

Etiquettes of Social Life in the Light of the Quran and *Sunnah*

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This is a well-known fact that the Quran is a great book of guidance for the whole human beings in every sphere of life including social life. The *Ahadith* contain enough details on the teachings of the Prophet about this matter. The etiquettes of social life, which would be discussed here, are mainly related to entering one's house, offering *Salaam*, talking, going outside or walking in the way/road, putting on dress or *libas*, eating and drinking, cleanness and neatness (*taharat/nazafat*). With regard to the first issue, the Quranic directive is very clear that before entering one's house seeking permission from owner/occupant is necessary and that the best way of the same is to offer *Salaam* and to return back without any hesitation, in case of no response even after the third *Salaam*, as has been *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*Mukhtasar Zad al Ma 'ad*, Urdu Tr. by Sayeed Ahmad Qamruzzaman, Riyaz, 1417 A.H.p.158). (In the changed situation, other customary means of seeking permission may be adopted). While meeting any one any where, offering *Salaam* is an important teaching of the Quran and *Sunnah*. In this regard, it is also desirable that in responding to one's *Salaam* it is virtuous to add some more words of prayer, such as *wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuhu, wa Maghfiratuhu*. In the same way, meeting happily, talking gently, speaking in low voice and humbleness (*tawazu*) in behaviour is demanded from the believers by the Quran and *Sunnah*. While sitting in the *majlis* or gathering, one should be generous in giving space for others and that he should not mind if he is asked to stand up and change his place due to requirement, as has been taught by the Quran (*Al- Nur/27-29*). Moderation in walking (*qasd fi al-mashy*),

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exhibiting modesty, lowering gaze and keeping away (while walking) from mingling with woman are some of the clear directives of the Quran. Lowering gaze during walking is a common directive for men and women, but the latter were further required to not to display their ornamentation (*zinat*) in public and to cover their body properly (*Al-Nur/30-31*). Interpreting this verse, the commentators generally pointed out that the display of *zinat* may be in dress as well as by jewelries and that main objective of this directive is that while going outside, the women should keep themselves away from all those actions which may excite the sentiments of people and may endanger their chastity (*ismat*) and honour. In some of the Traditions, the Prophet has very clearly directed that while trading path, men and women should walk separately and it is better for women to walk on the corner side of the way or road (*Sunan Abu Daud, Kitab al- Adab, Bab al- mashy fi al- tariq*).

A very important etiquette in daily life which was emphasized again and again in the Quran and *Sunnah* is taking care and respect of others and not to consider any one mean or treat him scornfully in their meeting, associating, talking, and socio-economic dealing with each other. In the same way, people are strictly prohibited to make joke or fun of others, to defame or call one with bad name or title. Since this is generally done by a person under the whim that he is respectable and other has lower position, the Quran reminds him that he should think over that the target of his jesting may be better or more virtuous (*khair*) than him (*Al-Hujurat/11*).

Cleanness of body, dress, house, surrounding areas and that of work place is very much desirable in view of the Quran as it declares that Allah Almighty likes those persons who maintain cleanness (*Al- Baqarah/122; Al- Taubah/108*). This is well-known that *taharah* is called by the *Hadith* as '*shatr al Iman*' (half part of the belief). This is recorded by Hazrat Sayeed Ibn Musayyib that the Prophet is reported to have said that 'Oh! believers! Keep your body clean as well as your courtyard (*afanyah*)'. (*Jami-i- Tirmezi, Abwab al-Istizan wa al- Adab, Bab la- Nazafah*). This is further reported that whenever the Prophet saw any dirty thing or filth anywhere he disliked very much. He used to direct his companions to remove or rub the same and sometimes he himself did this noble work. if any one went ahead to remove or rub filth he appreciated him/her very much (*Sunan-i- Nasai, Kitab al- Masjid, Bab Takhliq al- Masjid; Shibli Nomani, Sirat al Nabi, Darul Musannefin, Azamgarh, 2003, 2/162*). Besides, he used to express displeasure at those people who put on dirty clothes or whose hair were scattered and covered with dust and urged them to change their behaviour.

