

## Significance of Manners (ĀDĀB) in Islam

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**ABSTRACT:** Issues in courtesy and manners have always been important in practical morality and ethics. Certain manners and behaviours have been issued in traditions as key individual qualities to obtain. This article tries to introduce some general issues in courtesy and manners including their importance, definitions, instances, dimensions, contexts, codes and norms according to the practical conduct of the noble Prophet (s) and Imams (a).

**KEYWORDS:** courtesy, manners, morality, the Prophet (s)

### ۱) The importance of manners

What has given value to humans and has distinguished them from other creatures under the name “human”, and what takes them further from humanity and takes them to the peaks of the world of angels, is acquiring good manners and habits.

Imam ‘Ali (a) said:

“Ignite your heart with politeness as you ignite firewood with fire.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is the translation of the first chapter of *Ādāb-e Islami: Darsnāme-ye Akhlāq Barāye Tullāb-e Pāyeh-e Avval*

Imam Ṣādiq (a) said:

“If your death was delayed for two days, spend one of them on your manners so that you can get help from it on the day of your death.”<sup>2</sup>

Imam ‘Ali (a) said:

“O you believer! Indeed, this knowledge and these manners are your value , thus try hard in gaining them. Whatever is added to your knowledge and manners, is added to your value, for indeed, with knowledge you will be guided towards your Lord, and with manners you will improve in the serving of your Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Imam ‘Ali (a) has said:

“Whoever positions himself as the leader of the people should first start teaching himself before teaching others, but teaching with his manners comes before teaching with his words. And one who is the teacher and discipliner of himself deserves more praise than a person who teaches and disciplines the others.”<sup>4</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (a) has also said to Shaqrānī:

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<sup>1</sup> Harrānī, Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Shu‘bah, *Tuḥaf al-Uqūl*, (Qum: Daftar Entishārāt Islāmī, 1404 A.H.) p. 80.

ذک قلبک بالأدب كما تذکى النار بالحطب

<sup>2</sup> Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub, *Uṣūl Al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, (Bayrut: Dār al-Ta‘āruf, 1401 A.H.) p. 150, no. 132.

إن اجلّت في عمرك يومين فاجعل أحدهما لأدبک لتسعين به على يوم موتک

<sup>3</sup> Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 1, (Bayrut : Dār Ihya al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1403 A.H.) p. 180, ch. 1, no. 64.

يا مؤمن، إنّ هذا العلم والأدب ثمن لنفسک فاجتهد في تعلّمها، فما يزيد من علمک و أدبک يزيد في

ثمنک و قدرک؛ فإنّ بالعلم تتدى إلى ربّک و بالأدب تحسن خدمة ربّک

<sup>4</sup> *Nahj al-Balaghah*, (Sobhi Salih, Qum: al-Hijrah, 1395 A.H.)p. 480, Maxim no. 73.

من نصب نفسه للناس اماما فليبدأ بتعليم نفسه قبل تعليم غيره، وليكن تأديبه بسيرته قبل تأديبه بلسانه، و

معلم نفسه و مؤدّبها أحقّ بالإجلال من معلم الناس و مؤدّبهم

“O Shaqrānī! Indeed, a good deed is good coming from anyone, but if it comes from you it is even better, because you are related to us. And an evil deed is bad coming from anyone, but if it comes from you, it is worse.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2) The meaning of manners

In every kind of action, there are particular standards of behaviour which are called the manners of that kind of action. For instance, in speaking, one should not say something that results in shame. Therefore, if someone uses obscenities in speech, he has ignored the manners of speaking, and thus can be called an unmannered person.

‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains "manners" as follows:

Manners are a beautiful and accepted system, which human nature and taste consider honourable as a basis for all religious actions. In other words, manners are the beauty and delicacy of an action, and an action is beautiful when it is firstly, accepted by the religion, and secondly, performed with liberty.<sup>2</sup>

## 3) The relativism of manners

Adherence to manners is considered pleasant and favourable in every society, but the quality and standards might differ from one nation, or country, to another based on the values and customs of those nations and the values of their schools of thought. It is possible for something to be considered polite or decent in one nation, but to be oppositely impolite and indecent in another nation according to the values of their people. For instance, in an Islamic society, people show their respect when they see each other usually by saying the word “*salām*”, but in other societies, removing one's hat, waving, or bowing might be considered the polite way of greeting people.<sup>3</sup> However, we, as Muslims, are to abide by Islam, rationality, and the way of life of those who are examples of righteousness.

<sup>1</sup> Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 47, p. 349 - 350, ch. 33, no. 50.

يا شقراني، إن الحسن من كل أحدٍ حسنٌ، و أنه منك أحسن؛ لمكانك منّا، و إن القبيح من كل أحدٍ قبيحٌ، و إنه منك أقبح

<sup>2</sup> Majlisī, Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Mizān*, vol. 6, (Qum: Ismā‘īliyān, 1390) p. 255-256, following the verse 5: 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 256, following the verse 5: 20.

#### 4) The difference between manners and morality

Morality is a quality of the soul; they are the qualities that one establishes in his soul. But manners are a beautiful and accepted system upon which the actions of humans can be based.<sup>1</sup> In other words, morality is about one's inner world, and manners are about the beauty and delicacy of an action. About the difference between manners and morality, Ayatollah Muṭahharī has this to say:

Morality is related to one's self, it is how one organizes his passions. The passions within us, like desire and hate, have different tasks. Our desires, for instance, attract benefits; they compel us to obtain what pleases us. On the other hand, hate repels unfavourable things from us; it compels us to push back what we consider as bad and harmful.

However, we also possess rationality, which is the assessment faculty in us. Each passion within us only cares about its own fulfilment. For instance, we have a desire to eat. That passion *only* attracts us to food and does not take anything else into account. The same is true for hate, but these passions need to have a kind of organization; if they are let free, they will lead to corruption. For instance, eyes like to watch what they enjoy and they do not consider anything else. But there should be an assessment. One should not only do what he enjoys, but rather he should see how his organs and his character as a human being are affected afterwards.

Hence, we can conclude that *rationality* should control our body and our character, and give a reasonable share of fulfillment to our passions. This is what organizing one's passions means. In our traditions, as well, organizing the passions is mentioned; all the passions and organs of body have their own rights. And since rationality, alone, cannot control and judge them, religion defines their boundaries with the orders it gives us. Complying with the boundaries of our passions is called morality.

On the other hand, there are some behaviours, other than morality, that are needed and should be learned, and they can be called skills. For instance, one should know how to write and he

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 257, following the verse 5: 20.

needs to learn that skill. These behaviours and skills are manners. Manners do not have to do with organizing one's instincts, they are learned social behaviours. Manners can be changed, and have changed, overtime but morality does not.<sup>1</sup>

According to this notion, some scholars believe that every action that can be described as good or evil is within the domain of morality.<sup>2</sup>

### **The difference between hypocrisy and politeness**

Politeness is a pleasant behaviour that one voluntarily shows because of his real character. It is not any behaviour that is apparently good but done with evil intentions, like flattering someone out of fear.

