

Etiquettes of Seeking Knowledge

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Consider the statements of Allāh, “And whoever exalts the Sacred Matters of Allāh, then that is better for him with his Lord” [22:30] and “And whosoever exalts the Symbols of Allāh, then it is truly from the *taqwā* of the hearts.” [22:32]

From the Sacred Matters of Allāh and from His Signs are knowledge and its people. Whosoever exalts the *wahy* (revelation) and its people – without exceeding the limits – then it is an indication of him pleasing his Lord, and it is an indication of *taqwā*.

Ādāb (etiquettes) of worship are given such precedence and importance that Allāh taught the *ādāb* of seeking knowledge, before bestowing the actual knowledge itself (*wahy*). He taught purity, travelling to one’s *shaykh*, lowering one’s wings to him, respect of places of worship, and most importantly giving the due Rights of the Message, and the conveyer. All of these *ādāb* were taught through *ilhām* (inspiration), *fiṭrah*, and the sound intellect. *Wahy* only perfected these *ādāb*.

For example, before the *wahy* itself is revealed, Jibrīl, with the Angels of the Heavens, bow in *ruk’ū* front of Allāh, performing *tasbīh*, exalting and glorifying Him for a period only Allāh knows. After which, Jibrīl is commanded to raise his head, and then Allāh reveals whatever He Wills to reveal. Here, one can clearly infer that Allāh taught the Angels the *ādāb* and the pre-requisites of *how* to attain the *wahy*: assembling front of Him, bowing in submissiveness, exalting and glorifying Him *jalla wa ‘alā*.

Similarly, Mūsā *‘alayhis-salām* was inspired to travel and meet Allāh. He was commanded to take his shoes off before entering the sacred valley and to listen attentively. He was also commanded to travel and study under Khadir, and obey his commands for the specific knowledge which he (Mūsā) did not have even though Mūsā—overall—is far higher in status and virtue than Khadir.

Also, Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* was inspired to climb to Mount Ḥirā, and to exalt Allāh and worship Him therein, and eventually submit himself to Jibrīl’s commands of *Iqra’* – for travelling and submitting to Jibrīl’s commands was in reality travelling and submitting to Allāh. In both of our beloved Messengers’ stories and footsteps, the *ādāb* of travelling to the conveyer, submitting to him, lowering the wings front of him, respecting the place of worship, and so forth are given and taken.

Amongst mankind were those who deserved to be entrusted with the *wahy*. They were only entrusted with it after having perfected these *ādāb* through the most life experiences.

In short, the creation was taught *ādāb* either through *ilhām*, *fiṭrah* or sound intellect. Even the animals and insects were taught *ādāb* through the inspiration of instincts. As for mankind and jinn, for them, *ādāb* was taught through the aforementioned, and the *wahy* only perfected it, “I have been sent to perfect noble manners.” [Aḥmad, Muwaṭṭa, and others (*ṣaḥīh*)]

Thereby, inner and outer noble manners are taught before, and the *wahy* only perfects it.

Allāh did not only send a Spiritual Message through which mankind's and jinn's manners are perfected, but He also sent a physical, walking definition of Perfect Manners and Characteristics. He is an excellent exemplary, not only for Mankind and Jinn to obey and to follow, but moreover an admiration for the noble Angels! However, far greater and honourable is the affirmation and testimony Allāh, "And verily, You (O Muḥammad) are upon an Exalted and High Standard Character." [68:4]

He is *raḥmah* for the worlds, *bashīr* for the *muslimīn*, and *nazīr* for the *kāfirīn*. He is *imām* of the *muttaqīn*, *qā'id* of the *mujāhidīn*, and a tranquillity of the eye for the *muḥsinīn*. *Ṣalawātullāhi wa salāmuḥu 'alayhi*.

Know: It is impossible for an individual to manifest his character fully and perfectly *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. However, it is possible to do so as a group. A true group of followers and 15th generational students of his, whom are individually lofty in etiquette, are like one body and thus become representative of one body: one man and his exalted character – Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abdul Muṭṭalib *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.

There is no individual worship and no communal worship except that there are *ādāb* beautifying them. There are *ādāb* before, during and after an *'ibādah*. Take for example the *'ibādah* of *ṣalāh*: inner and outer purification and *sakīnah* are *ādāb* before it, whilst *khush'ū* and its inner and outer manifestations are *ādāb* during it, and finally *isthighfār* and *adhkār* are *ādāb* after it.

The *'ibādah* of Seeking Knowledge is like any other *'ibādah*. Just as *ṣalāh* and *jihād* are deeds of worship which have rules and regulations governing and beautifying them, so too, does Seeking Knowledge. These rules and regulations are deduced from the *fiṭrah*, sound intellect and the agreed upon Principles and Foundations of the *Sharī'ah*. These rules and regulations are overall referred to as *ādāb*. *Ādāb* consists of pre-requisites, obligations, recommendations, dislikes, prohibitions and nullifications.

From the pre-requisites of this great *'ibādah*, is to seek it intending and yearning the Pleasure of Allāh *jalla wa 'alā*, the Home of the Hereafter, and being determined upon it. And that which contradicts this, is from its nullifications.

From the obligations of this *'ibādah* is seeking it with the assistance of Allāh, taking notes in the classes, memorising and revising them. For how can one expect to acquire and guard Knowledge without any of these four matters? From its obligations is to act upon it. From its obligations is to call to it. From its obligations is constantly being grateful for it to Allāh. From its obligations is to be patient with the teacher, for he will test his students, and will seek the means by which to purify them.

And from the prohibitions of this *'ibādah* is holding rancour and malice towards Knowledge and its People. Indeed, its People are the Scholars, the Teachers and the Students. The Seeker of Knowledge must love, care and protect them. He is to think good of them. He is to support them. He is to work and cooperate with them. From its prohibitions is attributing statements to the teacher that which did not come from him.

From its prohibitions is going to extremes in venerating him. What can form part of its prohibitions are to abandon his general and specific Right, Sincere Advice, to come late or be absent without justification.

From the recommendations of this *'ibādah* is arriving early to the lessons as Mūsā said to his Lord, "...and I hastened (came early), so that You may be pleased (with me)." [20:84]. From the recommendations is to prepare the place of study for the teacher and the students. From the recommendations of this *'ibādah* is escorting the teacher to and from the classes.

From the dislikes of this *'ibādah* is to sit far away from the teacher, stretching ones legs towards him or leaning on the walls. From the dislikes of this *'ibādah* is to leave the gathering (even for a short period) whilst the lesson is taking place without requesting permission from the teacher or at least having him informed when the opportunity arises.

And these are but some of the *ādāb* of the Seeker of Knowledge. Indeed, the adoption of these *ādāb* are part of perfecting ones character about which the Messenger of Allāh *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* said, "I have been sent to perfect good manners," and specifically it is the perfecting of this fundamental and crucial *'ibādah*, upon which all other Deeds of Worship are built and beautified.

Through the *ādāb* of *fiṭrah* and *wahy*, one perfects his character with Allāh, with the creation, and with oneself, and thereby, is elevated amongst the Best Students of Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, "You'll find that the people are (like) metals (of different origins and natures), those whom were the best (in Character) *pre-Wahy* period are also the best in Islām, provided they gain comprehensive Islāmic knowledge..." [Bukhāri & Muslim]

So whoever yearns and intends good for himself with his Lord, the *taqwā* of the hearts, and becoming from the Best Students of Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, must exalt this Sacred Sign of Allāh by beautifying himself with these noble *ādāb*.

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وصلى الله وسلم على نبينا محمد