

THE PRECISE UNDERSTANDING OF CATEGORISING SCHOLARS INTO HARSH & MODERATE

- clarification of a doubt -

by Shaykh
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(حفظه الله)



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Shaykh ‘Abd-Allāh al-Bukhārī (حفظه الله) said,

“A questioner came to me few days ago during ḥajj and said, 'O Shaykh! Some people say, "Why do you object when Shaykh Rabī‘ is described as being harsh, while the *imāms* of *jarḥ* & *ta’dīl* were described as being harsh and moderate, and this is a well known fact, is this not the case?"

I say: who says that describing Shaykh Rabī‘ (حفظه الله) as being harsh is a criticism against him? We do not reject the fact that the people of knowledge did categorise in this manner, but as they say, the matter requires us to shed light upon it. May Allāh have mercy upon our Shaykh Ḥammād al-Anṣārī, he used to like this journalistic statement, it used to appeal to him, and he used to often repeat it saying, 'let us shed light on this matter' which meant highlighting it by further exposing and clarifying it. So let us shed light on this statement.

Now, when the scholars of *jarḥ* & *ta’dīl* categorised those who speak about the affair of the narrators into those who are harsh, moderate etc. did anyone from the people of knowledge understand the word 'harsh' as a form of censure against them? Did anyone understand this as a censure of that scholar, like Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān? Never! Furthermore, did anyone from the people of knowledge understand that every statement of the harsh scholar is rejected? Nobody understood it like that. Did anyone from the people of knowledge understand or say that the statement of every moderate scholar, who has been described as such, is accepted unrestrictedly, and that it is always the truth? Is there anyone who said that? No! Is it not possible that the moderate scholar's statement is less probable? Is it possible or not? If all of his speech was the truth, then there would be no need for this categorisation, and there would be one single statement. Without exception, none of the scholars said that the speech of the moderate scholar is to be accepted unrestrictedly. Is not al-Bukhārī from among the moderate scholars? Is he not so? And he was opposed by other scholars in his criticism of many narrators, like the clarification of al-Bukhārī's mistake in his book 'at-Tārīkh' by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, which is published along with 'at-Tārīkh al-Kabīr'. Is it no so? Also al-Ḥāfidh al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī addresses the mistakes of al-Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his book 'al-Mūḍih li Awhām al-Jam‘ wat-Tafrīq' which spans two volumes. Therefore I say: did this diminish anything

from their virtue or status? No one from among the scholars censured either of the two sides.

And the third point which we also want to highlight is: why do you categorise scholars into just moderate and harsh, when among the *imāms* of the *salaf* there were those who were lenient as well? Why do you not use this terminology nowadays? Why have you disregarded and neglected it, intentionally and deliberately? Ibn Ḥibbān was considered from among the lenient scholars regardless of his high standing and his level of memorisation. What do you say about him? Is there no lenient scholar nowadays? *mā shā`Allāh!* Are people divided into two categories only? And there are no lenient scholars now? Rather there is negligence now, not just leniency. Do you know what is negligence in this case? It is liberation from the principles and foundations of knowledge. And that is why these people utter this expression by which they intend to discredit, defame, insinuate and reject the truth, this is apparent. Is it not so? Then by Allāh! Tell me by your Lord! Who are the ones categorising people nowadays? 'So and so is such and so and so is such!' Little, ignorant and witless students are categorising the elder scholars whose beards and heads turned grey in the path of knowledge and *sunnah*. How is this acceptable O *shaykh!*? If you asked them about the rulings of *sharī`ah* pertaining to divorce, *ẓihār* and transactions, they would not be able to answer you, but they categorise scholars, giants. When a person knows his own level, he is merciful to himself and others. Did you understand? May Allāh bless you.

Therefore, it is not necessary that everything a scholar from among the scholars says is correct, and no one from among the people of knowledge says this. And on the contrary, do not pick and choose, saying, 'by Allāh! So and so I take his speech, and so and so I do not take his speech'. This is not correct, may Allāh bless you. This is wrong, and a great deficiency. A deficiency in emulating [the *manhaj*]. This deficiency is a deficiency in emulating [the *manhaj*]. It is imperative that you evaluate yourself, may Allāh bless you."

Translated by Zubayr `Abbāsī

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