The issue of dress has great importance for men and women, as this is part and parcel of their civilized life. The Quran and *Hadith* stand for simplicity, soberness and cleanses of dress without specification of its category. In this regard, the Quran's stand is very much clear from the declaration that the dress (*libas*) is means of covering body as well as its *zinat* (*Al-A'raf/26*). But at the same time, the Quran states that the dress of piety (*libas al- taqwa*) is far better for human being. It means that in using the dress as *zinat* (ornamentation), one should not exceed limit in such a way that *zinat* negates morality and *haya*. In other words, one should not use such dress which does not serve the purpose of *satr* and the person appears to be just without dress. The main addressees of the last directive are women, as this becomes clear from a *Hadith* (*Sahih Muslim, Kitab al- Libas, Bab al- Nisa' al- Kaasiyat al- Aariyat*). It is noteworthy that the relevant Quranic verses and *Ahadith* give three important points about the etiquettes of dress: *libas* should be *satir* (covering whole body), not so colourful or glittering that it may excite sentiments of onlookers and there should be no element of extravagance and pride. In fact, the Quran does not forbid fine and fancy dress. What is prohibited is pomp and show, feeling proud on wearing costly/fancy dress. The Prophet is reported to have said: 'eat and drink, give charity and put on dress, provided there is no extravagance and show of proud behaviour (*Sunan Ibn Majah, Kitab al- Libas, Bab Ilbas ma sheta ma akhtaka Israfun au Makhilah*). Some *ulama* of modern period have added that men should also not wear clothes of women and vice versa, as this behaviour reflects sick mindedness.

As regards etiquettes of eating and drinking, the basic principle given by the Quran is to use all the lawful things, but not to indulge in extravagance and wastage, as this is disrespect to the benediction of Allah (*kufran-i- nimat*), ingratitude to Him and denial of the rights of poor and needy persons which is never liked by Him (*Al- A'raf/31*). In fact, this principle is applicable to one's own meal as well as in serving the same to others.

Secondly, while eating, one should be full of the sense of gratitude to Allah Almighty and free from the feeling of pride and arrogance. According to the *Hadith*, it is prohibited to eat resting on any thing (like pillow or wall)(as this, if not due to disability, is generally considered a sign of being proud)(*Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al- Arimah, Bab al- Akl Muttakian*). The Prophet is reported to have said ' I take meal like a humble servant (*abd*) of Allah Almighty (Muhammad Farooq Khan, *Kalam-i- Nubuwwat*, New Delhi, 2011, 3/285-286, Note No.7) There are three essential etiquettes of eating and drinking in Islam: reciting *Bismillah* in the beginning, eating/drinking by right hand and taking meal from the front of one's plate or

tusht. Significantly enough, these directives are given in a single *Hadith* narrated by Hazart Umar Ibn Abi Salmah (*Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al- Tasmiah wa al-Akl bi al- Yamin*). Besides, there is another important issue to be examined that is eating and drinking in the standing position (which is nowadays is a common practice in feasts and social gathering). This is not allowed in Islam, as it is clearly stated in a *Hadith* recorded in *Sahih Bukhari (Kitab al- Ashribah, Bab Karahiat al- Shurb Qaima.)*. Significantly enough, an eminent *mufassir* of modern period is of the opinion that the prohibition of eating in standing position may be also inferred from a Quranic verse (*Muhammad/12*) which states that unbelievers (*kuffar*) take taste of the worldly things and eat like animals. The commentator thought that, apart from eating aimlessly and without any sense of gratitude to the Sustainer/Provider of subsistence (*Raziq*), another point of similarity between them is eating standing. It means that this is very much disliked and disapproved by the Quran. (*Tafsir-i- Ahsan al-Bayan, Urdu Tr.: Muhammad Junagarhi/Commentary: Salahuddin Yusuf, Farid Book Depo, New Delhi, n.d., p. 1190*). These are some important aspects of the social etiquettes which are required to be observed by Muslims to make the social life more pleasant and healthy, as acting upon the teachings of the Quran and *Sunnah* always brings good results.