### **5) The signs and manifestations of politeness**

Politeness and rudeness, both, have signs. Distinguishing the polite group of actions is not possible without noticing the impolite ones. These signs are visible both in speech and behaviour. If serenity in speech and decency in behaviour are an indication of politeness, then, obscenity and stubbornness indicate rudeness. If controlling one's friendships is a mannerly action, then, mingling with unsuitable people and not being careful in choosing friends is an ill mannered one. A person who does not respect other people and always mocks them and gossips about them, one who answers the obscenities of others with obscenities, one who *throws* objects to people instead of politely giving it to them, one who enters other's rooms without their permission, one who eats repulsively in front of others, one who does not cover up his sneeze in public, and so forth, obviously lacks social manners. Interestingly enough, Islam has instructions for all these situations.<sup>3</sup>

### **6) Religious conventions and common conventions**

Some conventions are called "*sunnah*" in religious terms; that is, the holy *shāri'* (one who makes the religious rules) respects them and has ordered

<sup>1</sup> Mutahhari, Murteza, *Eslam va Moghtaziyāt-e Zamān*, vol. 1, (Tehran: Šadrā, 1358 A.H.S.) p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to: Mišbāḥ Yazdī, Muhammad Taqī, *Akhlāq dar Qur'an*, vol. 1, (Qum: Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, 1377 A.H.S.) p. 240 - 241.

<sup>3</sup> Muḥaddithī, Javād, *Akhlāq-e Mo'āšerat*, (Qum: Būstān Kitāb, 1380 A.H.S.) p. 173 - 174.

them as *mustahab* (recommended) actions. Noticing the fact that Islam does not give any redundant orders, we should follow the actions that are made *sunnah*, as principles. For instance, about eating, it says that it is *mustahab* for one to chew his food a lot, say “*bismillab*” in the beginning and “*Alhamdulillah*” at the end, and to wash his hands before and after eating. These are not formalities; they are really beneficial to us. Islam cares about the health of the human body and human soul; it wants our teeth, stomach, and nervous system to be healthy. Eating hastily causes different diseases. This is not an issue specific only to a particular period of time, it is always true.

The other kind of conventions are the conventions that are made common among people. If they are done correctly, they will not have any special benefits nor will they cause any harm if they are left out.<sup>1</sup>

#### 7) The book of ethics:

The Qur'an is the ultimate source for human perfection and a great teacher of ethics. The Prophet (s) has said:

“The Qur'an is the divine table (in which all types of spiritual food we need are available), learn this divine table as much as you can.”<sup>2</sup>

Although in many *surahs* of the Qur'an ethical issues have been somehow pointed out, the *Surah al-Hujurat* can be called the *surah* of ethics and morality.<sup>3</sup>

#### 8) The perfect example of manners:

The perfect example of manners and morality, in every condition, in words and deeds, is the Noble Prophet Muhammad(s). One possesses the ethical qualities depending on how much he follows the orders of the Prophet (s) and his lifestyle. Thus, one achieves the peak of moral excellence when he

<sup>1</sup> Muṭahharī, *Eslām va moghtazīyyāt-e zamān*, vol. 1, p. 290. (mentioned with abridgment)

<sup>2</sup> *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 92, p. 16, ch. 1, no. 1.

القرآن مآدبة الله فتعلموا مآدبته ما استطعتم

<sup>3</sup> For the explanation of the ethical verses of this Surah refer to: *Tafsīr-e Sureh-ye Hujurat*, compiled by Ayatollah Ṣadr.

*completely* follows the Prophet (s) in every aspect of his life, for the Prophet (s) is disciplined by Allah Himself.

Imam Ṣādiq (a) said:

“Indeed, God disciplined his prophet, thus his manners became decent.”<sup>1</sup>

Imam ‘Ali (a) also said:

“Indeed, the prophet (s) was disciplined by God, and he disciplined me, and I discipline the believers.”<sup>2</sup>

#### 9) The manners of the prophets:

The prophets were the examples of morality, in words and deeds. Here, we point out some examples of their manners that are mentioned in the Qur'an.

- a) As a prayer and request for his needs the Prophet Job (a) states the following:

﴿أَيُّ مَسْتَبِي الضُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾

Indeed distress has befallen me, and You are the most merciful of the merciful. (21: 83)

This sentence shows the perfect manners of Job (a) from two aspects:

Firstly, he does not say “You have caused me distress”, but he says “distress has befallen me”. Secondly, instead of *requesting* mercy from God, he says: “You are the most merciful of the merciful” not saying “have mercy on me”; he avoids using the imperative form despite it being a request.

- b) The prophet Abraham (a) praises God in this way:

<sup>1</sup> Majlisi, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 17, p. 8, ch. 13, no. 12.

ان الله تعالى ادب نبيه فاحسن تاديبه

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 77, p. 267, ch. 11, no. 1.

ان رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله و سلم) ادبه الله عزوجل و هو ادبى و انا اؤدب المؤمنين

﴿الَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَ يَسْقِينِي وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي﴾

"[it is He who] provides me with food and drink and when I get sick, it is He who cures me" (26: 79-80)

When he mentions pleasant things, he relates them to God and says "[it is He who] provides me with food and drink", but when he mentions illness, he does not say "when He makes me ill, He cures me", rather he says "when I get sick, it is He who cures me".<sup>1</sup>

### 10) The Manners of the Prophet Muhammad (s):<sup>2</sup>

When the Noble Prophet (s) shook hands with someone, he was never the first one to release his hand; he would wait for that person to let go of his hand. He was never seen to stretch his legs in front of anyone. His sermons were shorter than everyone else's, and he always avoided pointless talk. People knew him by his pleasant smell. When he had company, he never removed his formal clothes and ornaments until that person left.<sup>3</sup>

Imam Riḍā (a) has narrated some detailed explanations of the customs, life conduct, and appearance of the Prophet (s), which will be partly mentioned below:

...Imam Husayn (s) said, 'I asked my father (s) about God's Prophet's (s) way of coming in. He (s) said, 'Only the Prophet (s) was allowed to go in and out from his place of entrance. When the Prophet (s) went home, he divided his time into three portions. One portion was for the sublime God. Another portion was for his family, and the third portion was for

<sup>1</sup> *Tafsīr-e Nemūneh*, Authors, vol. 6, (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1370 A.H.S.) p. 69, following the verse 5:120. For extensive information on manners of the prophets refer to: Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, vol. 6, p. 260 - 302, following verses 5: 116 - 5: 120.

<sup>2</sup> There are books written and devoted completely to explaining the appearance and manners of the Prophet (s), such as *Shamā'il al-Nabī (s)* by Tirmidhī, and *Hidāyat al-Ghabī fī Akhlāq al-Nabī* by Ibrāhīm Farāzī, which is the Persian translation and abridged version of *Akhlāq al-nabī* by Abu al-Sheikh Isfahani. *Hidāyat al-Ghabī* has been published in the *Tahqīqāt-e eslāmī* magazine (vol. 1 and 2, p. 83 - 100, year 1368 A.S.H).

<sup>3</sup> Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muhammad Husayn, *Sunan al-Nabī (s)*, (Tehran: Islāmīyah, 1354 A.H.S.) p. 45. For more information refer to: Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, vol. 6, p. 302 - 338, following verses 5: 116 - 5: 120.



himself. He (s) divided his own personal time into two parts - between himself and the people. First the elite entered and then the other people. He never withheld anything from them. Regarding the nation, he (s) preferred the noble ones by giving them a portion of his time according to their degree of nobility in religion. Some had only one request, others had two or more. He attended to their needs and pleased them by saying that which would improve their affairs and the affairs of the nation. He also asked them about their health. He (s) would also ask those present to inform those who were absent, and to convey to him (s) the requests of the people who had no access to him (s). He (s) said that on the Resurrection Day, God will firmly establish the steps of whoever presents the requests of a needy one who cannot be present before the ruler. Nothing but these needs were presented to him. He did not accept any other thing to be presented there. People entered like seeking scouts, and left with a full hand, knowing the religion and being able to guide others.”

