



Imam Abu Hanifa (80 -150 A.H)

Abu Hanifa (R.A. - Rahmatullaahi Alayhi: May Allah's mercy be upon him) was born in the era of the Companions ﷺ. He met many companions of the Prophet ﷺ (May Allah Shower His Mercy and blessings upon Him) and is counted amongst the Tabi'un (those who saw and followed the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ). He grew up in Al-Kufah and became versed in Hadith as well as Fiqh (Islamic law and Jurisprudence) and opinion. He had a great ability that, upon initially hearing any Hadith, he could memorize it word for word with its chain of narration. It is very important to understand that one can never become a Faqeeh without being a Muhaddith. He was divinely gifted with both of these bounties. The Hanafi Madhab is the most widely followed school of thought and practiced by the majority of the Muslims in the world. Imam Abu Hanifa (R.A.) had a group of devoted students who learned from him and conveyed what he taught. Amongst his students were Abu Yusuf, Muhammad bin Al-Hasan Ash-Shaybaani and Zufar bin Al-Hudhayl (R.A.). Imam Abu Hanifa (R.A.) passed away in 150 AH / 767CE in the state of prostration at 70 years of age. More than 50,000 people attended his Janazah (Funeral Prayers). Amongst his compilations in the field of Hadith, 'Kitabal-Athar' is well known and widely accepted around the globe.

Imam Malik (93 – 179 A.H)

Another of the four great Imams, Imam Malik (R.A.), also known as Abu Abdillah and Imam Darul Hijrah, is the founder of the Maliki school of thought. He grew up in Al-Madinah al Munawwarah. He loved knowledge and respected and glorified the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Imam Malik (R.A.) never taught a Hadith without ablution. He has various literary compilations and his 'Muwatta' is one of the most famous. He was only 20 years old when 70 scholars of Madinah bore witness to his knowledge and proclaimed him capable of Ijtihad (an ability to derive law from Qur'aan and Hadith) and giving Fatawa (Islamic rulings). His book 'Muwatta' is one of the first ever compilation in the field of Hadith.

Imam Al Shafi'i (150 – 204 A.H)

When he was two years old he was brought to Makkah. He became an orphan at a very early age and was taught by Malik ibn Anas (R.A.). He was highly ranked for his knowledge and understanding of jurisprudence. Imam Shafi'i (R.A.) was independent, generous, broad-minded and very understanding. He completed the memorisation of the Holy Qur'aan at a very young age of 7 years old. Every night he used to complete the recitation of the whole Qur'aan, and in Ramadhaan throughout the day and night he used to complete the Qur'aan twice. It is stated that in Ramadhaan he used to finish the Qur'aan 7 times in Salaah. Imam Al Shafi'i (R.A.) started giving Fatwa when he was only 15 years old. He studied under the great Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan Ash-Shaybaani (R.A.). Imam Al Shafi'i (R.A.) was the founder of the Shafi'i school of thought.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164 – 241 A.H.)

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (R.A.) started learning the knowledge of Hadith at a young age. He listened to his teachers in Baghdad and then travelled to Al-Hijaz and to Al-Yemen to acquire Hadith. He became famous among people through his piety and goodness. His personal cleanliness and lack of concern for worldly things were to such an extent that he became an example for these attributes. He went through many trials and tribulations to safeguard the sanctity of the book of Allah, the Holy Qur'aan. The day he died was a remarkable day. All of Baghdad's men and women came out to say farewell in a show of respect to him - not only the Muslims, but the Jews and Christians were also saddened by his passing away. Everyone was tearful at his sad demise. He has compiled over 27,000 Ahaadith in his famous book 'Al-Musnad'. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (R.A.) was the founder of the Hanbali school of thought.

The Four Great Imams of Fiqh Part 2