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Good Manners and Propriety

Khutbah Topic

His eminence Sheikh Saleh ibn Abdullah ibn Humaid –may Allah protect him– delivered this week’s Friday Khutbah titled “**Good Manners and Propriety**” in which he discussed Islamic good manners and moral standards of behaviour that Muslims should observe. These standards, he said, form part and parcel of our Islamic rulings, legislations and instructions. Sheikh Ibn Humaid cited examples such as *salat, fasting, hajj*, etc. and said that Islam preached virtue and forbade vice.

Part one

Praise be to Allah Whose kindness preempts all misfortunes and wards off all conspiracies! I praise Him (ﷻ) and thank Him and beg for more of His favours and magnanimity. With His kindness and favours graces and benefits multiply. I bear witness that there is no deity worth worshipping except Allah alone with no associates. The signs of His oneness are infinitely manifest in in all His creations. I also bear witness that our Master and Prophet Muhammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah –a chosen Prophet of a chosen descent, of a most noble birth, may Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours and Mercy), Peace and blessings on him, his pure and virtuous family –people of benevolence and high traits– and on his sincere and audacious Companions whose merits realized great achievements, and on the *tabi‘īn* and their followers in righteousness.

Having said that, I urge you, O people, and myself to fear Allah. So fear of Allah, may Allah have mercy on you. There is nothing more precious than sound health and nothing more prodigious than contentment. ﴿...and the raiment of righteousness, that is better﴾ [al-A‘rāf: 26]

Life is meant for toiling, not for laziness. On Doom's Day obedience will be the only means to salvation. Allah will protect the self-disciplined; he who prepares himself for the Hereafter will be granted agreeable life in the Herein. Nobody can grant you bounty that Allah has not decreed for you and nobody can protect you against a misfortune that Allah has ordained to afflict you. *﴿Whoever works righteousness – whether male or female – while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islâmic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)﴾* [an-Nahl: 97]

O Muslims!

A virtuous man was asked once, “*Have you read Aristotle's **Ethics**?*” He proudly replied, “No, but I have read Muhammad's *ethics*.”

Allah is great! The Book of our Lord is replete with instructions and moral codes of life and living including some for eating and drinking, speaking and acting, leave taking and discourse principles, dealing and attire, time and schedule keeping, etc. All these are detailed in the *Sunnah* and *Sirah* of the Prophet (ﷺ), who was sent to perfect good ethics and behaviour.

Religious laws and rulings were revealed in a complementary fashion and in an edifice of sound moral code, norms of conduct and high sensibility.

O Muslims!

High moral standards, propriety and decency of manners are among the greatest favours Allah has bestowed on His servants. Consideration for other people's feelings and principles of dealing with others are among the great religious aims.

Propriety is an instance of gentle behaviour and a superb act of benevolence. It embodies refinement, courtesy, good conduct, lofty behaviour and avoids offending words, deeds, or gestures and what may be embarrassing or harmful to others.

Cheerful people with amiable nature and smiling faces are liked everywhere as hearts tend to move closer to the humble. Meeting others with a smile, shaking hands with them and addressing them in kind and sweet words would certainly break the ice, and make them more than willing to accept your counsel, information, criticism or directives.

Brothers in Allah!

Propriety and good morals are signs of good faith and a banner of happiness that help one enjoy the pleasures of life and respect and please others. Bashfulness is, after all, a strand of faith.

Have you heard of anyone who outdid our Example, Master and Leader Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in good morals and propriety? Haven't you read in his *Sīrah* that a woman-slave used to take him by the hand wherever she wanted? He was the first to greet others and to stretch out his hand to shake theirs. He would wait for his interlocutor to take his hand away first or to move away from him. ***“The Prophet was never seen with his knee high in the presence of an interlocutor!”*** [Narrated by Tirmidhi]¹

Anas (رضي الله عنه) said: *“Whenever someone drew close to the Prophet (ﷺ) in order to whisper something in his ear, he would not withdraw until the whispering man himself did. His laughter was just a smile.”*

Dear Muslims!

