much over a period of nearly 15 years.
16. The Banu Abbas rulers - Al-Ma'moon and Al-Mu'tasim who were influenced by the Mu'tazila - tried to force the Ulama to accept the Mu'tazila doctrine.
17. Being a devotee of the Sunnah, and an opposer of Bid'at it fell upon the shoulders of Imam Hambal (ra) to oppose this doctrine vigorously.
18. Al-Mu'tasim even ordered the flogging and imprisonment of the Imam for several months.

Imam Hambal succumbed to the sufferings rather than deviate from the beliefs and practices of the Sunnah.

19. The sufferings of Imam Hambal ended when Al-Mutawakkil took over as ruler, restored the traditional teachings of Islam and accorded the Imam the honour befitting the great scholar.
20. Among his several works is the Encyclopaedia of Ahadith called Masnad, compiled by his son Abdulla from his lectures, and amplified by references to over 28,000 Ahadith.

21. His other important works include a collection of his fatwas (Islamic rulings on religious matters) - covering over 20 volumes.

   These fatwas form the basis of the Hambali School of Thought.

22. The Hambalis represent the smallest group in the four Sunni Schools of Fiqah.

23. Imam Hambal (ra) died after a short illness in Baghdad, on Friday evening, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal, 241 A.H. (855 A.C.) at the age of 77 years.

   His Janaza Salaat was attended by nearly 1,000,000 people who came to pay their respects to this great scholar of Islam. {M.A.R.K.}