

Humility When Speaking

(Verses 2 – 5)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرٍ بَعْضُكُمْ لِيَعْضُ اَنْ تَحْبَطَ اَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغْضِبُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ فُلُوْبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادَوْنَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُّرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“O’ you who have true faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet (Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and do not be loud in speaking to him (as you speak to one another) for (if you do this) then all of your (good) deeds will be made devoid of all virtue while you do not realize it. The hearts of those who lower their voices in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) are tested by Allah through consciousness (of Allah) – they will have forgiveness and a great reward (given to them by Allah). Unquestionably most of those who call upon you (O’ Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) from behind the private chambers (of your house) do not have any understanding. Had these people exercised patience until you (Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) had come out (from your house) then it would have been better for them and Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.”

One of the most important discussions in the science of Akhlaq relates to the method of speaking with people and the way that one interacts with individuals of various classes and strata, and in addition, observing the principles and manners of etiquette related to other people.

There are even some thinkers in the West that have carried out research projects and studies and have developed ways to influence people. These researchers have written manuals and books in relation to how people should live with others. It is interesting to note that most of the information that these experts have compiled have actually already been explicitly mentioned in the Islamic narrations!

Unfortunately however, our talented writers and scholars do not present the ethical teachings that are found in the Islamic sources in a way that is acceptable to the present day, coupled with practical examples for the younger generation – who are thirsty to hear these sorts of ethical teachings.

Our teachings (on this issue) are not presented as some of the scholars want the people to imagine that this information is based on the initiative (of research) of the Westerners. Rather, the youth should know that in this area of discussion, the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and his successors have given us a great deal of guidance.

The writer and great narrator of hadith, Shaikh Hurr al-'Amuli (may Allah be pleased with him) in his book *Wasail ash-Shi'a*¹, has narrated numerous ahadith concerning the responsibility that a Muslim has and the way that he must interact with other people. He has narrated traditions from the Noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon all of them) under the topic of *Etiquette of Social Intercourse while Travelling and at Home*.²

The method of interaction of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) with others around him is the best guide (for us) and provides us with the greatest assistance in this area of life. Briefly in this section, we present some examples of the behaviour and mode of interaction of the great Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) with those around him.

1. He was the first in greeting other people.
2. If he wished to speak to a person while in the streets or in a gathering, he would not speak to them while looking out of the corner of his eyes. Rather, he would turn his entire body in the direction of that person and then speak to him and while speaking, he always had a smile on his face.
3. If a person made an error while speaking, he would not call him to account for what was said.
4. No one was ever deprived of his good demeanour and etiquette.
5. If any of his companions were not present (at a gathering), then he would immediately ask about that person.
6. He respected people of all classes and ranks such that each and every person that met him felt as if he was the most honoured person in the sight of the Prophet.
7. Whenever he was in a gathering, he never chose a specific place to sit, rather, he sat in whatever spot was empty.
8. He fulfilled the needs and requests of those who came to him and if he was not able to, then he would at least make them pleased with a kind word.
9. He would bring a special sort of modest, dignity, truthfulness and pleasantness to a gathering and he

never raised his voice while speaking.

10. He was tolerant of bad etiquette from those who did not know better and those who were strangers and if someone performed an act that was not in accordance with his nature, the Prophet would not think anything of it.

11. He respected the elders and caressed the young children.

12. He spoke very little and never cut short the speech of anyone else.

13. He never reproached anyone.

14. He stayed away from things that had no worth or value to them and listened attentively to the speech of other people.

In addition to these, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) had many other traits – the most praiseworthy and heavenly characteristics have been mentioned in books on the life of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the history of Islam.

A Rough, Rude Society

Such a kind, gentle and broad-minded soul (that of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was enraptured within the hearts of the people who were spiritually and practically distanced from the beneficial ethical traits.

While in the presence of the Noble Messenger (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), people saw that he spoke in such a manner that one would think that they were speaking to a person who walks around the city streets and the market place (one who was not a Prophet).

In the ninth year of the Hijrah which is known as ‘Amul Wufud (The Year of the Delegations), various groups and assemblies of people from the tribes that lived around Madinah made their way to the city to accept the teachings of Islam. They would stand at the door of the Prophet’s house which was not too far away from the Masjid (an-Nabi) and at various times of the day would yell out:

يَا مُحَمَّدَ أَخْرُجْ!

“O’ Muhammad! Come out (of your house)! ”³

Not only did this act of theirs disturb the resting period of the Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), but in addition, it was also a form of disrespect to this noble personality. It is for this reason that in the four verses under discussion from the Qur'an, such people have been referred to as having little understanding and being simple minded.

Not only was the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) offended by the way that both the strangers and the desert `Arabs who were acquainted with him interacted with him, rather even some of his own close companions did not observe the proper etiquette while they were in his presence and were speaking to him.

Bukhari, the well-known narrator of hadith of the Ahl as-Sunnah has written:

“A group of people on behalf of the tribe of Bani Tamim were proceeding to enter the city of Madinah. Separately, Abu Bakr and `Umar selected a person to go and meet the people of the tribe, however a difference arose between the two of them on who should be chosen. This resulted in a quarrel which escalated to yelling and shouting while in the presence of the Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), which upset him quite a bit.

In order that this type of undesired scene would never be played out again while in the presence of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), the second and third verses of Surah al-Hujurat were revealed and these actions were classified as being so heinous, that one’s good actions would be completely removed.”⁴

In essence, we must look at why such a form of disrespect while in the presence of the Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) would result in the loss of the reward of one’s good deeds? The answer to this question is due to the fact that the honour and respect that is physically manifested and even the way that one speaks while in the presence of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) is an indication of the respect that one has deep inside his soul for the Prophet of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny).

It goes without saying that the method of dealing with others and our actions with them are the outcome of our beliefs and the level of faith that we possess (in our hearts). With this said, when an undesired act is done and attention is not paid to a great personality such as the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), then this shows that deep inside ones’ heart, one does not pay attention to the Prophet (Glorified and Exalted is He) or the other noble figures of the religion.

It must be noted that this form of respect is not limited to the period of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) when he was alive, rather, after the Messenger of Allah (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) has passed away, he must still be respected.

There is an event in history which took place after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan ibn `Ali al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him) where `Ayesha binte Abu Bakr (the wife of the Prophet Muhammad) started to scream and yell while near the grave of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny). She started to call upon others to assist her (to prevent the burial of Imam Hasan ibn `Ali, peace be upon him) near his grandfather and thus was successful in her mission. In order to quiet `Ayesha down, Imam Husain ibn `Ali (peace be upon him) recited this verse of the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

“O’ You who have true faith! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet (Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny).”

The Imam (peace be upon him) then continued by saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَمَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمْوَالًا مَا حَرَمَ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدٌ

“Certainly Allah has forbidden the believer to act in relation to the deceased in any way which was prohibited to act during his lifetime.”⁵

The scholars of the Qur'an have concluded from this verse that this type of respect is not related only to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) – rather, interaction with all of the leaders of Islam: the 'Ulama (Scholars), teachers, one's father and mother and in general, all of the elders must also be dealt with in this same form of respect.

This point must especially be noted when one is in the Haram (sanctuary) and the sacred thresholds where these personalities are buried and thus, any sort of yelling or screaming must not be performed in such places either.

1. Volume 7, Page 398 – 621.

2. The topic of this section of his compilation is “Ahkam al-`Ashrahtu Fis Safar wa al-Hadhr.”

3. Nur al-Thaqalain, Volume 5, Page 80.

4. Al-Taj, Volume 4, Page 213 & 214.

5. Nur al-Thaqalain, Volume 5, Page 80 & 81.

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