Imam Husayn (s) said, ‘I asked my father (a) about how God’s Prophet (s) was after he left.’ He (a) said, ‘God’s Prophet (s) kept quiet except about what was relevant to him. He (s) sought the love of the people and never drove the people away from himself. He honoured the noblest person in each tribe and appointed him as its head. He avoided the people without them feeling that they were not welcome. He asked about his companions and how they were doing. He asked the people about their affairs. He used to acknowledge good deeds and denounce wicked deeds without any exaggerations or underestimations. He was moderate. He was never negligent. He never forsook the right. His companions were of the best of the good-doing Muslims. To him the one who did the most good was the noblest. Whoever was more sympathetic and more helpful with others had a higher rank in his opinion.’”

Imam Husayn (s) added, ‘I asked my father (a) about his meetings. My father (a) said, ‘The Prophet (s) was always remembering God in his meetings, whether he sat down or stood up. He always took a back seat whenever he attended a meeting. He always recommended this. He always treated his companions equally, so that no one thought that others were

more honoured than he is. Whenever he had company, he waited until they got up and left the meeting. Whoever asked him for something returned with full hands, or received a gentle verbal response. His manners were the same with everyone. He was like a kind father for the people. Everyone was the same in his sight as far as the right was concerned.

His meetings were meetings of patience, shyness, honesty and trustworthiness. No one raised his voice there. No one was disrespected. No one's faults were divulged. Everyone was humble to others due to piety.

They respected the elder ones. They were kind with the younger ones. They preferred the needy to themselves and safeguarded the strangers.”

Imam Husayn (a) added, ‘I asked my father (a) about the way the Prophet (s) treated his companions My father (a) said, ‘He was always cheerful, good tempered and easy-going. He was neither stern nor was he very harsh. He neither yelled nor did he swear. He never found faults with others. He neither made fun of anyone nor did he praise anyone. He ignored what he disliked. No one got disappointed with him. Those who placed hopes in him were never deprived. He never did the following three things with the people. He never blamed anyone; he never pursued the people's minor faults or private affairs; and he only talked about things which he hoped deserved a good reward. Everyone was silent whenever he spoke. Others spoke only when he was silent. No one interrupted others' words in his presence. When someone was talking in his presence, others remained silent until he finished talking, then they continued on. He laughed at whatever made others laugh. He got surprised at whatever made others get surprised. He was patient with strangers who did not talk or act properly and used to say “assist needy persons who are trying to fulfill their needs when you see them.” He never interrupted anyone unless they stopped talking themselves or the time passed by in which case he would get up to leave and the talk ended.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Ṣadūq, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a)*, vol. 1, (Tehran: Ṣadūq Publication, 1372 A.H.S.), pp. 635-644 (summery).

Sheikh Ṣadūq (a) says:

“This tradition has been narrated to me by *mashayikh* (religious scholars who narrate hadith) from various sources.”

Ghazzalī, too, has devoted an extensive chapter to this issue in his book “*Iḥyā’Ulūm Al-Dīn*”, of which we will mention a summary below:

We will first mention the account of Allah’s disciplining of Muhammad by means of the *Qur’an*, then the accounts concisely summarizing the fine qualities of his character, his speech and laughter, his character and manner in regard to food, his character and manner in regard to dress, his pardoning although he had the power not to pardon, his aversion from whatever he disliked, his generosity and his liberality, bravery and courage, and his modesty.

#### **The Account of Allah’s Disciplining of Muhammad, His Friend and His Chosen One, by the Qur’an**

The Apostle of Allah was very humble and supplicatory of Allah, continuously asking Him to adorn him with fine qualities of breeding, and the noble qualities of character. While praying he used to say, “O Allah, embellish my external and internal natures;” and, “O Allah, cause me to shun the disapproved qualities of character.” Thereupon Allah answered his prayer by sending down the *Qur’an* and disciplining him through its teaching, so that Muhammad’s nature was the *Qur’an*.

Therefore, Allah disciplined him by the *Qur’an*, by the examples of its word, such as:

“Take amnesty and command what is just and shun the ignorant.”

“Verily Allah ordered justice, the doing of good, and the giving of gifts to kindred, and He forbade wickedness, wrongdoing, and oppression.”

“Be patient in whatever shall betide thee; verily, this is a bounden duty.”

“And he who bears patiently and forgives- verily, this is a bounden duty.”

“Forgive them and overlook it. Verily, Allah loves those who act generously.”

“Let them rather pardon and pass over the offence. Do you not desire that Allah forgive you?”

Muhammad was the first intended for (the function of) disciplining and refining. Then the light spread from him over the whole of creation, for he was disciplined by means of the *Qur'an* and he in turn disciplined creation. For this reason he said, “I was sent to complete the noble qualities of character.” Thereupon he made mankind desirous of the fine qualities of character. When Allah perfected his character, He praised him and said, “Verily you are of a noble nature.” Therefore, he is pure and free from any imperfection, for his character is at the peak of greatness, and his benevolence at the most perfect level.

#### **A Summary Account of His Fine Qualities of Character**

Muhammad was the most forbearing, honest, just, and chaste of men. His hand never touched the hand of a woman over whom he did not have the right of control, with whom he did not have sexual relations, or who was unlawful for him to marry. He was the most generous of men. Muhammad did not take of those things which Allah gave him, except his yearly provisions. He was never asked for anything but that he gave it [to him who asked]. Moreover he returned to his yearly provisions [which he stored for his family] and [taking of them] preferred him (the seeker) [over himself and his family]. Thus he was often in need before the end of the year, if nothing was presented to him. He patched his sandals and clothing, [and] performed household duties. Muhammad was the most bashful of men and did not stare into anyone's face. He answered the invitation of the slave and the freeborn. He accepted presents, even if they consisted only of a draught of milk; he ate them and requited equally for them. He did not consider himself too great to answer the [ordinary] people and the poor. He became angry for Allah and not for his own sake. Muhammad, while fighting certain polytheists, was offered the help of other polytheists. However, he replied, “I do not seek assistance in conquest from a polytheist,” even though he was with few men and in need of anyone who could increase his numbers.

Until the time of his death, he did not eat a full stomach of wheat bread three days in succession. He did that from altruism not from poverty or avarice. He attended feasts, visited the sick, and attended funerals. He

mounted his servant and others behind him on the same beast. He rode whatever was possible for him. At different times he rode a horse, a male camel, a gray she mule, an ass; at times he walked on foot, barefoot. He visited the sick in the farthest section in the city. He loved perfumes and disliked foul odors. He sat and ate with the poor. He showed regard to the people of virtue for their character and was intimate with the people of rank because of their piety. He did good for his kindred without preferring them to him who was more virtuous than they. He did not tyrannize anyone and accepted the excuse of him who begged his pardon. He jested but he only spoke the truth. He laughed without bursting out into laughter. His milk camels and sheep nourished him and his family with their milk, He did not eat better food nor wear better clothes than his male and female slaves. A moment did not pass without his doing an action for Allah or [doing] that which was indispensable for the soundness of his soul. He went to the garden of his companions. He did not despise a poor man for his poverty and misfortune, nor did he fear a king because of his power; rather, he urged them equally to Allah.

Allah combined in him virtuous conduct and perfect rule of people, though he was untaught, unable to read or write, grew up poor amongst the shepherds in the land of ignorance and desert, and was an orphan without father and mother. Allah taught him all the fine qualities of character, and forsaking what is useless.

He never cursed either a woman or a slave. While he was waging war it was said to him, "Would that you curse them (the enemy) O Apostle of Allah!" To which he responded, "I was sent to forgive not as a curser." Whenever he was asked to wish evil against anyone whether he be a Muslim, a disbeliever, a man of the common people, or a man of worth, he turned from wishing him evil to blessing him. He never revenged himself for what was done to him except when the sanctity of Allah was violated. No person, whether he be free born, male or female, came to Muhammad but that he supported him in his need. Anas ibn Malik said, "By Him who sent him with the truth, Muhammad never said to me in regard to anything that he disapproved, 'Why did you do it?'" He did not regard a bed as something amiss; for if they spread out a bed for him, he reclined upon it; if not, he reclined on the earth.