Likewise, the commands, rulings, and directives of our faith are unbelievably gentle and fine. On surveying the great acts of worship in Islam, one may readily realize the strength of the worship-ethic rapport. The acts of worships are the corner stone of faith. Though different in form, they are definitely similar in content. They are the precursor to perfection, the threshold to purity and the incipient to benevolence.

Salat, for instance, shuns evil and sin; it is an incarnation of refinement and good behaviour requiring worshippers to take good care of their appearance and to wear perfume in preparation for prayer, to walk to the mosque in tranquility and dignity, to stand in straight lines, to fill the gaps between worshippers, avoid eating garlic or onion and all foul-smelling food before going to the mosque.

The Prophet (ﷺ) told the man who jumped ranks in the mosque, ***“Sit down! You have disturbed the others.”***

If you, servants of Allah, are seeking reward for your worship, you must refrain from harming your brothers (in faith).

Insofar as *Zakat* is concerned, Allah (ﷻ) says, ***“Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allāh for them. Verily! Your invocations are a source of security for them; and***

¹ It is considered rude to raise one's legs in the presence of an elder. It is a sign of disrespect. The hadith means that the Prophet (ﷺ) never insulted anyone by making this gesture. (Translator's note.)

Allâh is All-Hearer, All-Knower﴾ [at-Tawbah: 103]. You may wish to make your charity explicit or discreet depending on the situation, in consideration of the people’s dignity and feelings: ﴿**Kind words and forgiving of faults are better than Sadaqah (charity) followed by injury. And Allâh is Rich (Free of all needs) and He is Most-Forbearing.**﴾ [al-Baqarah: 263]

Charity, in Islam, is a broader concept than mere alms giving. Smiling at you brother (in faith), giving directions to someone who lost his way, removing harm from the road and guiding the blind are all acts of charity.

Fasting involves abandoning all forms of evil in words or deeds. The Prophet said, “**He who does not renounce evil words and deeds, Allah does not need his renunciation of food and drink.**” Fasting involves abandoning *laghu* (useless talk) and *rafath* (bad language or sexual intercourse with one’s wives). “**If someone called him names, he should answer him, ‘I am fasting’.**”

Hajj is the sustenance of piety. ﴿**The Hajj (pilgrimage) is (in) the well-known (lunar year) months (i.e. the 10th month, the 11th month and the first ten days of the 12th month of the Islâmic calendar, i.e. two months and ten days). So whosoever intends to perform Hajj therein (by assuming Ithrâm), then he should not have sexual relations (with his wife), nor commit sin, nor dispute unjustly during the Hajj**﴾ [al-Baqarah: 197]. In Hajj you have to observe tranquility and avoid exaggeration. Never cause your brother (in faith) any harm in congested places, or while leaving the *Mashâ`ir* (holy sites of hajj rituals), casting *jimâr* (small stones), circumambulating the *Ka`bah*, kissing the Black Stone or performing *sa`i* (hurrying between *Safa* and *Marwa* mounts seven times).

Dear Muslims!

Some worshippers –may Allah grant them success and accept their efforts– are unable to correlate the acts of good worship with those of good behaviour. You see them performing their *Salat* on time and observing the formal aspects of all their acts of worship. But alas! They commit acts that are contradictory with good manners. If one’s worship does not purify one’s behaviour; if one’s faith does not refine one’s ethics, one gains but very little. All Muslims are aware of the figurative meaning of the “*muflis*” (bankrupt). He is identified as the one who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasting, and *zakat*, but comes also while he has

insulted, slandered, consumed others' wealth unlawfully, shed blood, and beat others; then he will have to account for his misdeeds. So where are his good deeds?

Would anyone with a gloomy face, evil intentions, and aggressive looks look pious. ***“The three signs of the hypocrite are: telling lies, treachery and breaking promises. His Salat and fasting will not make him a Muslim.”*** [Authentic hadith]

One of the aims of worship is to ward off discord and depression of the souls. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, ***“Straighten your ranks, and be resilient vis-à-vis your brethren, and do not differ lest your hearts differ too”*** and ***“The faithful is judged by his good morals attaining the rank of a fasting and praying man.”*** [Narrated by Abu Dawud]

O Muslims!

