



## In Defence of Abu Hurairah

### Introduction

During his life he was criticised unjustly. After his death he was continuously attacked by those with diseases in their hearts such as the *Khawaarij*, *Jahmiya*, *Mu'tazali Qadariya*, because of the *ahadeeth* he narrated that oppose their beliefs. He was also criticised by the extreme followers of the *Hanafee madhab*, such as *Mahmood Abu Riya*, *Nadhaam*, as well as *Abdul Hasan* from the *Sh'iah*, and then in more recent times, the rejecters of *ahadeeth*, and the modernist movements. Naturally, the orientalist took advantage of the unjust and misplaced criticism of all of the above to attack at Islam in general and the Sunnah in particular. This article will discuss his biography and critically examine the objections levelled against him. By doing this, we will demonstrate that Abu Hurairah was innocent of the false accusations made against him.

### His biography

Abu Hurairah, the illustrious Companion of the Prophet, Mohammad (salahu alaihi wa sallam) was a *Haafidh*<sup>1</sup>, and a *Fiqhee*<sup>2</sup>. Originating from *Yemen* and belonging to a tribe called '*Dous*', his real name was *Abdur Rahman bin Sakhar*. He was known in *Jaahileeya* as *Abdu-Shams*, but the Messenger of Allah (salahu alaihi wa sallam) named him *Abdur Rahman*. He later became known as *Abu Hurairah* so much that he almost forgot his name. There are numerous narrations of his names, the historians differed so much that more than thirty names have been attributed to him. All the historians agreed to his *kunyya*<sup>3</sup> but differed as to what was his correct name. The strongest of opinions is the name mentioned above, *Abdur Rahman bin Sakhar*.<sup>4</sup>

There are two narrations about how he got this *kuniya*, the first is what has been narrated from himself, where he said: "They gave me the *kuniya* Abu Hurairah because I used to look after sheep for my family. I found some kittens roaming around frightfully so I took care of

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<sup>1</sup> A memorizer of the prophetic ahadeeth

<sup>2</sup> One who has understanding of the Quraan and sunnah to a scholarly level

<sup>3</sup> Nickname

<sup>4</sup> see Tahdheed al Asmaa 2/270, Al Isaabah 4/202, Seer A'laam an nubala 2/ 578

them. When I returned to my family, they heard the sound of kittens from my room, so they said, 'What is this oh Abdu Shams?' So I said, 'Baby kittens, I found them.' They said, 'Then you are Abu Hurairah' (father of the kittens), so it remained with me."<sup>5</sup> The second narration is from the Prophet, (salahu alaihi wa sallam) narrated by Abu Hurairah himself, "The Messenger of Allah use to call me Abu Hirr, and the people called me Abu Hurairah. I preferred to be called by a male name as opposed to a female name."<sup>6</sup> There are other narrations showing that the Prophet, (salahu alaihi wa sallam) himself addressed him as "Oh Abu Hurairah..."

From the above narrations it could be understood that he was named Abu Hurairah in *Jahileeyah*<sup>7</sup> and in Islam. However, harmonisation of the two can be achieved; he took up his *kunya* in *jahileeyah* then after he migrated to Madeenah. He took the cats with him, and when the Prophet, (salahu alaihi wa sallam) saw him playing with them, he gave him the *kuniya* Abu Hirr.

Abu Hurairah embraced Islam at the hands of another Companion from his own tribe called Thufail bin Umaru ad Dousi. Thufail was a noble man, he was also a poet and used to invite many people to his home and treat them well. One day he travelled from Yemen to Makkah where he met a group of men from *Quraysh*. They said to him, "You have come to our city, let us inform you of a man in our midst who has divided us, and caused us to split. His speech is evil magic, he turns father against son, man against his wife. We fear for you and your people so do not give him your ear."

Thufail recounted, "They continued to warn me of his doings until we all agreed that I would not speak to him or listen to him. I went to the masjid and saw the Prophet, (salahu alaihi wa sallam) standing in prayer, so I stood near him and heard some of his speech. I said to myself, 'by Allah I am a poet, a good poet, I can tell good and bad poetry so what stops me from listening to him? If what I hear is good I will accept it, if it is evil I will reject it'. So I waited until he left. When he entered his home, I entered with him. I said to him, "Your people are saying so and so about you, warning me from you. Tell me what you are calling to." So he (salahu alaihi wa sallam) explained Islam to me and recited to me verses from the Quran. I said, "By Allah I have never heard better speech than this, or words more just than

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<sup>5</sup> Mustadrak Al Haakim 3/506

<sup>6</sup> ibid 3/507

<sup>7</sup> pre Islam

this". So I became a Muslim and said, "Oh Prophet, of Allah, I am a person who is obeyed by my people, and I am going back to them to call them to Islam. Make *dua* to Allah for me that he will help me." So the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, said: "Oh Allah give him a sign..."

Thufail left to call his tribe to Islam but no one answered his call except the father of his wife. He returned to the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, and requested from him to supplicate against the tribe of *Dous*. The Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, said, "Oh Allah, guide the people of *Dous*." He then instructed Thufail to return to his people and call them again. So he went back and called his people. This time they answered his call. From amongst them was Abu Hurairah, he was twenty-six years old at the time. Thufail remained with the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, until the Prophet died. He then accompanied Abu Bakr and fought in the battle of *Yamaamah*, against the apostates. He was martyred during this battle, may Allah be pleased with him.

Abu Hurairah arrived at Madeenah whilst the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, had gone on *jihad* to Khaybar. He arrived at the time of *fajr* and prayed behind Sabaa bin Arfatha whom the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, placed in charge of Madeenah. He read from *Soorah Maryam* in the first rakaat and *Soorah Mutafifeen* in the second. Abu Hurairah said, "When I heard the opening few verses of *mutafifeen*, I remembered a person from the tribe of *Azd* (of which *Dous* was an offshoot). He used to have one weighing scale for himself and one for others with which he used to cheat them". When Abu Hurairah found out the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, was in Khaybar he became sad and began to pack to leave, to go to him. He was told that the Messenger, was on his way back, but he replied, "I will not hear of him going anywhere except that I go too."