It was his nature to be the first to extend greetings to whomever he met. He was patient with anyone who asked him for help, to the point that he (Muhammad) was the one dismissed. When he met one of his companions

he was first to commence handshaking; he then took his hand and clasped it, strengthening his grasp over his hand. Muhammad did not rise or sit without the mentioning of Allah. No one sat in his company while he was praying but that he shortened his prayer and came forth to him and said, "Have you a need?" After satisfying his need, Muhammad returned to his prayer. His sitting place could not be distinguished from that of his companions because he sat wherever he could in a meeting. He never was seen stretching his legs before his companions. Most of the time Muhammad sat facing the direction of Mecca. He used to show regard to his visitor to the point of often spreading his garment and seating upon it him who was neither a relative nor foster brother. He preferred his guest [over himself] by [offering him] the cushion on which he reclined. He shared his attention with all his guests. Moreover he sat, listened, conversed, acted gracefully, directed himself to his guest, his company being, in spite of all that, modest, humble, and sincere. Allah said, "By the mercy of Allah, thou hast been mild towards them, but hast thou been harsh and hard headed, they would have certainly dispersed from around thee." He called his companions by their "surnames" (*kunya*) so as to honour and conciliate them. He surnamed whoever did not have a surname and called him by it, therewith softening his heart. No noise was raised in his company. When he arose he said, "Allah be praised, O Allah, I testify praising Thee that there is no God but Thou; I ask Thy pardon and repent to Thee."

### **The Account of His Speech and Laughter**

Of all men Muhammad had the most eloquent diction and the most pleasant speech. He said, "I am the most eloquent of the Arabs." He also said that the people of Paradise speak the dialect of Muhammad. His speech was exiguous and compliant. When he spoke he was not a babbler. His speech was like a string of [matched] gems.

They said that of all men Muhammad's speech was most concise. However, in spite of its concision his speech expressed all that he wanted to say. He used to speak comprehensively and concisely, neither exceeding nor falling short [from his purpose]. His sentences followed each other and were cohesive, so that his listener heard and understood him.

He was long silent, and did not speak without necessity. He did not say that which was forbidden to say. He only spoke the truth whether he was pleased or prone to anger. He avoided whoever made unpleasant speeches. Moreover

he used to express himself metonymically whenever he had to say anything which he loathed expressing. When he was silent, his companions spoke. One did not argue in his presence. He warned by exhortation and by advice. He was the most smiling and laughing of men in the presence of his companions, admiring what they said, and mingling with them. He often laughed so that his molar teeth showed. The laughter of his companions in his presence, in imitation of him and as a sign of their regard for him, was a smile. They said that he was the most smiling and agreeable of men except when a revelation (*Qur'an*) was revealed to him, when he mentioned the hour of the Resurrection, and when he preached a sermon. If he preached, he preached vigorously; if he were angered, he was angered only for the sake of Allah, and thus he was in all his affairs.

#### **The Account of His Character and Manner in Regard to Food**

The Apostle of Allah ate whatever was available. His most beloved food was one which many hands were upon it (i.e. partaking of food with other people). When the table was set he said, "In the name of Allah, render the food favourable and praiseworthy and cause it to have the favour of Paradise." While he sat eating, he frequently joined his knees and feet just as he who prays, except that one knee was over the other knee and one foot over the other foot, and said, "I am only a servant; I eat and sit as he does." He did not eat very hot food, in regard to which he said, "It is without blessing; verily Allah did not feed us fire, therefore cool it." He ate whatever was within his reach, eating with his three fingers, and sometimes he used a fourth finger. Muhammad never found fault with food. If he was pleased with it, he ate of it; if he disliked it, he neglected it; if he discarded it, he did not render it hateful to another person. When he finished he said, "Praise be to Allah! Allah, Thou art worthy to be praised. Thou hast fed, sated, given drink, and quenched thirst; praise belongs to Thee, who cannot be denied, who is eternally present, and who is indispensable."

He used to drink water in three portions, invoking Allah thrice. When he finished he praised Allah thrice. He sipped the water and did not gulp it. There was brought to him a vase in which there was honey and milk, and he refused to drink it saying, "There are two draughts in one, and two foods in one vase." Then he said, "I do not forbid it, but I dislike boasting in respect to the excesses of the world and calculating regarding them for the morrow; rather I love humility. For, verily, whoever is humble before Allah, Allah will extol him." In his house he did not ask them [his household] for food, nor

did he importune them with requests for food. If they fed him, he ate. He ate whatever they fed him, and drank whatever they gave him to drink. He often rose and took that which he ate and drank (i.e., he served himself).

### **The Account of His Character and Manner in Regard to Dress**

The Apostle of Allah used to wear whatever was at hand: e.g., a wrapper (*'izār*), an outer wrapping garment (*ridā*), a long shirt gown (*qamīṣ*), an upper gown with full sleeves (*jubba*), or other garments. He used to admire green garments. He wore white garments most frequently, saying, "Wear them while you are living and shroud yourself in them when you die." When he dressed, he dressed from his right side saying, "Praise to Allah who clothed me with that which I conceal my nakedness and with which I adorn myself amongst the people." When he took off his clothing, he removed it from his left side. Muhammad slept on a mat with nothing else beneath him.

### **The Account of His Pardoning**

The Apostle of Allah was the most forbearing of men and most desirous of pardoning, notwithstanding his power not to. Once, when he divided a necklace of gold and silver amongst his companions there arose a Bedouin who said, "O Muhammad, by Allah, verily, He [Allah] commanded that you act justly; whereas, I do not see you act thus." Thereupon Muhammad said, "Woe to you; who will act equitably to you after me?"

Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah related that the Apostle of Allah, in a wet garment, was giving people silver on the Day of Ḥunayn. Thereupon a man said to him, "O Apostle of Allah, act justly!" Then the Apostle of Allah said, "Woe to you; who will act justly if I do not act justly? In that case I would have failed and lost, if I did not act equitably."

The Apostle of Allah was in battle, and there was observed a carelessness amongst the Muslims, so that a man advanced against the Apostle of Allah with a sword saying, "Who will defend you against me?" Muhammad said, "Allah," and the sword fell from his hand. Seizing the sword Muhammad said, "Who will defend you against me?" And the man replied, "Be quick about it;" to which Muhammad said, "Say, I testify that there is no God other than Allah and that I am the Apostle of Allah!" The man replied, "No, I only say that I will not fight you, nor will I be with you, nor will I be with a people who will fight you." Thereupon Muhammad released him. When



Muhammad came back to his companions he said, "I come to you from the presence of the best of men."

The Apostle of Allah distributed allotments, and one of the Anṣār said, "This is a distribution by means of which the pleasure of Allah is not intended." When this was mentioned to the Prophet, his face reddened and he said, 'Allah have mercy; my brother Moses had suffered more than this, and he was patient.'

### **The Account of His Conduct When He Disliked Something**

He did not talk with anyone in regard to what he disliked. When he was visited by a person who was wearing a yellow garment, which he disliked, he did not say anything to him until he left. Then he said to some particular persons, "It would be good if you tell this man to forego this (i.e. the yellow garment)." When a Bedouin urinated in the mosque in his presence, and his companions intended to prevent him, Muhammad said, "Do not stop him." Then Muhammad said to him, "These mosques are not suited to serve as places of urination, excretion, or of any foul matter." In certain accounts it is stated, "Draw [people] close and do not scare [them] away."