Refined propriety and good manners should also be observed when having meals. One should not forget to wash one's hands before eating, eat from what is right in front of him, avoid blowing into hot food or breathing into the pitcher, refrain from uttering repulsive words and doing nasty things or gestures. Otherwise, one may eat what he likes from permissible food and wear garments that are agreeable to people.

When Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was invited to a man's house, he told his host, ***“You invited five of us, and this man is one of ours. You can either accept him or send him back.”*** ***“O Prophet of Allah, we accept him for your sake,”*** the host replied.

These are –by your Lord– true good manners; this is propriety in its most sublime image and meaning.

Other instances of high good manners and real propriety include manners of visiting and taking permission that apply to all, adults and children alike, such as knocking at the door gently and not standing right in front of it, taking permission is essentially a measure for protecting one's privacy and observing convenience when it comes to the visiting time: ***«And if you are asked to go back, go back, for it is purer for you»***[An-Nûr: 28]. It is also a measure to give a chance to the host to seat his guest inside his home wherever he wishes or wherever it is judged appropriate, depending on the situation, for hosts know better the short-comings (failings, defects) of their own houses. Similarly, it would be unbecoming of anyone to ask anyone else to leave their sitting place for them. By the same token, it would be highly recommended to make room for the other while in congregation, ***«And when you are told to rise up [for prayers, or Jihâd (holy fighting in Allah's cause), or for any other good deed], rise up»***[Al-Mujâdilâh: 11]. Moreover, no two should hold secret counsel without the permission of the third, for this would cause him discomfort, ***«And when the children***

among you come to puberty, then let them (also) ask for permission﴾[An-Nûr: 59], ﴿and those among you who have not come to the age of puberty ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions: before Fajr (morning) Salât (prayer), and while you put off your clothes for the noonday (rest), and after the 'Ishâ' (late-night) Salât (prayer).﴾[An-Nûr: 58]

With respect to manners in the context of meetings, consultation, and running sessions, the Qur'ân instructs us as follows: *﴿ The true believers are only those, who believe in (the Oneness of) Allâh and His Messenger (Muhammad (ﷺ)): and when they are with him on some common matter, they go not away until they have asked his permission. Verily those who ask your permission, those are they who (really) believe in Allâh and His Messenger. So if they ask your permission for some affairs of theirs, give permission to whom you will of them, and ask Allâh for their forgiveness. Truly, Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful﴾ [An-Nûr: 62]*

In order to ensure one's civility vis-a-vis one's neighbours, one is instructed not to look inside one's neighbour's home, or try to find out what he is carrying. Rather, one should avoid glancing at one's neighbour's wife and try to cover what is uncovered of his flaws.

It is only decent when calling on a sick person to sit for just a short while, make supplication to Allah to grant him good health and then leave; for visiting the sick is different from ordinary visiting.

Tactfulness, decency and propriety ought to be manifested in the way we drive our cars, park them, obey traffic rules, respect speed limits, use public facilities and protect and keep these facilities clean and well-maintained. We also have to remember the bounties Allah has bestowed upon us nowadays including the means of social communication. These should be properly used whether for conversing, sending and receiving messages.

One of the highest and most prominent signs of propriety and good manners is bashfulness; particularly when one abstains from doing what is wrong and feels above all that is inappropriate.

Consider, for instance, the following sublime image of the Prophet. Abu Said Al-Khudri (رضي الله عنه) says: "*The Prophet (ﷺ) was more bashful than the virgin in her private room, and if he ever saw anything he hated, we would know this by (looking at) his face.*" [Narrated by Muslim]

Yes, indeed, only people with good manners and propriety would feel embarrassed if ever thought by others to have committed wrongdoing; they would be keen to keep their reputation pure, unblemished and protected against rumours and suspicions.