Abu Hurairah left for Khaybar after a day or part of a day. That which is authentic is that he arrived at Khaybar after the battle had been won. He said, "I came to the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, after the battle. I used to have a slave who travelled with me. Whilst I was sitting with the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, he said, "Oh Abu Hurairah, is this your slave who came with you?" I said, "By Allah he is now free." Then he began to sing a *nasheed* out of happiness.

After seeing his attachment to the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, and thirst for knowledge, the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, was pleased with Abu Hurairah, and

praised him. A narration was reported that the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, asked Abu Hurairah, "What tribe are you from?" He replied "From Ad Dous." The Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, said, "I never used to see anyone from that tribe that had good in him".<sup>8</sup> Indeed this was a great praise for Abu Hurairah .

### **His character and his zeal for knowledge**

History shows that he made *hijrah* to Madeenah with his mother whilst she was a polytheist. Abu Hurairah used to serve her and invite her to Islam. She would always refuse and revile the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. What he saw from his mother never used to bother him, until one day he entered upon the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, very upset, sad, and resorting to him for help. He asked the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, to make *duaa* that faith would enter her heart. So he did so until she accepted Islam.

One day he went out and met a group of people who asked him, "What did you come out for?" He said, "Hunger." They replied, "By Allah nothing brought us out except hunger also." So they entered upon the Messenger, of Allah *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, and he said: "**What has brought you all out at this time?**" They said, "Hunger". The Prophet gave each of them two dates and said: "**Eat these two dates and drink over them water, they will suffice you for this day of yours.**" So I ate one date and kept the other. He *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, said, "Why do you not eat the other?" I replied, "I want to keep it for my mother." He *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, said: "**Eat it and we shall give you two dates for her also.**"<sup>9</sup>

His zeal for knowledge started from the day he arrived in Madeenah. He freed himself from everything that would normally keep one busy all for the sake of seeking knowledge. He became content with living a simple life with the *Ahlul Sufha*<sup>10</sup> in order to be free to seek knowledge. Allah increased him in knowledge so much that he superseded many Companions that had accompanied the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, throughout his Prophethood. The Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, made a specific *duaa* for him which he did not make for anyone else.

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<sup>8</sup> Tirmidhi

<sup>9</sup> Seera Alaam an-Nubala 2/592-593

<sup>10</sup> the poor that lived in the prophets Masjid

Abu Hurairah was illiterate, and he feared that his memory might fail him. So he complained to the Messenger, of Allah salallahu alaihi wa sallam, saying that he hears from him many *ahadeeth* but forgets them. So the Messenger, asked him to spread out his cloak, which he did. The Messenger, salallahu alaihi wa sallam, then said some words in his hands and wiped it over the cloak and said, "Wear it now." Abu Hurairah wore it and said, "I did not forget a *hadeeth* after that."<sup>11</sup>

So this is how Abu Hurairah became the Companion who narrated the most *ahadeeth* and spoke about *ahadeeth* of the Prophet, salallahu alaihi wa sallam. He acknowledges this, as he said, "There is no Companion of the Messenger, salallahu alaihi wa sallam, which has narrated more *ahadeeth* from him than I, except Abdullah bin Amr bin A'as because he use to write and I did not."<sup>12</sup>

He never used to bother about food and drink when it came to attaining *ahadeeth* from the Prophet, salallahu alaihi wa sallam. This is how he lived his life, so simply, for the sake of knowledge. In one narration he was lying on his front out of extreme hunger trying to flatten his stomach against the ground. In another instance Abu Bakr passed by him, so Abu Hurairah stopped Abu Bakr to ask him about a verse in the Quran, but in actuality he was hoping he would take him to his home and feed him. But Abu Bakr answered his question not knowing his real need. Then Abu Qasim salallahu alaihi wa sallam, passed him by, looked at his face and said, "Come with me Oh Abu Hurairah." So he followed him to his home. There was a bowl of *Laban*<sup>13</sup> which Abu Hurairah saw and wanted to drink to strengthen his body, but the Messenger, of Allah ordered him to bring the *Ahlul sufah* to drink from it. So Abu Hurairah did so, knowing that when they come they would drink all of it due to their large number, and the bowl was only one and small. Abu Hurairah thought that perhaps the Prophet, salallahu alaihi wa sallam, did not understand his need as was the case with Abu Bakr. After they came and took their seats, Allah's Messenger ordered Abu Hurairah to give them each to drink. So he did so, one by one and each time looking into the bowl to see how much was left. When they had finished Abu Hurairah saw there was only a little left at the base of the bowl. He took it to the Prophet, salallahu alaihi wa sallam, and the Prophet, took it from him to drink himself, but smiled at him and said, "Drink Abu Hurairah." He drank, then the Messenger, said again, "Drink Abu Hurairah." So he drank again, he kept

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<sup>11</sup> Bukhari kitab al munaqib 28

<sup>12</sup> Bukhaari 1/38

<sup>13</sup> milk

telling him to drink until Abu Hurairah said, "I can drink no more." Then he took it from him and drank himself.<sup>14</sup>

Abu Hurairah used to fall unconscious in the Prophet's *masjid* out of extreme hunger. People would place their feet on his neck thinking that he had been possessed, but it was not evil possession, it was none else but hunger.<sup>15</sup>