One day a Bedouin came to Muhammad and asked him for something. Muhammad gave it to him and said, "Have I done well by you?" To which the Bedouin answered, "No, nor have you acted decently." Upon this reply the Muslims became angered and rose against the Bedouin. At this point, however, Muhammad advised them to desist. Then, Muhammad rose and went to his lodging and gave a further amount to the Bedouin and said to him, "Have I done well by you? To which the Bedouin answered, "Yes, may Allah reward you with well-being of family and tribe." In reply, the Prophet said to him, "You have made a certain statement and something of that has remained in the minds of my companions. Hence would you like to say before them what you said before me, so that they would remove from their chests (hearts) what they have against you." Thereupon the Bedouin answered, "Yes." When it was dusk or the next day, the Bedouin came, and the Prophet said, "Verily this Bedouin said what he said, and we increased his amount so that he asserted that he was pleased. Is that so? And the Bedouin answered, "Yes, may Allah reward you with well-being of family and tribe." Then Muhammad said, "Verily the narrative of myself and this Bedouin is as the narrative of the man who had a female camel which only caused her to be more frightened. Then the owner of the camel called the

people and said to them, 'Leave me and my camel alone, for verily I am gentle with her and have more understanding.' He turned to the camel, took some sweepings for her, and returned her gently until she kneeled. Then he saddled her and sat upon her. Now, verily, if I forsook you when the Bedouin said what he said, and you had killed him, he would have entered the Fire."

### **The Account of His Munificence and His Liberality**

Muhammad was the most generous and liberal of men. In the month of Ramadan he was like the "Sent-Wind," withholding nothing. 'Ali, when he described the Prophet, used to say, "Of all men, he was the most liberal handed, the most open hearted, the most truthful, the most fulfilling of promise, the gentlest of temper, and the noblest toward kindred. Whoever saw him unexpectedly, was awed by him, and whoever got intimated and knew him, loved him." Ali said, describing him, "I did not see his likeness before or after him." Muhammad never said, "No" when he was asked for something. Having put on the earth ninety thousand dirham which were brought to him, he rose and divided it, not refusing anyone who asked until there was no longer any [dirhams] to distribute.

A man came and asked him for something. Muhammad, having nothing with him, said, "Buy, making me responsible, and when we will have something we will pay for it." Thereupon 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, "O Apostle of Allah, Allah did not impose upon you what you cannot do." This answer having displeased Muhammad, the man said, "Spend graciously, and do not fear from Allah for having little to spend." The Prophet then smiled and the joy was noticeable on his face.

### **An Account of His Bravery**

Muhammad was the most gallant and the bravest of men. 'Ali (a) said, "I found myself at the Badr battle taking refuge in the Prophet of Allah, who was closest to the enemy. Muhammad was on that day the most courageous of men."

It is said that Muhammad (s) spoke little. . He was the bravest of men. The courageous person was one who was close to Muhammad (s) in the Badr battle, because of Muhammad's proximity to the enemy. They said that he was very courageous. When the polytheists approached him, he alighted from

his male camel and said, "I am the prophet; there is no falsehood in what I say. I am the grandson of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib." On that day there was not seen anyone who was more vehement than he.

### **An Account of His Modesty**

Muhammad was the most modest of men despite of his high position. He rode on an ass on which there was packed a hairy cloth; Muhammad, notwithstanding that, asked one to ride behind him. Muhammad used to visit the ill, follow the funeral bier, answer the call of the slave, and patch his shoes and garments. In his house he did the family duties together with the rest of the family. His companions did not rise for him because they knew that he disliked that.

When he passed young boys, he greeted them. When a man frightened by his reverential fear of Muhammad was brought to him, Muhammad said to him, "Be at rest. I am not a king. I am only the son of a woman of Quraysh, who eats dried meat."

He sat amongst his companions conversing with them, as if he were one of them. When a stranger came, not knowing which one of them was Muhammad, he asked concerning him until the companions asked Muhammad (s) to sit in a way in which the stranger could distinguish him in from the rest. Later he sat on a mud bench which they built for him.

'Aisha said to Muhammad, "Eat reclining; it is easier for you." Muhammad (s) replied, inclining his head until his forehead almost touched the ground, "On the contrary, I eat as the slave eats, and sit as the slave sits."

None of his companions called him but that he said, "At thy service!" When he sat with the people, if they spoke regarding the future world, he participated with them; if they spoke regarding food and drink, he did likewise; if they spoke regarding worldly matters, he did likewise, gently and modestly. They used to recite poetry sometimes before him and used to mention matters which occurred in the "State of Ignorance." Muhammad smiled when they laughed; and he did not restrain them except from that which was sinful.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Khārazmī, Mu'ayyid al-Dīn, *Tarjomeh-ye Iḥyā al-'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, vol. 2, (Tehran: Enteshārāt 'Elmī & Farhangī, 1372 A.H.S.) pp. 770-792

## ii) The Manners of the Imams:

*Amir al-Mu'minīn*, Imam 'Ali (a), narrates:

Once, I reached the Prophet (s) when he was in one of his rooms. I asked for permission to enter the room; he gave me permission and I went in. Then, he said, "O 'Ali, this house is yours. You do not need to ask for permission." I said, "O messenger of God, I liked to ask for permission." The Prophet (s), then, said, "O 'Ali, you like what God likes, and you followed the Godly manners."<sup>1</sup>

To respect his older brother, Imam Husayn (a) never spoke in the presence of Imam Hasan (a). His younger brother, Muhammad ibn Ḥanafīyah, did the same in the presence of Imam Husayn (a).<sup>2</sup>

Imam 'Ali (a) says:

When the Prophet (s) was alive, Hasan called me "*aba al-Husayn*" (the father of Husayn), and Husayn called me "*Aba al-Hasan*" (the father of Hasan), and they called the Prophet (s) "father"<sup>3</sup> When the Prophet (s) passed away, they called me "father".<sup>3</sup>

A female servant gave a flower to Imam Hasan (a). The Imam (a) said, "I set you free for Allah." He was asked, "why did you let her go for a flower?" He responded: "God has disciplined us." And then said, "When you are greeted with a salute, greet with a better one than it' (4:86), and the greeting better than hers was to set her free."<sup>4</sup>

*Zayn al-'Ābidīn*, Imam Sajjād (a) has said:

Once, I became drastically ill. My father said, "what do you desire?" I answered "I desire to be of those who do not suggest anything against what their Lord decides for them, that is, to be pleased with his choice." My father said, "That is noble of you my son. You are like Abraham (a) the friend of God. When he was in the fire, Gabriel said to him, 'What do you need?'

<sup>1</sup> Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 76, p. 14-15, chap. 98, no. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 43, p. 319, ch. 13, following hadith no. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Sharḥ-i Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 43, p. 343, ch. 16, no. 15.

Ibrahim said, 'I will not suggest anything to my Lord. He, alone, suffices me and He is the best trustee.'<sup>1</sup>

Imam Ṣādiq (a) narrates that:

Imam ‘Ali (a) said to Imam Hasan (a) "My son, stand up and make a speech so that I can listen to your words." Imam Hasan (a) said, "Father, how can I make a speech while I see your face, and I will be ashamed [to deliver a speech in your presence]."<sup>2</sup>

## 12) The Conduct of Ma’sūmīn in Dealing with Unmannered People:

Tolerating and bearing with discourtesy and rudeness of others, is a sign of the nobility of a person. The Glorious Qur’an knows this as one of the qualities of "*Tbād al-Raḥmān*":

﴿وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا﴾

"The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and when the ignorant address them, [they] say, 'Peace!'" (25: 63)

The Imams, that were examples of nobility and manners, always treated the ignorant people in a way that would cause a change deep in their hearts. In the days when Imam ‘Ali (a) was the ruler of the Islamic society, he went to the bazaar sometimes, gave some advice and warnings to people and vendors, and threatened the offenders by a whip.

