

The Manners of Speaking in Islam

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ABSTRACT: Some Islamic teachings are related to the manners or rules of etiquette, one of the more important of which is the manners of speaking. "Speaking", from an Islamic perspective, can be examined from two aspects: the content and the form. The first is related to the amount of a speaker's knowledge and intelligence, and the latter in his suavity and decorum. Concerning Islamic manners of speaking, some topics are discussed as how to speak with God, with saints (specially the Prophet and his progeny), with those who have guardianship over us (like father, mother, and the teacher), and with common people. This paper proceeds to the most important of them including subjects like: speaking calmly and softly, starting a conversation with the name of Allah, avoiding verbal roughness, idle talking, backbiting, and flattery.

KEYWORDS: courtesy (*adab*), speaking, right speech, whispering, veracity/truthfulness.

Introduction

If we divide all the Islamic teachings, we can put "social manners" in a group next to the other groups like principle of faith, worship, social obligations, transaction rules, ethics, and Islamic rites. Most scholars discuss ethics and etiquette together without making any differentiation between them¹. But some of them, in the past and the present time, have paid attention to the

¹ For example, Narāqī in his book, *JAMI' AL-SA'ADAT*, has propounded the manners of teaching and learning amidst other ethical points. Narāqī, 1383, vol. 1, 105.

distinction between them and made independent books in some issues. Shahīd Thānī, for instance, has written a book about the manners of teaching and learning (*Munyat al-Murīd fi Ādāb al-Mufīd wal Mustafīd*), or Imam Khomeini has written a book about the ethics of prayer (*Ādāb al-Ṣalāt*). But noticing the definitions offered, it will be clear that, although overlapping in some cases, they belong to different categories.

For more clarity, the majority of scholars have defined ethics as the “stable inner dispositions” which are the origin of good or bad deeds.¹ But "manners" is defined as a set of demanded and admirable behavioural patterns in personal or social life. Although this definition is too general, it will be adapted proportionately to particular cases.

For example, "social manners" are to be defined as all behaviours a person shows in dealing with other members of the society, or all behaviours of a tribe relating to other tribes or a group to other groups or a state in connection with other states. Also the "manners of speaking" has its proper definition, as other manners like: the rules of business, the manners of teaching and learning, the ethics of war, the rules of debate and dialogue, the rules of paying necessary and recommended alms, the rules of enjoining the good and forbidding of wrong, the rules of etiquette in addressing prophets, Imams, saints, father and mother, friends, elders, teenagers, elderly men and women, orphans, poor people, deprived ones, mendicant/begging people, neighbours, foreigners, fellow-believers and non-fellow-believers, belligerent and non-belligerent enemies, and in a large scale the manners of getting in touch with other Muslim or religious countries, and even non-religious countries, which form a set of political manners of international relations. These very manners can make the individual relationship or international relations very sound or dark and dim.

Besides the manners an individual performs relating to the society or a society to another society, there are some other manners belonging to the personal realm of individuals and make, like social manners, a part of their character/personality, like: the manners of eating food, the manners of walking in public, the manners of sitting in a session, etc.

¹ Muhammad Ali Sadat writes: “Ethics consists of inner dispositions, qualities, and spiritual characteristics.” Sadat, 1367, 22.

In addition to the previously mentioned ones, some other ritual manners are related to the realm of man's connection with God and religion, like: the ethics and manners of saying prayer¹, including in its turn a set of manners about preliminary actions and each part of prayer, such as the manners of ablution², dressing, the place of saying prayer, the recitation, standing in the position of *ṣalāt*, the manners of bowing and prostration, the manners of sitting in the prayer, and other manners belonging to the congregational prayer and community prayers, and prayer in mosque; and the manners of pilgrimage, the manners of fasting, and the manners of invoicing God individually or collectively. All these manners will form a polygon outline which deserves significant research by theologians. This article will proceed to the manners of speaking, specially the manners of speaking with God, with prophets, saints, father and mother and the others, according to the view of the Qur'an and traditions.

A. The manners of speaking with God

Prayer and supplication are two forms of speaking with God, as reciting the Qur'an is in fact divine speech with man. Concerning the manners of saying prayer the noble Qur'an says: And do not utter your prayer with a very loud voice nor be silent with regard to it, and seek a way between these (17: 110).³ Likewise, some manners specify traditions for each part of prayer, which must be discussed independently⁴.