Abu Hurairah was not lazy, neither was he fleeing from working to earn his living. Rather, he lived an extremely poor life in order to free himself to attain that which was more important - the Prophetic knowledge- and then spread it amongst the people. When a lot of his *ahadeeth* did spread amongst the people he told them the reason for this in no uncertain manner, he said, "You say Abu Hurairah relays too many *ahadeeth* from the Messenger, of Allah and you ask how is it that the *muhajiroon* and *ansaar* do not relate as many *ahadeeth*. My brothers from the *muhajiroon* were kept busy in the markets, and my brothers from the *Ansaar* were kept busy with their work and wealth. As for me, I was a poor person from the *masakeen* of *ahlul sufha*. I accompanied the Messenger, of Allah to fill my stomach<sup>16</sup>, so I was present when they were absent and remembered when they forgot."<sup>17</sup>

Another example of his strong memory and thirst for knowledge is when people used to say, "Abu Hurairah relates too many *ahadeeth*." One day he met a person who he asked, "What did the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam* recite last night in his prayer?" The person said, "I do not know." Abu Hurairah said, "I know, he read 'such and such'."<sup>18</sup>

Abu Hurairah used to love the Messenger, of Allah *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, very dearly. His heart would fly whenever he would see the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. Food and drink became unimportant to him if the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, had disappeared from him.

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<sup>14</sup> Musnad Imaam Ahmad 2/515, Bukhari 11/281 kitaab ar raqaaiq

<sup>15</sup> Bukhari 9/128

<sup>16</sup> he means here that the knowledge he learnt took away the hunger pains, not as the people of desires interpret this – he accompanied the messenger only to be given food. Even though he was given to eat and drink his goal and aim was for knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> Safwatu safwah 1/286 and Bukhari

<sup>18</sup> Bukhari

Abu Hurairah once said to the Messenger, of Allah *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, “Oh Messenger, of Allah when I see you my eyes brighten up and my soul feels good and if I do not see you my soul does not feel good.....” or some words of this nature.<sup>19</sup>

After the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, had passed away, he used to speak about the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, with the following words: “*My beloved Abu Qasim salallahu alaihi wa sallam, or, my friend salallahu alaihi wa sallam, narrated to me...*” So much that at times when he would narrate *ahadeeth* from the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, he would be unable to hold himself back from crying.

In one narration, Abdul Wahaab al Madani reported that a man entered upon Muawiyah and he said, “I passed by Madeenah and Abu Hurairah was sitting in the Prophet’s *masjid* and around him were a group of people he was narrating to. He said to them: ‘Abul Qasim *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, narrated to me...’ He stopped and cried. Then he tried again and said, ‘My dear friend *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, the Prophet, of Allah, Abu Qasim’. Again, he stopped and cried, he was unable to continue so he got up and left.”<sup>20</sup>

The Prophet *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, sent Abu Hurairah to Bahrain to aid the people there. When he got there A’laa bin Hadarami said to him, “The Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, advised me to benefit from you, and so what would you like to do?” He replied, “I will be your *Mu’adhin*.” Abu Hurairah remained there for approximately one year then returned to the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*.

There has been much said about the length of period he accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. Ibnu Abi Khaalid said, “Qais told me that Abu Hurairah said, ‘I accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, for three years’.”<sup>21</sup>

Humaid bin Abdur Rahman al Himeeri said, “Qais told me Abu Hurairah said, ‘I accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, for four years’.”<sup>22</sup> Ath Thahabi said, “This second narration is more correct because from the battle of Khaybar to the death of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, was four years and nights.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Majmoo az zawaaid 9/362

<sup>20</sup> seera a’laam an Nubalah

<sup>21</sup> Musnad Imam Ahmad 2/475

<sup>22</sup> Tareeq Yaqoob bin Sufyaan 3/161

<sup>23</sup> seera alaam an Nubalah 2/590

Haafidh Ibnu Jowzi also agreed with this.<sup>24</sup> In any case, there is no conflict because those who say he accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam* for three years took out the year he was sent to Bahrain. Those who say four years included that period.

He accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, up until his *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, death. He left everything for the sake of his beloved, to learn as much knowledge as possible from the school of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, himself. He attained no property, land, food or drink, just knowledge. After the death of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, he used the knowledge greatly, to benefit himself and the people. He had over eight hundred students.<sup>25</sup> Due to his care in the spreading of *ahadeeth*, he would prevent the narrations of *ahadeeth* which prophesised trials and tribulations amongst the Muslims.

Many Companions testified that Abu Hurairah narrated many *ahadeeth* and was accurate in his narrations. By way of example, a man came to Talha bin Abdullah and said, “Oh Abu Mohammad, this Yemeni (meaning Abu Hurairah), is he more knowledgeable of the *ahadeeth* of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, than you all? We hear from him what we do not hear from you all, or does he attribute to the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, that which he did not say?” Talha replied, “As for him hearing from the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, that which we did not hear, then there is no doubt in that because we were people busy with our houses and sheep and work. We used to go to the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, for some parts of the day. Abu Hurairah was a *miskeen*, weak, always at the door of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, his hand in his, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. So there is no doubt he heard what we did not hear. You will never find anyone, who has any good in him, attributing to the Prophet, that which he did not say.”<sup>26</sup>

Also, regarding the reward for participating in *janazah*, after Aesha approved of Abu Hurairah’s narration, Ibnu Umar said, “ You, oh Abu Hurairah, accompanied the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, more than us and are more knowledgeable than us about his *hadeeth*.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Talqee fahoom ahlil athar

<sup>25</sup> Seera alaam an Nubalah

<sup>26</sup> Seera alaam an nubalah 2/605-606, Tirmidhi, Bukhari, al Haakim fi mustadrak

<sup>27</sup> Musnad Imam Ahmad 2/302, Tirmidhi 13/226, Mustadraq al Haakim 3/510-511

Abu Hurairah was of those scholars who acted upon what he knew, so he worshipped, performed *thikr*, and contemplated much. Hammad bin Yazeed narrates from Abass al Jurairi who said that he heard Uthman an Nahdi say, “Abu Hurairah welcomed seven guests and at night he, his wife, and his servant would take it in turns sleeping. The first would pray and before sleeping wake up the second to pray then the second would wake up the third before sleeping. I asked, ‘Oh Abu Hurairah, how do you fast?’ He replied, ‘I fast the first three days of each month’.”<sup>28</sup>