These manners of conduct also include knowing people's rights and ranks in order to revere them and show them respect. We have to acknowledge the merits of each one of them; thus, a young boy should behave in a certain way with his elders, a student with his teacher, and a son with his father. The Sultan (ruler) as well as the 'ālim (scholar) have their respective positions and should be respected accordingly.

O Muslims!

These are certain forms of behavior and conduct that would reveal a man's good discretion, decency, etiquette, and taste. Wise men have said: "*merit is gained by reason and good manners not by origin or lineage; rather, if a person's lineage is low, his good manners lift him up.*"

Good manners are a means to every virtue and a pretext for every *Sharia*. Abu Ja'far Al-Mansour says: "*If you want to be praised profusely, then meet people with a smiling face.*"

Propriety, O servants of Allah, is not a weakness, for a generous well-respected man would rather lose his life than his self-respect; the wise man, in the presence of his fellow men, behaves properly and kindly; he controls his conduct and speaks measurably. However, in certain circumstances, fits of anger or passion would indicate a potential for nobility and generous nature.

A good-mannered person receives you generously by word and deed no matter how you approach him, for good words may be more effective than power and authority. Indeed, it an indication of good reason when one prefers listening to speaking.

I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan: **﴿And turn not your face away from men with pride, nor walk in insolence through the earth. Verily, Allāh likes not any arrogant boaster.﴾** [Luqmân: 18] **﴿And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the braying of the asses.﴾** [Luqmân: 19]

May Allah (ﷻ) benefit me and you with the great Qur'ān and with the guidance of Prophet Mohammed (ﷺ)! I say this and ask Allah's forgiveness for you and me and for all the Muslims! So ask for His forgiveness; He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful!

Part Two

Praise be to Allah! praise be to Allah Who raised the status of those of rank and prestige; I praise Him (ﷻ) and thank Him. By His mercy and grace, His wisdom and justice He runs His divine decrees (for all His creatures) and I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone with no associates. He creates whatever He wills and chooses and I bear witness that our Master and Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) is the Servant and Messenger of Allah (ﷻ), a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, the pure and Chosen One. may Allah send His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, and Mercy) and Peace upon him, his good and pure family, his good Companions, the *tabi'in* (the contemporaries of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ- after his death) and those who followed them in righteousness as long as the day and night alternate until the Day of Judgment!

O Muslims!

The helpless are those who fail to carry out self-control properly; the pitiful are those possessing bad temper and no sense of decency, let alone the harm and misery they bring upon themselves and the others. They would not respect the feelings of others and would never seek to avoid confrontations. Such are the insensible and the hot-tempered; those who would seek to unleash pain and expose others' defects and faults. Ibn Al-Qayyim describes such people thus: *"getting together with him (i.e. one of such people) is the fever of the soul; he's unbearable and hateful; he cannot say something useful and cannot listen properly in order to learn; in addition, he does not know his own self to give it its due worth."*

Gossip has its own noise that disappears gradually with maturity (right guidance); however, there is a group of people who take a central position in meetings and keep talking; their audience realizes that they do not make sense as they talk, that that have no sense of rationality or propriety. Rather, one might even suspect their sense of coherence. It is true that righteousness of words entails righteousness of heart. Verily, we seek refuge with Allah from those people who

set their tongues free to speak evil; they hunt for news, track people's failings; they are slanderers and backbiters: "***The most hateful man to Allah is the vehement disputer.***" [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]

The blight of the forbearing person is wrathfulness; and he who has ill manners loses his lineage and kinship. The alienated person is the one with no good manners, and the most evil of people in front of Allah on the Day of Judgment is he who was abandoned by people to avoid his filth and obscenity.