Once, when he was passing from the date bazaar, he saw a female servant who was crying; he asked her the reason. She answered "I am a servant of a house. I bought some dates from this shop and took them home, but they did not like them, so I've returned them, but the seller does not accept them." The Imam (a) told the seller: "This woman is a servant; she does not have a choice herself. Take these dates from her and return her money." The man told the Imam (a) not to interfere in his affair. People told him "what are you doing? This is the *Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn* (ruler of the Muslims)." The man suddenly lost his confidence and turned pale. He quickly took the dates and returned the money. Then he humbly said, "O ‘Ali, forgive me and be

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 46, p. 67, ch. 5, no. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 43, p. 350, ch. 16, no. 24.

pleased with me.” The Imam (a) said: “I will not be pleased with you until you pay people their rights.”<sup>1</sup>

A foolish person treats me with ignorance, and I do not like answering him. He increases his foolishness, and I increase my forbearance, like incense whose fragrance increases when it burns.<sup>2</sup>

A man named ‘Iṣām, went from Damascus to Medina. In the Mosque of Medina he saw a noble and magnificent man who caught his attention. He asked: “Who is that man sitting there? Seems like he is an aristocrat.” Someone answered: “That is Husayn ibn ‘Ali.” As he heard this, he went and stood in front of Imam Husayn (a), and with the most possible indecency cursed Imam ‘Ali (a) and Imam Husayn (a) himself as much as he could. The Imam (a) looked at the man, and realized that he must have been misled. As the man finished speaking, The Imam (a) said: “Are you from Damascus?” The man said, “yes.” The Imam (a) said: “I know, the people of Damascus are usually like this. So, you are a stranger in our city, and you are our guest. Come to our home and be our guest so that we can welcome you, and supply you, if you are out of supplies.” This man says: “I suddenly felt so ashamed that I wanted the earth to open up and swallow me.”<sup>3</sup>

Ibn Athīr says: “Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far, was called *Kāzīm* (one who swallows his anger) because he always did good to those who did bad to him.”<sup>4</sup>

Beauty is not the clothes that adorn us. Indeed, the true beauty is the beauty of knowledge and manners.<sup>5</sup>

### 13) Benefits of Politeness:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 332, ch. 98, no. 14.

ما أرضاني عنك اذا وفيتهم حقوقهم

<sup>2</sup> *Dīvān-e mansūb be Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* (poems attributed to Imam ‘Ali (a)), (Tehran: Usweh, 1373 A.H.S.), p. 82, line 37.

و ذى سفه يواجهنى بجهل و أكره أن أكون له مجيبا

يزيد سفاهة و أزيد حلما كعود زاد فى الاحراق طيبا

<sup>3</sup> Qumi, Sheikh ‘Abbas, *Muntabi al-‘Āmāl*, vol. 1, (Qum: Mu‘minīn, 1379 A.H.S.) p. 600 - 601.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 345.

<sup>5</sup> *Dīvān-e mansūb be Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* (poems attributed to Imam ‘Ali (a)), p. 76, line 32.

ليس الجمال بأثواب تزئنا إنّ الجمال جمال العلم ولأدب

Politeness is one of the most valuable assets and legacies of human life. It is the source of many benefits and it has a lot of good outcomes. Here, we will point out a few of the benefits of politeness.

- a) Covering the deficiencies: Imam ‘Ali (a) has said, “Good manners compensate for bad ancestry”.<sup>1</sup>
- b) Reducing the mistakes: Politeness protects one from mistakes and errors. Imam ‘Ali (a) has said: “Whoever impels himself to comply with manners, his vices will be reduced.”<sup>2</sup>
- c) Beautifying the character: politeness makes one well-behaved, refines one’s morality, and corrects his bad habits. Imam ‘Ali (a) has said: “The fruit of having good manners is good morality.”<sup>3</sup>
- d) Being accepted and admired socially: This is another outcome of being polite. Politeness is adherence to a group of beautiful actions, and since everyone loves and favours beauty, everyone loves a polite person.

#### 14) Methods of Obtaining Good Manners:

- a) Noticing the unpleasantness of some actions:

Someone asked Jesus Christ (a), “Who taught you courtesy?” he responded, “No one disciplined me. I [just] saw the ugliness of ignorance so I avoided it.”<sup>4</sup> Also Imam ‘Ali (a) has said: “For disciplining yourself, it will be enough only to avoid acts you do not like from others.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Khunsārī, Muhammad, *Sharḥ-i Ghurar al-Hikam*, vol. 3, (Tehran: Tehran University, 1366 A.H.S.) p. 383.

حسن الادب يستر قبح النسب

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 263.

من كلف بالادب قلت مساويه

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 352.

قرها لادب حسن الخلق

<sup>4</sup> Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p. 326, ch. 21, no. 45.

ما ادبني احد. رايت قبح الجهل فحانته

<sup>5</sup> Khunsārī, *Sharḥ-i Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 20, p. 49.

Luqman was asked, “who did you learn courtesy from?” he said, “From the discourteous. Whatever I saw unpleasant in them, I refused to do it.”<sup>1</sup>

One could, for instance, learn to talk less from those who talk a lot and cheaply, and learn generosity by seeing the ugliness of what stingy people do. No one likes indecency. If we learn from the indecency of others to move towards excellence, then our teacher of ethics is within ourselves. Imam ‘Ali (a) has said: “When you see an unfavourable habit in others try to avoid such behaviour yourself.”<sup>2</sup>

b) Improving our knowledge:

Courtesy results from a deep understanding and perception of realities, and likewise, discourtesy results from ignorance. Imam ‘Ali (a) says: “When a man’s knowledge increases, his good manners increase [too].”<sup>3</sup>

c) Associating with knowledgeable and decent people:

Imam ‘Ali (a) has said: “Associate with knowledgeable people so that your knowledge will be increased, your behaviour will be refined, and your soul will be purified.”<sup>4</sup> “Associate with patient people so that your patience will be increased.”<sup>5</sup> “Associate with righteous people, for if you do a good act they will praise you, and if you make a mistake they will not rebuke you.”<sup>6</sup>

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كفائك مؤدبا لنفسك تجنب ماكرهته من غيرك

<sup>1</sup> *Golestān-e Sa‘dī*, ch. 2, Dar Akhlāq-e Darvīshān

<sup>2</sup> Khunsārī, *Sharḥ-i Ghurar al-Ḥikam*, vol. 3, p. 161.

إذا رأيت في غيرك خلقا ذميما فتجنب من نفسك امثاله

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 585.

إذا زاد علم الرجل زاد أدبه

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 373.

جالس العلماء يزداد علمك و يحسن أدبك و تترك نفسك

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 357.

جالس الحكماء تزداد حلما

<sup>6</sup> Malikī Ashtarī, Abul Husayn Warrām, *Tanabbuh al-Khawāṭir*, vol. 2, (Bayrut: Dār al-Ta‘ārūf, ?) p. 122.

جالس الأبرار، فإنك إن فعلت خيرا حمدوك، و إن أخطأت لم يعنفوك



“Associating with wise people is the life of the mind and the cure for the soul.”<sup>1</sup>

Associating with righteous people has a deep impact on purifying one’s soul and acquiring virtue. Imam Sajjād (a) says: “The meetings of righteous people invites to righteousness.”<sup>2</sup>

The companions of Jesus Christ (a) asked him, “O spirit of Allah, who should we associate with?”; he answered, “One who seeing him reminds you of Allah, and whose words increases your [good] deeds, and whose deeds interest you in the hereafter.”<sup>3</sup>

Oppositely, mingling with those who are slaves to their desires has unpleasant effects.