Abu Salmah narrates, “I went to visit Abu Hurairah when he was sick. So I said, ‘Oh Allah cure Abu Hurairah’, he said, ‘Oh Allah do not return it’ – meaning his soul. Then he said, ‘Oh Abu Salmah, it is feared that a time will come to the people when death is more beloved to them than red gold’.”<sup>29</sup>

So this was the life of Abu Hurairah. He lived it in pursuit of knowledge, and acting upon it. Following the guidance of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, he was far from the delights of this *dunya* and its decorations. Despite this, at the time of his death, when he was about to leave this world, he began to cry. So it was said to him, “What makes you weep oh Abu Hurairah?” He replied, “I do not weep over this *dunya* of yours, but I weep over the long journey ahead of me, and my little preparation for it. I am now climbing that which ascends only in the paradise or hell, and I do not know which one of the two I will be made to enter.”<sup>30</sup>

He left unto the Mercy of Allah in the year fifty-one *hijri* in his house in *Ateeq*. Waleed bin Utbah bin Abi Sufyaan, the deputy of Madeenah, prayed over him after the *Asr* prayer, he was buried in the *Baqee*. May Allah have mercy upon him (*as sahaabi al jaleel Abu Hurairah fe dhoe marweeyaatihi. Mohammad al Adhami, 1418hj*).

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<sup>28</sup> Hiliyal awleyaa 1/382, Seer a' laam an nubalah 2/609

<sup>29</sup> Hiliyaa awliyaa 1/384, tabaqaat ibnu s'ad 4/338

<sup>30</sup> Al Bidaya wa Nihaya 8/112

## **His Critics**

Regarding the unjust criticism, disparagement and attacks against this illustrious Companion of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, we find that most of his critics had other agendas and motives for their attacks. In general, all of their criticisms were due to two main reasons:

**ONE:** The number of *ahadeeth* Abu Hurairah narrated, which was 5374 *ahadeeth* of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, in a period of four years according to the strongest opinion. There was no Companion who narrated as much *ahadeeth* as him. His critics did not believe it was possible that in a period of three to four years, he was able to narrate more *ahadeeth* than the Companions who accompanied the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, throughout his Prophethood. They use this as a basis to accuse him of fabricating, cheating and lying. They criticised him in this manner in order to cast doubt upon the *sunnah*, thus rendering their own *madhab* or religion correct and that of *Ahlu Sunnah* and Islam, incorrect.

**TWO:** He narrated so many *ahadeeth* which opposed the intellect and were very strange (according to his critics). For this reason, some of the critics would not accept his narrations. This was mainly found in the *Usools* of the *Hanafi Madhab*. By default they had to reject a number of *ahadeeth* of his because of this false principle.

There are a number of secondary reasons why his critics endeavoured to defame, disparage, and reject his narrations. These will be examined after the discussion of the two primary reasons mentioned above.

### **The first criticism: narrating too many ahadith**

As for the first main criticism, it is a basis used for much other criticism. Dr Mohammad Diyaa ar Rahman al A'adhmi, a teacher in the Islamic University of Madeenah, Saudi Arabia, carried out a research into the actual number of *ahadeeth* reported by Abu Hurairah.

In summary, Dr A'adhami explains that the number of *ahadeeth* he narrated is 5374 in total. This was mentioned by Ibnu Jowzee and Ibnu Hazam who both relied on the Musnad of Imaam Abu Abdur Rahman Baqee bin Mukhlid. However, according to Ahmad Mohammad Shaakir may Allah have mercy upon him, from the 5374 *ahadeeth* there are a number that were repetitive. When these are taken out, the number drops to about 1579 *ahadeeth* only. Al A'adhami arrived at this number by examining the Musnad of Abu Hurairah from the Musnad of Imaam Ahmad. He found it contained only 3833 *ahadeeth*. We see that Ibnu Jowzee used Abu Abdur Rahman Baqee's Musnad to determine this huge number of 5374 due to it including repetitive *ahadeeth* with their multiple chains. (al Adhami p61-62)

Another possible explanation to this large number is that Baqee could also have narrated different parts of the same *ahadeeth* more than once in order of chapter headings, according to *fiqh* as Imam Bukhari had done. Ibnu Hazam emphasised this when he described him to have organised the *ahadeeth* of each companion according to chapter headings of *fiqh*. If one was to reject this explanation of the actual number of *ahadeeth* being 1579 according to Shaakir, and insist the narrations are 5374 individual *ahadeeth*, even after taking out the repetition. Then it could be argued, how did Imaam Ahmad miss all those remaining *ahadeeth*? It is well known that he compiled more *ahadeeth* of the prominent companions like Ibnu Masood, Abdullah ibnu Umar, and Ibnu Abass, than Baqee did, which must also have included Abu Hurairah.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, there is an interesting fact which increases the reliability of the *ahadeeth* narrated by Abu Hurairah, and destroys the false claims of all those who seek to destroy the *sunnah* by disparaging this great Companion of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. Most of the *ahadeeth* narrated by Abu Hurairah have witnesses, meaning they are also reported by other Companions, in different chains. Without any mention of Abu Hurairah, these narrations, which are identical to his narrations, are not criticised. The result of which, there is a much smaller number of *ahadeeth* left, which he actually narrates himself, with no other witnessing or supporting narrations. In the six books of *sunnan*, plus the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, this totals to only 300 *ahadeeth*. It is well known amongst the *muhadithoon*<sup>32</sup> that a Companion himself is reliable and trustworthy, he does not need a witnessing or supporting narrations.

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<sup>31</sup> Al Baaith al Hatheeth sharh Ikhtisaar uloom al hadeeth p187-188

<sup>32</sup> Scholar of *ahadeeth* and its related science

Now it is clear that Abu Hurairah clearly had great status, we know about the various *duaa's* the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) made for him, his commission by the Prophet, (salallahu alaihi wa sallam, to Bahrain), his depth in knowledge and so on.

