

Social Manners (Part 2)

A beggar stopped the Prophet's wife Aisha (RA) and she gave him a piece of dry bread. At another time, a properly dressed, well-groomed man asked her for food. She let him sit and offered him a meal. When asked about that, she replied that the Prophet (PBUH) said: '**Treat people according to their status.**'

So, the Sunnah is to start according to the following order of merits: age, knowledge, social status, lineage, veterans, generosity or similar virtues. Further, the Sunnah of hospitality, is to start with the most **prominent**, then to move to those on the right in order to harmonize the custom of starting on the right with the custom of starting with people of virtue.

Some people who misunderstand the real meaning of some texts of the Sunnah claim that the Sunnah is to start with those on your right whoever they are. They base this on Hadiths that stress starting from the right. But this is only true when the group is in all-ways equal in character, status or age. However, if one of them is distinguished with a merit such as old age, then the Sunnah is to start with this person.

Imam Ibn Rushd said: 'As a rule, if the status of those present is equal, one should start on the right, as with every desirable act. However, if a scholar, an honorable person or an elder is present, the Sunnah is to start with such a person and then move to his or her right in a counter clockwise fashion. The Messenger of Allah was offered milk mixed with water while a Bedouin was sitting on his right, and to his left, was sitting Abu Bakr. The Prophet drank some and handed it over to the Bedouin saying, 'From the right, then to the right.'

Do not proceed to the left, even if the person to the left is of a higher status, unless those on the right agree to pass their turn. The Messenger (PBUH) was sitting with elders on his left and a young man on his right. He was brought a drink. After drinking, he asked the young man: 'Would you give me the permission to pass it to those? The boy answered: 'By Allah no. I would not favour anyone with my share of your drink.' The Prophet willingly put the drink in the child hand indicating that it is his right.

The Indian scholar, Al-Mubarkfuri, mentioned...on this hadith 'the server should be the last one to drink,' that..., '**This indicates that the server should delay his drink until all the guests are served.** The same applies when fruits are being served. The most notable should be served first, and then those of the right until everyone is served.'

Al-Minawi said 'This implies that the Sunnah is to continue serving drinks and food with those on the right of the most noble person even if that person happened to be less important than the person on the left.'

A Hadith in Sahih Muslim reinforces this rule of serving the elder or the most noble first, and then those on his right. 'The Prophet visited my father and we served him

with food made of dates and butter. Then he was brought dates, and he ate it and threw the pit using his middle and forefingers. Then he was brought a drink from which he drank and passed it to his right.'

However, if someone asks for a drink, they have the right to the request before anybody else regardless of age or status, and the round should proceed with those on their right. If this person notices someone older or of higher status showing desire for the drink, he, or she may willingly give up his, or her right in favor of that person. When preferring others to yourself, you have practiced the Islamic manner of unselfishness, and you will achieve great virtue, and honor and gain great rewards.

To respect, obey and give precedence to the elderly is an old and established Arab custom. Here I would like to quote in full the advice of Qais bin Asem AL-Tamimi, a great companion. On his death bed, Qais advised his children to make their elders/seniors their leaders from whom they will also receive valuable advice and wisdom all revolving around Islamic behavior.

Qais bin Asem was one of the leaders of Tamim. Famous for his eloquent speeches, the Prophet gave him the title 'Master of the desert dwellers.' He was a wise and mild-mannered person. On the 9th year of Al-Hijra, he came to visit the Prophet in Medina with a delegation of his tribe Bani Tamim. When the Prophet saw him he said 'This is the master of the desert dwellers.' He spent his last years in Basra where he died in the 20th year of Al-Hijra.

He was very patient and lenient. Ahnaf bin Qais, a famous Arab, was asked, 'Who taught you **patience and leniency**?' He answered, 'Qais bin Asem. Once I saw him sitting in his courtyard talking to his guests and his tribe. A man tied-up in ropes and a dead body were brought to him. He was told, 'This is your nephew. He killed your son.' Qais bin Asem remained calm and continued his conversation until he was finished. Then turning to his nephew, he said to him: 'You have done the worst. You have sinned toward your Lord, you harmed your relative, and murdered your cousin. You killed yourself and weakened your tribe.' He called another son and said to him, 'My son, go to your cousin and untie him, go to your brother and bury him, and go to his mother and give her a hundred camels to compensate her for the loss of her son.'

Al-Hasan Al-Basri who met him and studied at his hand said that when Qais bin Asem was dying, he called his thirty-three children, and advised them as follows:

'Oh my sons, fear Allah and remember what I will say, for no one will give you more sincere advice. When I die, make your seniors your leaders. Do not make your juniors your leaders for if you promote your seniors you will maintain your father's memory. Do not make your juniors your leaders for if you do so people will not only disrespect your seniors, but will look down at you. Do not wail on my death for I heard the Prophet forbidding wailing. Look after your wealth for it enlightens the generous and obviates the need to be mean. Do not beg people for that is the worst of wealth. Avoid bad traits which may please you once, but displease you many times.'

Qais then called for his **quiver**, and asked his eldest son, Ali, to take out an arrow. He then asked him to break it which he did. He then asked him to break two arrows and this he did. He then asked his son to bundle thirty arrows with a tie and break them all, but his son could not. He said, 'My sons, you will be strong if united and weak if separated.' Then he composed the following poem:

Glory is what the truthful father built and which was maintained by the children.
Glory, bravery and leniency are best adorned with chastity and generosity
Thirty you are, my sons, in face of calamities and trouble
You are like thirty arrows bundled in a strong tie
It will not be broken, but once separated will be easily broken
Your elders, your best mannered, should be your leaders
Your young should be protected and nurtured until your youngest matures.

MANNERS WITH PARENTS

Observe complete respect and reverence to your father and mother, for they are the most worthy of your consideration. Al-Bukhari and Muslim reported that a man asked the Prophet (PBUH): 'Oh Messenger of Allah, who is the most worthy of my best conduct?' He answered: 'Your mother! Your mother! Your mother! Then your father, then the next, and the next.'

Hisham bin 'Urwa narrated that his father told him that Abu Hurairah (RA) saw a man walking ahead of another. He asked him: 'How is this man related to you?' 'He is my Father,' the man answered. Abu Hurairah told him: 'Do not walk ahead of him, do not sit until he sits, and do not call him by his name.'

'While Imam Malik was reading his hadith book to me, he suddenly stood up for a long while, then he sat again. He was asked why, and he answered: 'My mother came down asking me something. Since she was standing I stood up respectfully, when she went, I sat back down.'

The revered follower Tawoos bin Kisan said: 'It is part of the Sunnah to respect four persons: **a scholar, an elder, a leader, and a father**. It is considered rude that a man call his father by his name.' At the end of his book of Malkite Fiqh Al-Kafi, Imam Bin 'Abdul Al-Barr said:

'Kindness to the parents is an obligatory, duty and by the grace of Allah it is an easy matter. Kindness means to be humble with them, to speak to them nicely, to look at them with love and respect, to speak in a mild tone that does not surpass theirs unless they are hard of hearing, to give them complete access to your own wealth, and to offer them the best of your food and drink.'

It is part of the Sunnah to respect which four persons?

Why Imam Malik stood up while reading?

Explain the story of Qais and the quiver (arrows)

Prophet (PBUH) said: '**Treat people according** _____.'

The server should delay his drink until _____.

When serving people, what order should we maintain?