#### 15) Different Kinds of Courtesy:

##### a) Courtesy with Allah:

The most important display of politeness is its manifestation in regard to God. Muslims should try to have the utmost courtesy with Allah, comply with the courtesies of His presence, and mention His holy names with respect and regard.

It is narrated that a teenage boy said, “*Salām*” to the Prophet (s), and expressed his happiness to see him. The Prophet (s) said, “O young man, do you like me” The boy answered: “yes, by God [I love you], O messenger of God.”

-As much as your eyes?

-More than my eyes.

-As much as your father?

<sup>1</sup> Khunsārī, *Sharḥ-i Gburar al-Hikam*, vol. 6, p. 151.

بجالسه الحكماء حياه العقول، و شفاء النفوس

<sup>2</sup> Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 78, p. 141, no. 35.

بجالس الصالحين داعيه الى الصلاح

<sup>3</sup> Kulaynī, *Uṣūl Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 39, Bab Mujālisat al-Ulamā’ Wa Ṣuḥbatahum, no. 3.

من يذكركم الله رويته و يزيد في علمكم منطقه و يرغبكم في الاخره عمله

-More.

-As much as your mother?

-More.

-As much as yourself?

-By God, O messenger of God, I love you more than myself.

-As much as God?

-Allah, Allah, Allah. O messenger, this level is neither for you nor for anyone else, since I love you for the love of God.

The Prophet (s) looked at his companions and said, "Be like this. Love God for his kindness towards you and the provision he has given you, and love me for the love of God."<sup>1</sup>

From the Prophet's (s) point of view, this teenager is the example of courtesy with Allah.

Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, who is one of the greatest scholars of the Shi'a, has never mentioned the holy word of "Allah" without "*jalla jalālah*" in his writings. Ayatollah Khomeini, too, always mentioned the name of God with "*muta'āl*" (eminent), "*subhān*" (glorious), and other descriptions.<sup>2</sup>

One aspect of courtesy with God is being courteous with respect to prayer and worship. Sometimes the impoliteness and insolence of the prayer is very apparent, and at times it is seen that the prayer threatens Holy Allah that "If you do not fulfil my prayer, I will do such and such".

Everyone who has a stronger Godly affection in his heart endeavours more in adhering with the courtesies of Allah's presence and in beautifying his soul and appearance, and he behaves in such a way so that Allah will look at him with satisfaction. The nearer one is to God, the stronger is the adherence in his heart to the slightest points of courtesy with God. One who finds

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<sup>1</sup> *Sharḥ-i Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 10, p. 171.

هكذا كونوا، احبوا الله لاحسانه اليكم و انعامه عليكم و احبوني لحب الله

<sup>2</sup> For more information refer to: Mokhtārī, Reza, *Sīmā-ye farzānegān*, (Qum: Būstān Kitāb, 1380 A.H.S.) p. 272 - 278.

himself present before God should comply with some manners that will be mentioned briefly:

I) One should always be mindful of Allah and not anything else, it is narrated that:

Truly when a servant stands up for performing prayer he is in the presence of Allah. So when he pays attention [to something other than God], the Lord tells him "to whom are you paying attention? To someone who is better than me for you? O son of Adam, turn towards me for I am better than whom you are paying attention to."<sup>1</sup>

II) If one finds a rank before Allah; finds vicinity to Him and gains an opportunity to pray, he should never forget where he is standing and do not cross the line of servanthood. He should not be affected by vanity and pride.

III) The more a request is distant from the form of an order, the more courteous it will sound. For example, when Abraham (a) wanted to pray for forgiveness of the sinners, he did not say a command like prayer, instead he said, "and as for someone who disobeys me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful."<sup>2</sup> And did not say "forgive them and show mercy to them."

IV) Job (a) did the same when he wanted to pray for cure and mercy. He said, "Indeed distress has befallen me, and You are the most merciful of the merciful."<sup>3</sup> And not "Show mercy to me."

V) Jesus Christ (a), too, kept his prayer from sounding like an order when he wanted to pray for God's mercy and removal of the punishment from his people. He said, "If You punish them, they are indeed Your creatures; but if

<sup>1</sup> Kāshānī, 'Izz al-Dīn, *Miṣbāh al-Hidāyah*, (Tehran: Homā, 1367 A.H.S.) p. 209.

ان العبد اذا قام الى الصلاه فانه بين يدي الرحمن فاذا التفت قال له الرب الى من تلتفت؟ الى من هو خير لك  
مى؟ يابن آدم اقبل الى فانا خير لك ممن تلتفت اليه

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an, 14: 36

و من عصاني فانك غفور رحيم

<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an 21: 83

ان مسني الضر و انت ارحم الراحمين

You forgive them, You are indeed the All-mighty, the All-wise."<sup>1</sup>And he did not say "Do not punish them and forgive them". In addition, in response to God's question that "Were it you who said to the people, 'Take me and my mother for gods besides God?'"<sup>2</sup>,he said, "Had I said it, You would certainly have known it."<sup>3</sup>And he did not say "I did not say such a thing" so that it would sound less disapproving, and hence courtesy with God's presence would be more respected.<sup>4</sup>

VI) One should not see himself and refer to himself when he is mentioning a Godly gift, as the Prophet (s) said, "The earth was condensed for me and its sunsets and sunrises were shown to me"<sup>5</sup> and he did not say "I saw the east and the west of the world", since he did not want to mention himself (directly) to be more courteous.<sup>6</sup>

#### b) Courtesy with the Noble Prophet (s):

A Muslim should adhere to the highest level of courtesy with the Noble Prophet (s). Abū Hārūn narrates:

I was a companion of Imam Ṣādiq (a). Once, I was not able to visit him for several days. After I managed to see him, he said, "Abū Hārūn, It has been a while that I have not seen you.", I responded, "God has gifted me a son", the Imam (a)said, "May God bless him for you, what have you named him?" I answered "I have named him Muhammad.", the holy Imam (a) lowered his head to the extent that it was close to touching the ground,

<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an 5: 118

ان تعذبهم فاعذبهم عبادك و ان تغفرهم فانك انت العزيز الحكيم

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an 5: 116

ءانت قلت للناس اتخذوني و امي الهين من دون الله

<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an 5: 116

ان كنت قلته فقد علمته

<sup>4</sup> What is meant is that in a prayer, we should not speak to God with insolence and in a command-like manner; Thus, the mentioned verses are not in contrast with other verses that have prayers in imperative mood but are mentioned with beginnings that indicate respect.

<sup>5</sup> Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 18, p. 136, ch. 11, below the narration number 39.

زويت لي الارض فاريت مشارقتها و مغاربها

<sup>6</sup> Refer to: Kāshānī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah*, p. 209 - 211.

and said, "Muhammad, Muhammad, Muhammad", then he said:

[I swear] on my life, my children, my family, my father and on the people of the earth, may all of them be sacrificed for the messenger of God, [that] I will not swear at him, will not hit him, and will not do bad to him, and be aware that there is no house in which the name Muhammad exists unless that house is made holy every day.<sup>1</sup>

*Ṣalawāt* is the key of honouring the high rank of the Prophet (s), which is also a part of *tashahhud* and is established as one of the obligatory actions of prayer (*ṣalāt*). Furthermore, it is *mustahab* to recite *ṣalawāt* whenever one hears or mentions the Prophet's holy name.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary for every faithful Muslim to adhere to some courtesies with the Noble Prophet (s) and honour his greatness:

I) The most important courtesy is to know the Prophet (s) to be present and watching us everywhere. That is, just as God is always present and aware of all our physical and mental activities, the Prophet (s), too, is aware of our activities. Therefore, one should be ashamed to oppose him openly or secretly, and should never neglect anything about courtesy in his presence.