Therefore this indicates that the personal attack Abu Hurairah, was motivated by a desire to destroy a portion of Islam which he brought to the *ummah*. His critics, with their ulterior motives attempted to destroy the foundations of Islam by casting doubt upon the one who narrated the largest number of *ahadeeth*. In actuality, they cast doubt on a large number of *ahadeeth*, thus casting doubt on a large portion of the *sunnah*, which is the second source of Islam. This ends in doubting Islam. But their efforts failed as a great portion of the *ahadeeth* which existed with Abu Hurairah, existed among the Companions in general. This renders the saying of Imam Shaafi true: that he was indeed the most strongest memorizer of those in his time.

The *Shi'ites* also criticised him, belittled him, and made him of no importance using this same argument – from amongst them was a person by the name of Abdul Husain. He claimed doubt in his writings on how a Companion who accompanied the Messenger for only three years could produce such a vast number of *ahadeeth*. No doubt he only used this argument against *Sunnis* because it gave weight to his attempted destruction of the *sunnah*. But he forgot the *Shi'ites'* own foolish narrators and scholars (whom they believe some are sinless). Some of them claimed to have narrated **thirty thousand ahadeeth** from their *Imaams*.

One of the scholars of the *Shi'ah* namely Abul Aabaas an Najashi, said in his collection known as 'the men of Najashi', that the narrator Abaan bin Tuglib narrated from *Imaam Jafar as Saadiq*, **thirty thousand ahadeeth!!**<sup>33</sup> (Burhaan: p23) What an exaggeration!

Now see their lowliness.. They have the audacity to disparage a righteous Companion, then compile in their books the following: One of their narrators named Jaabir bin Yazeed al Ja'fi used to carry so many *ahadeeth* from their 'sinless' *Imaams* that he would become mad and go to the graveyards to bury their *ahadeeth*!

Al Kishi narrates from Jaabir al Ja'afi who said, "Abu Ja'afar narrated to me **seventy thousand ahadeeth !!** I never narrated these *ahadeeth* to anyone nor shall I ever do so." So

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<sup>33</sup> Rijjaal an Najashi 1/78-79 and in kaatimatu wasaail as shiah 20/116

Jaabir said, "I said to Abu Ja'afar, 'May I be sacrificed for you, you have placed on me a great burden when you narrated to me from your secrets which I have not narrated to anyone. Perhaps it has built up so much inside me that I am becoming mad'." So he replied, "Oh Jaabir, if this is the case then go to the graveyard, dig a hole and stick your head in it then say Mohammad bin Ali narrated to me so and so."<sup>34</sup>

Regarding the second main reason for his disparagement, all the scholars of this *ummah* acted upon the *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah, even when it contradicted 'sound reasoning' according to their *madhab*. For example the *hadeeth* of the Prophet, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, "Whoever ate or drank out of forgetfulness then he should continue his fast, for indeed Allah gave him to eat and drink." Abu Haneefah, Sha'afi, Ahmad and others all acted upon this *hadeeth*, even though the *qayaas*<sup>35</sup> with Abu Haneefah was to break the fast and not continue it, but he left his *qayaas* for the *hadeeth* of Abu Hurairah.

Here are some examples to show that even with that, there were instances where all scholars would accept his *ahadeeth*. Narrated by Abu Hurairah, "A man cannot take the niece of his wife as another wife." Everyone accepted this and acted upon this. Also in the *hadeeth* of the dog who licks a bowl it is to be washed three times. The *ahnaaf* acted upon this *hadeeth* also narrated by Abu Hurairah.

It is well established that the *Hanafi* scholars use to accept some *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah and leave others. Al Izzi explains how he found a famous *Hanafi* scholar of *fiqh*, the one who explained the books of Imaam Shaybani. His name was as-Sarkhasi, died in the year 490 H. He attributed to an Nakhi what an Nakhi said he took from those before him, that they used to accept and reject the *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah (al izzi p238). So it was mainly Abu Haneefa who took this stance of not accepting some *ahadeeth* narrated by Abu Hurairah. The reason he did so was because he relied on Hamaad bin Abi Sulayman who narrated from Ibraheem an Nakhai and it was he who used to reject some *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah.<sup>36</sup>

As we know, Aeysha (ra) pointed out some of what the critics believed to be a criticism of Abu Hurairah. Some of the uncles and aunts of Ibraheem An Nakhi were close students of Aeysha (ra). An Nakhi used to rely on them for narrations from Aeysha, so he was

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<sup>34</sup> Rijaal al Kishi p194

<sup>35</sup> Sound intellectual reasoning based on the Quraan and Sunnah

<sup>36</sup> Kitaab al Ilil wa ma'rifatu rijaal by Imaam Ahmad p140

influenced by them to the extent that he stated, “Any *ahadeeth* from Abu Hurairah that contradict sound reasoning I reject.” He was open in his reason for this and said Abu Hurairah was not a *fiqhee*.<sup>37</sup> (al izzī p238) A great deal of the *madhab* of Abu Haneefah was based on An Nakhi’s narrations and opinions, this is how the *Hanafee*’s inherited his fundamentals. It seems that Ibraheem An Nakhi did not know the other narrations from other Companions which detailed the observations made by Aeysha(ra) and showed Abu Hurairah to be a reliable, trustworthy source.