In offering supplication, as in reciting *ṣalāt*, God has to be addressed politely. It must be started with praising God and salutation upon the Prophet and his progeny, and ended with the salutation on the Prophet and his progeny, too. This manner facilitates the fulfillment of the supplication, because salutation (asking mercy of God) upon the Prophet and his progeny will be answered certainly and a supplication flanked by two answered

¹ The difference between a valid prayer and a prayer with proper manners is that a valid prayer serves just as performing your duty correctly as mentioned in Islamic jurisprudence, but a prayer with its proper manners will lead you to closeness to Allah and to an understanding of His presence.

² In *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'a*, a book attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq (a), is mentioned: do the ablution with all its obligatory and recommended rules.

³ وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافُتْ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعْ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا.

⁴ Imam Khomeini has written a book on the ethics and manners of prayer, *ĀDĀB AL-ṢALĀT*, and Sayyid Aḥmad Fahrī has explained it.

requests will be answered, too, if it is performed sincerely and is in the interest of the supplicant. This manner is taught in *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyyah*.¹

The manners of speaking with God have two aspects: personal and social. Prayer and supplication in private is related to the personal aspect. Relating to the social aspect we have some manners too. For example during prayer or offering supplication in public places like the Holy Mosque in Mecca, the Prophet's mosque, and other mosques, each person must give others performing circumambulation or saying prayer or offering supplication some consideration. Supplicant also should recite the authentic narrated supplications and ask God for what is good here and in the hereafter for themselves and their coreligionists, and they should not insist in asking for worldly things. Likewise, one should act upon the other manners of supplication mentioned in related books.

B. The manners of speaking with the Prophet (s)²

Most *ayahs* expressing the manners of speaking with the Prophet were revealed in Medina, i.e. they are Medinite *ayahs*, which were revealed after the establishing of the Islamic nation in Medina. These manners are mostly mentioned in chapters like *al-Ḥujurāt* (49), *al-Fatḥ* (48), *al-Mujādilah* (58), *al-Ḥasr* (59), *al-Mumtaḥanah* (60), and *al-Taḥrīm* (66).

We, at first, examine some *ayahs* of the chapter *al-Ḥujurāt*³ and then *ayahs* of other chapters.

In the first five *ayahs* of this *surah* (49) God has spoken about the etiquette and manners that must be regarded by believers in speaking with the Prophet Muhammad. In the first *ayah*, God says:

¹ See: Ṣalawātī, 1381, 46. *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyyah* is a narrative book containing 54 supplication of Imam al-Sajjād (a).

² What is mentioned in the Qur'an and narrations about the manners of speaking with the Prophet, can be applied especially to shi'ite Imams (a) who are the designated successors of him and to religious masters generally, except some specified cases. Also, some of these manners are applicable even after his death, i.e., the manners of his pilgrimage.

³ This chapter is Medinite and contains some religious points and by acting upon which, the social and individual happiness will be guaranteed in the best way. The manners of speaking with Allah and His Prophet are included, which are mentioned in the first five *ayahs* of this chapter. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 18, 305.

“O you who believe! Do not venture ahead of Allah and His Apostle, and be wary of Allah, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is hearing, knowing.”¹ (49:1)

The first *ayah* is more general than the others, because advancing before God has been mentioned in this *ayah*, too. Advancing in the presence of Allah and His Prophet means, as some scholars have said,² to overtake them both in speaking and other actions.

So this *ayah* is general and contains advancing both in speaking or doing any action. However, because of the contextual evidence at the end of the *ayah*, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī says that this *ayah* is just about overtaking in speech. Because at the end of the *ayah* Allah says: “Allah is hearing, knowing.” Hearing is related to speaking and knowing is related to the content of speech and its motives. If God had said: “Allah is hearing, seeing,” instead, we could say that the *ayah* is general and contains both speaking and other actions³.

So, the first manner of speaking with the Prophet is that believers should not start speaking before he says something and should not give an opinion about a religious precept before the Prophet speaks about it. This manner is in conformity with piety and the completeness of faith, as God almighty says after that: “And be careful of (your duty to) Allah,” meaning that to be virtuous is to observe dignity and the degree of the Prophet by not overtaking him.

In the second *ayah* He says:

“O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, and do not speak loud to him as you speak

¹ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدُمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

² Mohammad Baqir Muḥaqqiq, quoting TAFSĪR ‘ALĪ IBN IBRĀHĪM, says that this *ayah* is about Bani ‘Uday and Bani Tamīm, two groups of Arabs, who called the Prophet loudly and with the title “O, Muhammad”, and moved in front of him. Also, quoting TAFSĪR KASHF AL-ASRĀR on the part of Hasan al-Baṣrī, he says that this *ayah* was about the offering of sacrifice prior to the Prophet on the Day of Sacrifice. Muḥaqqiq, vol. 2, 737-738.

