

ETIQUETTE IN A GATHERING OF KNOWLEDGE

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الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ. وَنَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّهِ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ،

فَيَا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ، اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ أَوْصِيَكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ بِتَقْوَى اللّٰهِ، فَقَدْ فَازَ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Let us increase our righteousness to Allah the Almighty by doing all that He prescribes and leaving all that He prohibits. May we be blessed by Allah the Almighty in this life and the hereafter.

Dear blessed brothers and sisters,

Allah the Almighty created human beings as the best of creations. One of the reasons for the nobility of mankind is due to knowledge. From the very beginning of Prophet Adam's creation, Allah the Almighty taught him knowledge and the names of objects, to the point that the angels were commanded to prostrate to him as a sign of respect. Such is the greatness of knowledge; its gatherings are honored, and those who seek, pursue, and spread it are blessed. Allah the Almighty says in chapter 58 (surah al-Mujadalah) verse 11:

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَقَسَّعُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

Which means: “O believers! When you are told to make room in gatherings, then do so. Allah will make room for you ‘in His grace’. And if you are told to rise, then do so. Allah will elevate those of you who are faithful, and ‘raise’ those gifted with knowledge in rank. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.”

Dear brothers and sisters,

However, knowledge can also lead humans toward destruction if it is used to threaten well-being or harm the environment. For this reason, scholars unanimously agree that it is crucial for a person to possess good manners and noble character before embarking on the pursuit of knowledge. Abdullah bin Mubarak once advised:

وَكَاثُوا يَطْلُبُونَ الْأَدَبَ قَبْلَ الْعِلْمِ

Which means: “They would learn manners first, then knowledge.”

In a well-known hadith, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was approached by Sayyidina Jibril (Gabriel) Alaihissalam who appeared in human form dressed in pure white and clean garments to teach the meanings of faith (*iman*), submission (*Islam*), and excellence (*ihsan*). Sayyidina Jibril Alaihissalam sat close to the Prophet (pbuh), symbolizing the importance of face-to-face learning (*talaqqi*) and the close bond between teacher and student. The dialogue between Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Sayyidina Jibril Alaihissalam illustrates

the significance of showing proper etiquette toward one's teacher by speaking respectfully and humbly to those who possess greater knowledge.

Thus, we are taught to uphold proper etiquette in gatherings of knowledge—whether in mosques, prayer halls (suraus), classrooms, lecture halls, or elsewhere. In the traditional pondok (Islamic boarding school) education system, students are required to learn manners first, as emphasized in the book *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Sheikh Az-Zarnuji. This book stresses the importance of sincere intention in learning solely for the sake of Allah the Almighty, seeking happiness in the hereafter, eliminating ignorance, reviving the religion, and preserving Islam through knowledge.

In addition, for a teacher who wishes to teach, it is essential that his/her delivery is based on knowledge he/she truly possess. A teacher must prepare thoroughly before teaching, such as by studying the works of reputable scholars, rather than speaking aimlessly without references or reliable sources. The etiquette of delivering knowledge to engage the audience effectively must be upheld without denying the need for humor, enthusiasm, and energetic presentation provided it remains within the boundaries permitted by Islamic law. One must not turn a gathering of knowledge into a platform for spreading hatred, falsehoods, or seeking fame. Ibn Umar Radiallahu Anhu said:

مَا أَخْرَجَنِي إِلَّا الْقَاصُّ وَلَوْلَاهُ لَمَا خَرَجْتُ.

Which means: *“I do not leave the mosque except after listening to the storytellers’ sermons. If they were not there, I would not leave the mosque.”*

In Sunan Tirmidhi, al-‘Irbad bin Sariyah narrated a powerful hadith:

“The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us a clear lesson, causing our tears to flow and our hearts to tremble.”

Dear brothers and sisters,

Nowadays, there are individuals who lack proper knowledge yet boldly present themselves as religious teachers or scholar whether in sermons or especially on social media platforms like TikTok and Facebook. They go as far as spreading incorrect religious teachings, even lying in the name of religion, just to gain likes and shares. There are also those who falsely claim to have studied under renowned sheikhs, at Islamic boarding schools (pondok), or prestigious universities. Muslims must be cautious not to be influenced by such deceivers. Instead, seek out a mursyid (qualified spiritual guide); a teacher who is certified and has deeply studied religious knowledge according to the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah.

Dear brothers and sisters,

In conclusion, let us all:

1. enliven gatherings of knowledge and uphold proper etiquette within them whether as a teacher, student, or listener.
2. use Mosques and prayer halls to organize comprehensive gatherings of knowledge that cover the fundamentals of religion, such as the study of

the Qur'an, Hadith, Sirah (Prophetic biography), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Aqidah (creed), and Akhlaq (morals and ethics).

3. Seek guidance from any recognized educational institution or program to gain deeper religious knowledge preferably through talaqqi (direct transmission) or face-to-face learning.

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يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَانِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.