Regarding the principle of theirs: ‘Any *Hadeeth* from Abu Hurairah which contradicts sound reasoning (*qiyaas ath thaahir*) is to be rejected unless the *ummah* accept it, only then it is acted upon.....’ A number of scholars rejected this principle, from among them, Imam ath Thahabi, Ibnu Asaakir, and Ibnu Kathee. Ibnu Katheer said, “What these *koofeen* have created is rejected and the majority of the scholars are against it.”<sup>38</sup> Imaam ath Thahabi said, “This is nothing, Muslims have used his *ahadeeth* as evidence from old times and recent times because of his great memory, status, precision. Even the likes of Ibnu Abaas was well mannered in front of him when an important matter came to them and a ruling was needed he said, ‘This is an important matter, give the fatwa, oh Abu Hurairah’.”<sup>39</sup>(al izzī p238) As for an Nakhi, he was the main source of reliance on the *ahadeeth* of Aeysha (ra) from Madeenah for Hammad and Abu Haneefah. As mentioned before his aunts and uncles accompanied Aeysha closely. (al izzī p239) So we can clearly see why he adopted the principle he did, but this does not mean we should follow him in that, especially when other narrations have come to us from other Companions explaining the reality behind the claimed criticism. This will be expounded on later.

As for the secondary reasons for his attack the *Raafidha* motives for attacking Abu Huraira are two, to disparage the Companions of the Prophet, (s) as this is part of their religion, and to place doubt in the minds of the *Sunni* about the *ahadeeth* they used to establish their religion.

Some of the *rawaafidh* say Abu Hurairah spoke ill of Ali (ra) and his household, and that he supported Muawiyah against Ali (ra) during the *fitnah*. They also say that Ali (ra) along with

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<sup>37</sup> Meezan al Itidaal 1/35

<sup>38</sup> Al Bidaaya wa Nihaayah 8/109-110

<sup>39</sup> Seer al alaam an Nubala 2/438, also these words can be found in Meezaan al Itidaal 1/35

other Companions disparaged and reprimanded Abu Hurairah. Let us look at just a few of these corrupt lies created against him, with their refutation.

They said that when a *hadeeth* from Abu Hurairah came to Ali he would say, "Is he not from the worst liars?" or "The biggest liars of the living who lied against the Messenger, of Allah is Abu Hurairah ad Dousi."<sup>40</sup> Both of these narrations come from a person named Abu Jafar al Askaafi who is a person of innovation calling to desires and is untrustworthy, unreliable.<sup>41</sup>

We find in reality the opposite of their baseless attacks. Abu Hurairah reported *ahadeeth* about the excellence of *Ahlul Bait*. From the many *ahadeeth* he narrated about the great excellence of Ali (ra), in all the books of *ahadeeth* we find the *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah to be the most in number amongst all the authentic narrations.

By way of example, *Imaam Muslim* narrates a hadeeth from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger, of Allah (s) said, "I will indeed give the flag of leadership to someone who loves Allah and his Messenger, and Allah and his Messenger, love him. Allah will give victory by his hand..." We know from this *hadeeth* that the person chosen was Ali (ra). (al Izzī p171) Also in *Al Mustadrak* of Al Haakim<sup>42</sup> there is a narration which shows his love for the family of Ali (ra). Sayeed al Maqbari narrates, "We were with Abu Hurairah when Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Taalib came to us, he gave us *salam* and we replied. Abu Hurairah was not aware of this so we said to him, 'Look Abu Hurairah, there came Hasan'. He caught him up and said, 'May peace be upon you also *yaa sayedi* (oh my respected one)'. Then he returned to them and said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (s) say, 'Indeed he is a *sayid* (respected one)'." (al izzī p173)

With such love and respect for the family of the Messenger, (s) it does not come as any surprise to read that Abu Hurairah cried on the day Hasan died and he called the people to cry. Those who were present that day said, "We saw Abu Hurairah the day Hasan died standing in the *masjid* raising his voice loudly shouting, 'Oh people, this day the most beloved to the Messenger of Allah has died, so cry'." (al Izzī p173)

What caused their evil tongues to claim that Abu Hurairah had spoken ill of Ali (ra) and his household, and that he supported Muawiyah against 'Alī? We find authentic narrations

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<sup>40</sup> Sharhu Nahaj al Balaaga 1/468 Beirut publication.

<sup>41</sup> Abu Hurairah raawiyatul Islam p278

<sup>42</sup> Mustadrak 3/169 with an authentic chain and originated by al Haithami in Majmoo az zawaaid 9/178 to Tabarani.

from the children of Ali (ra), and his household that many of them narrated *ahadeeth* from Abu Hurairah. We find that even those who fought with Ali (ra) in the battle of *Jamal*, and *sifeen*, many of them narrated the *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah. If they believed he hated Ali and his household they would never have narrated these *ahadeeth* from him. (al izzzi p175)

One such *hadeeth* is: Saeed bin Marjaana a Companion of Ali bin Hussain, a grandson of Ali (ra) said that Abu Hurairah (ra) said, "The Messenger of Allah (s) said, 'Any man who frees a Muslim slave, Allah will save every bone of his from the fire'." <sup>43</sup> Saeed bin Marjaana said, "I went to Ali bin Hussain and told him this *hadeeth*, Ali bin Hussain said, 'Did you hear this yourself from Abu Hurairah? He replied, 'Yes'. Then Ali Bin Hussain said to his slave, 'Go. You are free for the sake of Allah'." <sup>44</sup>

Ali bin Hussain was from the grandsons of Ali bin Abi Taalib (ra). The fact that he emphasised the question, 'Did you hear this from Abu Hurairah yourself?' clearly shows that Abu Hurairah was a trustworthy reliable person to him. He then further emphasised his acceptance of Abu Hurairah's *hadeeth* by acting upon it straight away. (al Izzzi p178)

### **The attack of some Hanafee's on Abu Hurairah**

#### **a) He was not a *fiqhee***<sup>45</sup>

We find amongst the old and contemporary scholars who follow extremely the *madhab* of Abu Haneefah (ra) in such manner that Abu Haneefah, who they attribute themselves to, would be free from. In their evil criticism, disparaging this great illustrious Companion of the Prophet (s), they rejected some of his *ahadeeth* claiming he was not a *fiqhee*, that his knowledge was less than other Companions. Some of his *ahadeeth* contradict sound reasoning, other Companions spoke ill of him, as well as other false accusations.

