

Chapter – 39

Imam Abu Dawood

(817 - 889 AD)

His name is Suleiman and Kunniya is Abu Dawood. Father's name is Ash'ath bin Basher. Born in 202AH/817AD in Sistan, a city near Kandahar and Herat. Sistan is also called by Arabs as Sajistan. He first learned the hadith, then began to collect the hadiths. He also visited various Islamic countries, such as Egypt, Syria, Hijaz, Iraq and Khorasan. In those days, Basra, the city of Iraq, was considered to be having high hold of knowledge where Imam Abu Dawood spent much of his time.

Allah bestowed Imam Abu Dawood with the best memory. He was an expert in Hadith knowledge. He was so proficient at this art that he could easily identify the correct and the forged Hadith. That is why in his time he was called "Imam al-Muhadditheen".

Besides a high grade Muhaddith, Abu Dawood was considered as an excellent judge. Because he also had perfect access to the Jurisprudence and on the art of its understanding. However, he stayed away from worldly ranks. He was a pious and righteous person. He spent most of his time in pursuit of knowledge, teaching and worship.

Imam Abu Dawood learned Hadith from some 300 teachers. Among them, the most prominent are Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ishaq Ibn Rahwiya, Abu Thaur and Yahya Ibn Maini. His numbers of disciples were also numerous. The

recipients of the hadith knowledge from him include the famous scholars, Imam Tirmizi and Imam Nasai. In addition to that, the prominent scholar Ibn Arabi was also one of the Imam's disciples.

Imam Abu Dawood has carried out a collection of about 0.5 million hadiths, which contains a total of 4,800 hadiths, and from that he compiled his own book. In this, he had specially cared for compiling only authentic hadiths. After "Sahih al-Bukhari" and "Sahih Muslim" his book is now considered to be the most reliable book of hadith.

The well-known book of Hadith, "*Sunan Abu Dawood*", was completed by Imam Abu Dawood in the year 241AH/855AD, while his stay was in Baghdad. After completing his book he showed it to his teacher, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Imam Hanbal had greatly appreciated his work. Al-Khattabi, Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Kathir also paid rich tributes to Imam Abu Dawood's work.

Imam Abu Dawood himself commented on his book and said: "From my collection, only following four hadiths of Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH) are sufficient for any intelligent and sensible person." Those hadiths are:

- (1) Acts depend on intentions.
- (2) A better implementation of Islam is that humans should not look at it to which they have nothing to do.
- (3) None of you can be a believer unless he chooses for his brother what he likes for himself.
- (4) What is lawful and what is unlawful, it is clear. However, the thing between the two is questionable. And whoever saved himself from these suspicious things, it would be as if he had protected his religion.

Among other works of Imam Abu Dawood, the following books are also well known:

- Kitab ud-Rad
- Kitab al-Masa'il
- Masnad Malik
- Kitab al-Marasil

Imam Abu Dawood died in 275AH/889AD. He was about 72 years old at the time of his death. He was buried in the city of Basra, Iraq.

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