³ Ṭabāṭabā’ī, vol. 18, 305.

loud to one another, lest your deeds became null while you do not perceive.”¹ (49: 2)

This *ayah* addresses the believers like the first one to call Muslims again and make their attention more.

In this *ayah* God has mentioned another manner of speaking with the Prophet. Believers should not raise their voices in front of the Prophet more than his and they should not call him loudly, because this action will end in the humiliation of the Prophet and shows the impoliteness of the speaker, which is contrary to paying respect and honour to the Prophet, while believers are charged to honour the position of the Prophet.

In continuation, saying "do not speak loud to him as you speak loud to one another", God absolutely prohibited speaking loudly to him. At the beginning of the *ayah*, believers were forbidden to speak to the Prophet in a tone above his tone, but here, as a general rule, they were ordered not to speak loudly to him at all. It shows that believers should speak in a normal way and avoid shouting while talking to each other, as the wise Luqman, teaching his son the way of speaking, says:

“and lower your voice; indeed the ungainliest of voices is the donkey’s voice.”² (31: 19)

Likening the voice of those who speak very loudly to the voice of donkeys can be for this reason that asses either do not make any sound, or make an ungainly sound which stings the psyche, as the snake bites the body.

Being the sign of impoliteness, speaking loudly to the Prophet has another result; good deeds of believers due to this action will be rendered void unconsciously, as God, after forbidding speaking loudly, says:

“lest your works should fail without your being aware.” (49: 2)

Ayatollah Sayyid Riḍā Ṣadr says:

¹ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ.

² وَأَغْضَضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ.

“The Prophet (s) is the most beloved creature in the eyes of God, so revering him is the highest goodness. Whoever doesn’t act politely in his presence his worships and good deeds will be rendered void.”¹

In the third *ayah*, to encourage believers to behave in this manner, God points out the results of observing it in speaking to the Prophet:

“Indeed those who lower their voices in the presence of the Apostle of Allah—they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for Godwariness. For them will be forgiveness and a great reward.”² (49:3)

Lowering the voice is metaphorically a sign of self-possession and observing etiquette of speaking, and this manner of behavior arises out of piety.³

So, self-possession and sedateness should be observed in speaking and socializing with everybody, especially with the Prophet (s) and the saints, because respecting the Prophet and revering him, honouring him, is also revering almighty God Himself. The Prophet was sent by God almighty and to honour the messenger is to revere the sender too. For this very reason God has made honouring the Prophet a sign of inner piety and, as a result, a cause of receiving great reward and forgiveness.

In the next *ayah*, God teaches another manner of conversation with the Prophet and considers non-observance of this manner as a cause of foolishness:

“(as for) those who call out to you from behind the private chambers, most of them do not apply reason.”⁴ (49:4)

Muhammad Bāqir Muḥaqqiq, regarding the occasion of revelation, says that this *ayah* is about some unwise people of the Banī Tamīm tribe who came behind his house and said: “O, Muhammad come out to us, we want to

¹ Ṣadr, 1384, 192.

² إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَى لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ.

³ Ibid, 202.

⁴ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَنَادُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

speak with you.” The Prophet (s) was afflicted by their impoliteness and their style of speaking and then this *ayah* was sent [to teach them the good manners of speaking.]¹

Courtesy implies that they had to wait in front of his house until he comes to them, then politely offer their demands and speak with him. It is not proper to call the Prophet loudly from behind the walls of his house to come out to them and, consequently, to offend the Prophet by their bad manners, which end in the nullification of their religious deeds. In the next *ayah*, God teaches the right way of referring to and speaking with the Prophet:

“Had they been patient until you came out for them, it would have been better for them, and Allah is forgiving, merciful.”²
(49:5)

Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, in his comment on this *ayah*, says: “If they had waited and didn’t call the Prophet until he came out to them, it would have been better for them, because it would have been a sign of their politeness and observing the honour, greatness and the degree of the prophetic mission and it would have led to receiving the mercy and forgiveness of God.”³

These noble *ayahs* enumerate some manners of etiquette and speaking with the messenger of God. We refer to the most important of them:

1. Believers ought not to overtake the Messenger of God in speaking.
2. In the presence of the Prophet, nobody should speak louder than he does. Generally, the people of faith ought not to speak loudly in his presence; they should speak honourably and respectfully.
3. To speak with the Prophet, believers ought not to go towards his house whenever they want and call him and annoy him. This kind of action may disturb his private supplications or his rest, or prevent him from looking after home affairs. They should seek a suitable time, like when he comes out to see the Muslims, or at a special occasion determined by him for visiting,

¹ Muḥaqqiq, 739. This saying is quoted from RABĪʿ AL-ABRĀR, a book of Zamakhsharī. Muḥaqqiq has mentioned some other similar sayings from other writers.

² وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

³ Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1417, vol. 18, 315

or when he sits in the mosque to look after Muslims' affairs, and then pay a visit to him.

Beside what has been mentioned in this chapter about the manners of speaking to the Prophet, some other manners have been mentioned in other Qur'anic chapters that are not specific to the Prophet; they are general and every Muslim must regard them.

C. General manners of speaking

1. Hailing

Believers, as a general rule, must hail and greet each other before starting conversation. Yet this general rule is more emphasized for the Prophet (s) and great men of Islam.

The glorious Qur'an says:

“Indeed Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who have faith! Invoke blessings on him and invoke Peace upon him in a worthy manner.”¹ (33:56)

God also teaches His Prophet that when believers come to you say:

“Peace to you.” (6:54)

Even when the divine angels arrived to the Prophet Abraham (a), the first word they said was this salutation and Abraham (a) greeted them too. (11: 69) Then, embodied in the shape of humans, they entered his house and he entertained them. One of the good manners of Muslim scholars is that they start their speech with the name of God and praise him, then continue to praise and greet the Prophet.

Greeting and hailing are so important in Islam that Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) says:

“Whoever starts a speech before hailing, don't reply to him.”²

¹ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا.

² Kulaynī, 1365, vol. 2, 644 (من بدأ بالكلام قبل السلام فلا تجيبوه).

So, one of the important manners of speaking is to greet your addressee before saying anything; and it makes no difference whether there is one addressee or more. Also it makes no difference whether people want to speak with the Prophet or he wants to speak with them; in both cases hailing is recommended. Greeting and hailing are recommended as a good manner not just at the start of speaking, but also when you enter a house or a work place or when you meet a group of people or a friend or an acquaintance or even any believer: you should hail and greet them¹.

2. Abstention from whispering

Najwā (whispering) in Arabic² and in Qur'anic language³ means "to speak with another one in secret". The glorious Qur'an forbade talking secretly in doing sin or disobeying the Prophet, but allowed it in doing good and piety. (58: 9)

In order to talk secretly to The Prophet, the Qur'an laid down some rules; everybody who wished to speak with him secretly should offer some charity before his secret talk (58: 12), but later God abolished this rule because it was difficult for Muslims, however He recommended them to do the prayer and to give alms and obey God and His messenger. (58: 13)

Whispering (to a person) in public, generally, is not approved of if it causes other's suspicion and mistrust, save in necessary cases. So, one of the manners of speaking is to avoid secret talks in public.

3. Softly speaking

Tender and soft words always are more efficient than harsh ones. God Almighty says to Moses: go you and your brother to Pharaoh: verily he has waxed insolent. But speak to him gently and in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear.⁴ (20: 43 - 44)

¹ Unfortunately, these manners have been weakened in our society to some extent. We see that some people before hailing start to speak or offer their demands.

² Ibrāhīm bin Anīs and others, vol. 2, 905

³ Sha'rānī, 1398 AH, vol. 2, 440.

⁴ اذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى، فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى.

When speaking with Pharaoh has to be in a gentle manner, it is clear that preferably the other people must be talked to in a soft manner. Gentleness is divine mercy, as God says to His Prophet:

“It was by Allah’s mercy that you have been gentle with them.”¹
(3: 159)

And it was the smooth words and sweet tongue of the Prophet that calmed the rough and rude Arab of that time and established brotherhood and fondness between them, as God says: so you became brethren by his favour.²

On the contrary, hot temper and scurrility cause people to flee from man, even if he was the Prophet, as Almighty God says to his Prophet: And had you been severe and harsh hearted, they would have broken away from about you³ (3: 159)

In his recommendations to Imam ‘Ali (a), the Prophet (s) says: O, ‘Ali! Whoever that the people don’t feel safety from his tongue he will reach the hell.⁴ Also in the words of Imam al-Ṣādiq (a) one of the signs of good disposition is to speak with others friendly and kindly. In answering this question that what is the good disposition, he says: to show humility or curtesy and to speak kindly and friendly and to face people cheerfully.⁵