In response, some scholars like *sheikh ul Islam Ibnu Taymeeyah* wrote in his defence. Let us examine some of their refutations of the above accusations.

Umar ibnu Khataab (ra) made him the *Amir* over Bahrain, and he use to give them rulings of *fiqh* regarding the deepest of matters. By way of example, in the issue of divorce, a women

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<sup>43</sup> Bukhari

<sup>44</sup> Muntaqa ibnul Jarood p324, musnad Abi Awaana 1/145, fathul Baari 6/73

<sup>45</sup> One who has a scholarly understanding of the Quran and Sunnah to extract Shariah rulings.

who was divorced from her husband twice then remarries another man, then is divorced by that man and is remarried to her first husband again – does she continue from her second divorce with him? (As in the *madhab* of *Shaafi*, *Maaliki*, and *Hanbaali*). Or does she start from beginning again? (As in the *madhab* of *Abu Haneefah*). Abu Hurairah gave the fatwa which coincided with the majority of the *fuqahaa*, and which Umar and the major Companions use to say also. We find all the scholars who say they do not take *ahadeeth* from Abu Hurairah, actually acting upon many of his *ahadeeth* and using his *ahadeeth* to justify their positions in *fiqh*.

**b) There were more knowledgeable Companions than him**

Furthermore, it is well known that the Companions were at different levels of *Fiqhu*. Some were more knowledgeable than others. Like Umar and Ali were more knowledgeable than Imraan Ibnu Hussain but no one claimed Imraan bin Hussain was not a *fiqhee*. Likewise, even if Ibnu Masood and Muad bin Jabal were more knowledgeable than Abu Hurairah and Ibnu Umar that did not make the latter two not *fiqhee*.

**c) He was only a *Haafidh* of *ahadeeth***

Even if this was true, and he did not have the *fiqh* of the *ahaadeeth*, there is still no room for criticism against him. If we were to submit to this corruption, then he narrated *ahaadeeth* which he had memorized from the Prophet, (s). Like those who memorize the *Quran*, and *adhaan* but do not understand it, it is still considered praiseworthy and is not a criticism. His memorisation was precise, he narrated many *ahadeeth* with the wording of the Prophet,(s). He was from the best memorizers of this *ummah*, The Prophet, (s) made supplication for his memory and since then he never forgot a *hadeeth*. As mentioned previously Ibnu Abaas asked him to give a *fatwah* in important matters. Umar placed him as *Amir* over Bahrain. We have clearly shown how the majority of scholars acted upon his *ahadeeth* in deep issues of *fiqhu* as opposee to acting on other Companions *ahadeeth*. No doubt he was a *fiqhee* regardless of what his critics say.

**d) Some Companions disparaged his narrations**

Another untrue, misplaced criticism is that Umar and others said he made mistakes in many of his narrations. His critics claim that Aeysha (ra) was one of his main critics and had

pointed out many mistakes in his narrations and knowledge. Rather, we find that he use to narrate *ahadeeth* outside the house of Aeysha (ra) and raise his voice saying, “Oh Companion of the room, do you reject any narrations I have mentioned?” After Aeysha (ra) completed her prayers she would not reject any of his narrations but said, “He, salallahu alaihi wa sallam, would not narrate the *hadeeth* as you do, so fast, he would narrate it so much that if one could count the words and would end up memorising it.” So she rejected the way it was delivered, not what was delivered.<sup>46</sup> (al a’Adhami, p59) There is also a *hadeeth* which affirms the opposite, here Aeysha confirms his knowledge, and accepts his narrations when other Companions doubted it. For example, in *Bukhari* and *Muslim* a *hadeeth* which Abu Hurairah reported from the Messenger, of Allah (s) who said, “Whoever leaves the home of a *janazah* and prays over it then follows it until it is buried he will have two rewards, each one of them the size of Mount *Uhud*, and whoever prays over it then returns home, will have one reward (like that of Mount *Uhud*).” Ibnu Umar contested this *hadeeth*, he had pebbles in his hand and sent a messenger, to ask Aeysha about this *hadeeth*. The messenger, returned and said, “Aeysha informed me that Abu Hurairah is truthful and she also heard this *hadeeth* from the Messenger of Allah, (s)”. Ibnu Umar threw the pebbles in his hand on the ground and said, “We have lost a great deal of rewards the size of *Uhud*,” (al Izzi p234).<sup>47</sup>

As for the accusation that Umar (ra) beat Abu Hurairah for fabricating *ahadeeth* in one claim, and for narrating too many *ahadeeth* in another. Both of them were claimed to be in *Saheeh Muslim* but this is unfounded. These narrations are only found in a *shi’ah* text called ‘*Sharh Nahj al- Balagha*’ narrated by Abu Jafar al Askaafi who is a weak narrator, unreliable and untrustworthy as mentioned before.(al Izzi p123) How would Umar do such a thing? Then place him as *Ameer* over Bahrain – in such a responsible position. Further evidence that Umar did not even speak ill of him or warn against him is that his own grandsons narrated from Abu Hurairah. It is inconceivable to say that their grandfather did not warn his children and his children did not warn their children of such a fabricator, or liar (as they assume). On the contrary, we find them narrating *ahadeeth* from him, the likes of Saalim ibnu Abdullah Ibnu Umar, and Hafs bin Aasim Ibnu Umar. (al Izzi p124)

Another of their false claims is that Umar said to Abu Hurairah, “You will stop narrating *ahadeeth* from the Messenger of Allah (s) or I will send you back to the land of ad Dous.”