II) Any achievement that righteous people make is earned through the guidance of the Prophet (s). Therefore, one should not think that walking the path of perfection is needless of his help.

III) After completely believing in the Prophet (s), comes the full adherence to his *sunnah* and life conduct (*sirah*). The Prophet (s) has said: "Whoever

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<sup>1</sup> Hurr 'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol. 21, (Qum: Mu'assiseh 'Āl al-Bayt li Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1416 A.H.) p. 393, no. 27387.

بنفسى و بولدى و باهلى و بابوى و باهل الارض كلهم جميعا الفدا لرسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله و سلم)

لاتسبه و لاتضره و لاتسىء اليه، و اعلم انه ليس فى الارض دار فيها اسم محمد الا و هى تققدس كل يوم

<sup>2</sup> Yazdī, Sayyid Muhammad Kāḍim, *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqā*, vol. 2, (Qum: Daftar Inteshārāt Islāmī, 1420 A.H.) p. 619.

revives my customs that are forgotten after me, he will be rewarded like those who do it, without their reward being reduced.”<sup>1</sup>

IV) Honouring the Prophet (s) should always be along with honouring God, whether it be in beliefs, words, or deeds. Holly Allah says: “that you may have faith in God and His Apostle, and that you may support him and revere him.”<sup>2</sup>

Obeying the Prophet (s) should be viewed to be along with obeying God, who said, “Say, ‘Obey God, and obey the Apostle.’”<sup>3</sup>, because believing in God and His oneness is not complete and accepted without believing in the Prophet (s) and his prophethood. As the name of Holy God is always mentioned with respect and regard in writing and speaking, the name of the Prophet (s), too, should be mentioned with high regard and *ṣalawāt*.

Muḥaddith Qumī, has written the following about Imam Ṣādiq (a):

His highness used to state a lot of wise words. He was friendly and sociable, and was very beneficial. Every time he wanted to say "*ghāla rasūl Allah (s)*" (the Prophet (s) said), his face would change to an extent that those who knew him would not recognize him...

Think deeply about the state of Imam Ṣādiq (a) in respecting the Prophet (s). Notice how his mood changed when he mentioned a hadith from the Prophet (s) and mentioned his name. This is while he was the beloved son of the Prophet (s). Thus, learn this, and mention the name of the Prophet (s) with the utmost respect, and recite *ṣalawāt* after it, and when you write his holy name somewhere, write *ṣalawāt* without any abbreviation after his name. And do not confine yourself to abbreviations of *ṣalawāt* like the people who are deprived of

<sup>1</sup> Muttaqī Hindī, Ali, *Kanz al-Ummāl*, vol. 1, (Bayrut: Mo'asseseh Risālah, 1409 A.H.) p. 179 - 180, no. 908.

من احيا سنتي قد اميتت بعدى كان له من الاجر مثل من عمل بها من غير ان ينقص من اجورهم شيئا

<sup>2</sup> The Qur'an 48: 9

لتؤمنوا بالله ورسوله و تعزروه و توقروه

<sup>3</sup> The Qur'an 24: 54

قل اطيعوا الله و اطيعوا الرسول

this felicity. Do not touch his holy name without *wuḍū* and despite doing all that, apologize to his highness because of negligence in doing your duty.<sup>1</sup>

### c) Courtesy with the infallible Imams (a):

An important duty for us is to be courteous with the infallible Imams. The people who are aware of the very high ranks of the household of the Prophet (s) and the Imams (a), show their highest respect to them. Hence, the first thing for us to do is to realize their prominent and divine ranks, which naturally leads us to respect them humbly.

For knowing the Imams (a), the *ziyārat* of *Jāmi'ah kabīrah* is a reliable source after the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, and it paints a clear picture of the prominent ranks of the household of the Prophet (s). In this *ziyārat* we read:

مَوَالِيٍّ لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْبَلُ مِنَ الْمَدْحِ كُنْهَكُمْ وَمِنَ الْوَصْفِ قُدْرَتَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ نُورُ  
الْأَخْيَارِ وَهُدَاهُ الْأَبْرَارِ وَحُجَجُ الْجَبَّارِ

My masters! It is not possible for me to appraise your praise, nor can I reach the heart of your praiseworthiness nor describe your excellence. You are lights of the virtuous and guides of the righteous, and proven authorities of the Almighty God.

كَلَامُكُمْ نُورٌ وَأَمْرُكُمْ رُشْدٌ وَوَصِيَّتُكُمْ تَقْوَى وَفِعْلُكُمْ الْخَيْرُ وَعَادَتُكُمْ الْإِحْسَانُ، وَ  
سَجِيَّتُكُمْ الْكَرَمُ وَشَأْنُكُمْ الْحَقُّ وَالصَّدَقُ وَالرِّفْقُ وَقَوْلُكُمْ حُكْمٌ وَحَتْمٌ وَرَأْيُكُمْ عِلْمٌ  
وَجِلْمٌ وَحَزْمٌ إِنَّ ذِكْرَ الْخَيْرِ كُنْتُمْ أَوْلَاهُ وَأَصْلُهُ وَفَرْعُهُ وَمَعْدِنُهُ وَمَأْوَاهُ وَمُنْتَهَاهُ

Your speech is light dispelling darkness and doubts, your command is uprightness, your advice is piety, your actions are all virtuous, and your habit is benevolence, your nature and disposition is munificence. Your dignity is equity, veracity and clemency. Your word speech is firm and decisive, your opinion and counsel comprises sagacity, forbearance and prudence. Wherever excellence is mentioned you are its origin, its root, its branch, its treasure, its abode, its zenith and culmination.

<sup>1</sup> Qumi, *Muntaha al-'Āmāl*, vol. 2, p. 234 - 242.

Yunis ibn Ya'qūb narrates that:

Once, a group of the companions of Imam Ṣādiq (a), like Ḥamrān ibn A'yān, Hishām ibn Sālīm, and Hishām ibn Ḥakam, who was a young man, were in his presence. The Imam (a) said, "O Hishām, Do you not tell me about how you managed with 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd-an opposing scholar- and how you argued with him?" Hishām responded, "O son of the Prophet, I feel ashamed to talk in your presence and my tongue is unable to speak." The holy Imam (a) said: "When I order you to do something, do it."

Thus, Hishām ibn Ḥakam described his successful discussion with 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad ibn Hasan Ammār says:

I stayed in Medina with Ali ibn Ja'far (a) –son of Musa ibn Ja'far (a)- for two years, to write down the narrations he had heard from his brother- Imam Kāzīm (a). One day, I was sitting in his presence when Imam Jawād (a) came. At this time, Ali ibn Ja'far (a) stood up without shoes and *ridā'* (an outer wrapping garment), kissed Imam Jawād's hand and bowed before him. Imam Jawād (a)said, "O' uncle, sit down. May God have mercy on you." Ali ibn Ja'far (a) said, "O' my master, how can I sit while you are standing?" After Ali ibn Ja'far (a) returned to his place, people criticized him and said, "You are the uncle of his father and you bow before him like that?" Ali ibn Ja'far (a) said, "Be quiet," and then he held his beard with his hand and said, "When God has not valued this white beard of mine, and He has placed this young man in that high position –*Imamate*, do I deny his superiority and high rank? I seek refuge from God from your words, for I am a servant of His."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kulayni, *Uṣūl Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 169, Bāb al-Idtirār 'ila al-Ḥujjah, no. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 47, p. 266, ch. 30, no. 35.