4. The honest speech

One of the teachings of the Qur’an on the manners of speaking is to speak truthfully and honestly. Being smooth, our speech must be true and straight as well. “Sadād” in Arabic language denotes the truth of a speech or a deed. So, the straight speech means a right and true and upright speech. In two places the noble Qur’an, after piety, commands believers to speak truly and honestly.⁶

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ
فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِبِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا
وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فَظًا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكُمْ

⁴ Ṣadūq, 4. (يا على من خاف الناس لسانه فهو من اهل النار)

⁵ Ibid, 116 (تلين جانبك و تطيب كلامك و تلقا اخاك ببشر حسن)

⁶ see: 4: 9 and 33: 70

In chapter 33 God Almighty says:

“O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and speak upright words.”¹ (33: 70)

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī in commenting on this *ayah* concerning upright speech says:

Upright speech is a kind of saying that is true and compatible with reality as well as void of idle or unlawful talk like gossiping. So the faithful man should examine the correctness of his speech and avoid idle talking or talking in a manner that changes a good situation to a bad one.²

So, speaking truly and avoiding idle talking are two elements of an upright speech:

A. To abstain from idle talking

The Glorious Qur’an, in *Surah Mu’minūn*, regards avoidance of idle talking as one of the qualities of believers:

“Certainly, the faithful have attained salvation...who avoid vain talk.”³ (23: 3)

One of the authors writes: “A divine man describes idle talking as such: ‘Every talk is vain unless if you don’t say it, you may commit a sin or suffer a loss in life or property.’”⁴

B. Telling the truth/veracity.

One of the other qualities of upright speech is veracity. In other words, one of the most important manners of speaking is veracity. Veracity, being a manner of speaking, in one respect, is in the realm of moralities, in another respect, because telling the truth or lies are two stable habits in the human

¹ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

² Ṭabāṭabā’ī, vol. 16, 347

³ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ... وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

⁴ Fihri, 1359, p. 233

soul. So, these respects are related to each other. The connectedness between them is due to this fact that human dispositions are formed in the soul by repeating some deeds. So, in this regard, if somebody respects this manner of speaking (telling the truth) and repeats it, the habit of veracity will become stable in his soul; and if he does not respect it and tells lies, the habit of mendacity will stabilize in his soul.

In his recommendations to Imam ‘Ali (a), the Prophet (s) has counted mendacity as contamination of speech¹ and elsewhere it was counted as a sign of hypocrisy: “A hypocrite has three characteristics: he tells lies when he speaks, breaks his promise, and is not a good trustee, i.e. he breaches his trusts.”²

5. Abstention from flattery

One of the other manners of speaking is to not flatter others, especially bosses, rich people, and, in general, every wealthy and mighty person. Flattering is the quality of deluders, as the Prophet (s) says: “One of the signs of deluders is that they flatter you in your presence and backbite you in your absence.”³

6. Generously speaking

One of the manners of speaking is to speak generously. Generosity in speaking means to honour your addressees and to speak to them respectfully. Almighty God has commanded not to tell your parents, “Fie!” (i.e., the least word that may annoy them) and to speak with them honourably. He says: “Say not to them ‘Fie!’ neither chide them, but speak to them noble words.”⁴ (17: 23)

The Qur’an is [itself] a noble word (56: 77) that was sent down from the generous Lord (82: 60) by an honourable *angel* (81: 19) to the heart of a noble prophet to bestow honour and dignity upon people.

¹ آفة الحديث الكذب (Sadūq, Ibid, 45)

² Ibid, 23 (للمنافق ثلاث علامات: اذا حدث كذب و اذا وعد اخلف و اذا ابتمن خان)

³ Ibid, 23.

⁴ فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

Speech, spoken or written, must be in a generous and honourable way; not only with parents but with all people, even with pagans, as when his holiness the prophet Solomon decided to write a letter to the Queen of Sheba, he wrote it honourably. The Glorious Qur'an quotes the Queen of Sheba as she says to her governmental counsellors:

“O [members of the] elite! Indeed a noble letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon, and it begins ‘In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.’”¹ (27:29 & 30)

Therefore every speaker must speak with his addressees generously, especially with those to whom he is indebted.

7. To say good words in a good way.

One of the manners of speaking is to say good words and in a good way as well. There is a subtle difference between these two manners; the first one is related to the content of speech and the latter to the diction of it. The first is rooted in the knowledge and intelligence of a speaker and the latter in his courtesy and politeness.