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<sup>46</sup> Majmoo al Fatawaa Ibnu Taymia 4/532

<sup>47</sup> difaa un abi hurairah by al izzi p234

The authenticity of this narration has not been mentioned however if we were to submit to it, this is not a disparaging remark nor Umar's disapproval of his knowledge. Rather it was because Umar feared that other people would begin to do the same and lie and fabricate *ahadeeth*. If Umar thought he was fabricating, he would not have just banished him to another land, he would have cut off his tongue.<sup>48</sup>(al Izzi p122) Further, it was well known that Umar was very strict in allowing anyone to narrate from the Messenger, *salallahu alaihi wa sallam*, he used to advise them to limit the number of narrations they relay in order to prevent lies, and fabrications from entering into Islam. (Ibnu Qutayba p47)

### **Attack of Mahmood Abu Riyaa against Abu Hurairah**

Abu Riyaa compiled a book in which he wrote a biography of Abu Hurairah, consisting of over fifty pages. He did not leave a single criticism, further he attacked all the other Companions, disparaging them, accusing them and belittling them. For this reason, Dr Abdul Ghani Abdul Khaaliq wrote an extensive refutation of Abu Riyaa in his book, '*Difaa uni Sunnah*'. We shall take just a few examples of his refutation to illustrate the unjust criticism and oppression by Abu Riyaa against Abu Hurairah the Companion of the Messenger of Allah (s).

Abu Riyaa mentioned in his book p166, "...and when Aeysha (ra) said to him, 'Indeed you narrate *ahadeeth* I never heard from the Messenger, of Allah (s)', he replied to her with a reply that had no manners and no dignity. When he said to her, 'You were too busy.... women and make-up'. Narrated by Ibnu Sa'ad, Bukhari, and Ibnu Katheer, and others."

It is imperative to note that the narration which Ibnu Katheer brought in his *Bidaayah* is as follows, "She said to Abu Hurairah, 'You narrated too many *ahadeeth* from the Messenger, (s) oh Abu Hurairah'. He said, 'By Allah *Khohol* and make-up did not keep me busy away from the Messenger, (s), but I believe that it kept you busy from the many *ahadeeth* I have'. She replied, 'Perhaps so'." So this narration destroys what Abu Riyaa brought from his narrations because it can clearly be seen that there was no issue of bad manners or disrespect. How can that be in the case of a person who defends himself? Furthermore, Aeysha agreed with him and was content with his words when she said "perhaps so..." (Khaaliq: p101)

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<sup>48</sup> Al Izzi p122

Abu Riyaa also mentioned in his book page 185, "...So whoever does this is not (and there is no crime in mentioning this) except 'despicable' has 'no prestige' and 'no mention'." The reason why Abu Riyaa said he deserves to be 'despicable' is because he claims that Abu Hurairah did not accompany the Prophet, (s) except to fill his stomach, and he joined the ranks of the *sufha* as a sanctuary for his poverty. He ate like they ate, or he ate with the Prophet, (s) or with one of the Companions. But this is in no way a flaw, defect or blemish of his character! Allah Most High praised the poor and Abu Hurairah was indeed amongst them.

**(Charity is) for the poor who are confined (from travel) for the sake of Allah, unable to seek bounty in the land (trade or work), the one who knows them not, thinks that they are rich because of their modesty. You will know them from their marks they do not ask and beg of people.** <sup>49</sup>

Then comes Abu Riyaa, making the praised despicable, the excellence discarded. So should we leave the words of Allah and take the oppression of Abu Riyaa?! (Khaaliq: p101)

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, using the true scales of criticism, the criticism against this honest, trustworthy Companion of the Prophet, (s) cannot be accepted. The Messenger, (s) himself trusted him entirely and made him governor over Bahrain. After him (s) Umar, the second Khalif of Islam continued this trust. Also, so many Companions praised him. Abu Hurairah was that Companion who forsook food, shelter, business and the delights of life in order to memorise the *ahadeeth* of the Messenger, (s) and we heard this from the other Companions themselves. It is agreed upon by all scholars that the Companions, all of them, are trustworthy. So it should not be surprising that he narrated so many *ahadeeth* in such a small period of time. As research has shown that the true number of *ahadeeth* was only 1579 after taking out the repetition, the critics who argued he narrated too many *ahadeeth* in such a small time scale, this nullifies their argument. Hence, there is no cause for alarm. Furthermore, according to Dr Mohammad Diyaa ar Rahman al A'dhami, when the 1579 *ahadeeth* were scrutinised, it was found that Abu Hurairah only narrated 300 that were not witnessed narrations and 1279 of his *ahadeeth*, all had other Companions narrating the same *ahadeeth*, giving strength to his narrations. This made apparent the evil intentions of his critics. None of those Companions who narrated the witnessed *ahadeeth* were attacked like Abu Hurairah.

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<sup>49</sup> Soora Baqara v 273

This finding also emphasised Abu Hurairah was a *fiqhee* – he had understanding of *ahadeeth*. Those *ahadeeth* he narrated which many thought were strange *ahadeeth* or *ahadeeth* which contradicted sound reasoning were all narrated by other Companions too. As for the *ahadeeth* he was alone in narrating, they were not criticised in this manner. His critics were tainted with only one side of the coin. Most of their narrations, when traced back, ended with no one, or gaps in the chain of narrators, or men who were judged to be weak narrators or fabricators. Those that were traced back authentically to Aeysha (ra), whom they claimed criticised his knowledge, in actual fact this was not the case as she only criticised the method in which he delivered *ahadeeth* not the *ahadeeth* itself. They may have also picked up unjust criticisms from other than her, which were passed on to An Nakhi who passed on to Hammad who passed on to Abu Haneefah may Allah have mercy on them all.

The *Shi'ah* attempt to disparage him failed in every direction. |It was clearly seen how they were in no position to disparage him when their own *Imaams* and narrators had claimed to narrate up to 65,000 or more *ahadeeth* than Abu Hurairah.

There are some *ahadeeth* of Abu Hurairah which are rejected because of a number of reasons. Perhaps in another essay, a portion of them will be discussed to show how they are ultimately reliable and acceptable and those who reject them do so upon no real grounds, rather only to support their corrupt ideologies.

Abdul Qadir Baksh