Thus, fear Allah! May Allah have mercy on you! Certainly, a gentleman does not wish to lose his morals along with those who have none. Indeed, we avoid only the impudent whose natural disposition is fierce and whose faces are shameless. ***«And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allâh) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness.»*** [Al-Furqan: 63]

This being said, I advise you to send your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy) and peace on the Mercy and Blessing Allah bestowed on you, your Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the Messenger of Allah, as Your Lord commanded you to do in His wise Book where He so truthfully and graciously said: ***«Allâh sends His Salât (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy) on the Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and also His angels (ask Allâh to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your Salât[1] on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islâmic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As-Salâmu 'Alaikum.»*** [Al-Ahzab: 56]

O Allah! Send Your *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Mercy), Peace and Blessing on Your Servant and Messenger, our Master and Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), the beloved and the Chosen One; on his virtuous and immaculate family and on his wives, the mothers of the believers! O Allah! We seek Your satisfaction with the four Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali, the Prophet's Companions, the *tabi'in* and those who followed them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment! O Allah! We seek Your Satisfaction with us as well, as You are Most Forgiving, Most Generous, and Most Beneficent!

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims, and fail polytheism and polytheists! O Allah! Let down tyrants and infidels and all other enemies of Islam!

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands, and set right our *Imams* and leaders! O Allah! Entrust our government to those who fear You and seek Your satisfaction! O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Grant our *Imam* and Leader a success of Your own! Honor him with Your obedience and make Your word the uppermost through him! Make him an asset to Islam and Muslims! Grant him sound health and wellness! Guide him, his deputy, his brothers and his aides to do what You love and please, and lead them to righteousness and piety!

O Allah! Help Muslim leaders to abide by Your Book and to follow the *Sunnah* of Your Prophet, Mohammad (ﷺ)! Make them a blessing on Your faithful, and unite them on the grounds of righteousness and truth! O Lord of the Worlds!

O Allah! Make for this *Ummah* a matter (an affair) of rationality (guidance) whereby the pious are honoured and the sinful are guided, and where virtue is promoted and vice is prevented! Verily, You are the Omniscient!

O Allah! Set right the conditions of Muslims, O Allah! Set right the conditions of Muslims, stop their bloodshed, give leadership to the best among them, unite their word on the Truth, the right guidance, and the *Sunnah*! Grant them victory over Your enemy and theirs!

O Allah! Save our brothers in Syria! O Allah! Save our brothers in Syria! O Allah! Unite them; spare their blood; heal their patients; bless the souls of their dead; and shelter their homeless! O Allah! Unite them and set right their affairs! O Allah! Turn their concerns and distress into relief, and their inflictions into wellbeing! O Allah! Help them defeat their enemy and Yours!

O Allah! Do punish the tyrants in Syria; O Allah! Do punish them as You are more than a match to them! O Allah disperse their gathering, scatter their unity, turn the tide against them, let their destruction be in their plotting! O You, the Strong, the Invulnerable!

O Allah! Do punish the usurpers among the Jews, O Allah! Do punish the Zionist usurpers and occupiers among the Jews, for You are capable of so doing! O Allah! Give them a taste of Your sturdiness that is so inevitably destined to strike the offenders! O Allah! We pray You to drive them off to their own detriment, and we seek refuge in You from their evils! O Allah disperse their gathering, scatter their unity, turn the tide against them, let their destruction be in their plotting! O You, the Strong, the Invulnerable!

﴿... Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!﴾ [Al-Baqarah: 201] ﴿Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.﴾ [Al-A'raf: 23]

O servants of Allah!

﴿Verily, Allâh enjoins Al-‘Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allâh Alone - Islâmîc Monotheism) and Al-Ihsân [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allâh, totally for Allâh’s sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin[1] (i.e. all that Allâh has ordered you to give them e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help), and forbids Al-Fahshâ’ (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false witness, to kill a life without right), and Al-Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islâmîc law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed.﴾ [Al-Nahl: 90]

So, remember Allah and He shall remember you, and be grateful to Him for His blessings and He shall give you more of them. *﴿... and the remembering (praising) of (you by) Allâh (in front of the angels) is greater indeed [than your remembering (praising) of Allâh in prayers. And Allâh knows what you do.﴾ [Al-‘Ankabut: 45].*

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