In several cases the Glorious Qur'an asks believers to speak with others beautifully and to say honourable words. Regarding relatives, orphans, and the poor, it says:

“And when the division is attended by relatives, the orphans and the needy, provide for them out of it, and speak to them honourable words.”² (4:8)

“*Qawlan ma'rūf*” (قولا معروفا) are the very honourable words that must be uttered in a beautiful way. Some linguists have said: “Every action admired by the intellect or the divine law is regarded as honourable and good.”³ On this basis, “*qawlan ma'rūf*” is a speech admired by reason or the divine law.

¹ قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِنِّي الْكَيْبُ إِلَى كِتَابٍ كَرِيمٍ. إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
² وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا.

³ Ebrahim Anis and the others, 595. (المعروف اسم لكل فعل يعرف حسنه بالعقل او الشرع)

One of the other characters of the honourable word is that man should speak as much as he can and deserves, i.e., not utter something without consideration, as the noble Qur'an says:

“It is very hateful to God that you say what you do not or cannot do.”¹ (61: 3)

Imam ‘Ali (a) in a very beautiful speech says: “Words are in your control until you have uttered them; but when you have spoken them out, you are under their control. Therefore, guard your tongue as you guard your gold and silver, for often one expression snatches away a blessing and invites punishment.”² Many words, often may be the seeds of sedition in society - words uttered out of sensual desire or ostentation or for humiliating others to reach the worldly desires and wishes.

Adequate evidence for the ignorance of a man is that he is controlled by his tongue, as Imam al-Hādī (a) is quoted as saying: “Ignorance is kept under his tongue.”³

8. Abstention from mocking, fault finding and reproaching.

Another manner of speaking is that man's speech should not cause ridicule and blame of others due to their deficiencies, most of which may be natural. God has created human kind in various types; white skinned or dark skinned, tall or short, and other variations. There are some positive and negative traits and points in each person. To ridicule and blame and reproach others on account of their natural deficiencies will expand the grounds of hatred, vengeance and enmity in the society and diminish the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood. To establish an Islamic utopia through the Prophet of Islam, God teaches Muslims some manners in this regard. For example, He (swt) says:

كَبُرُ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

² ‘Abdoh, 1413 AH, 752.

(الكلام في وثائقك ما لم تتكلم فاذا تكلمت به صرت في وثائقه فاخزن لسانك كما تخزن ذهبك و ورقك فرب كلمة سلبت نعمة و جلبت نعمة)

³ ‘Atārudī, 1410 AH, 304. (الجاهل اسير لسانه)

“O you who have faith! Let not any people ridicule another people: it may be that they are better than they are; nor let women [ridicule] women: it may be that they are better than they are. And do not defame one another, nor insult one another by [calling] nicknames. How evil are profane names subsequent to faith! And whoever is not penitent—such are the wrongdoers.”(49: 11)

9. Abstention from backbiting

Another of the manners is to avoid backbiting, slandering a person in his absence. The Glorious Qur’an fights against this pagan habit, which is still alive in human societies. The worst trait is to flatter someone in his presence and backbite him in his absence. This kind of action is a sign of hypocrisy and insincerity. Taking backbiting as eating the meat of the brother’s dead body, the Glorious Qur’an says:

“And do not spy on or backbite one another. Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And be wary of Allah; indeed Allah is all-clement, all-merciful.” (49: 12)

Instead of appreciating and praising others’ goodness publicly and secretly, why do we act like flies sitting on wounds and abscesses? Why we are not like bees, who sit on the flowers and bear healing honey?² The root of backbiting is spying and snooping on the affairs of people. So, the glorious Qur’an has prohibited spying first and then it forbids backbiting. Searching to know the faults of others is a very bad deed which ends with a pessimistic mood between people and the departure of the spirit of friendship and agreement in the society.

10. To give addresses some consideration

Imam al-Ṣādiq (*a*) is quoted as saying: “The Prophet did not speak to people deeply and according to his depth of knowledge.” And then he quoted the

¹ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ.

² Mūsavi Lāry, p. 273

Prophet as saying: “We prophets are enjoined to speak with people only to the extent of their cognitive capacities.”¹

A speech must be uttered for the benefit of the addressee, not for pedantry. Eloquence is regarded as a beautiful feature in speaking. Eloquence means to know the addressees and then arrange the speech on the basis of one’s knowledge and position; in some cases brevity is desirable and sometimes verbosity. In both cases, however, the speech must be void of shortage or prolixity to convey the message correctly. It was said as a proverb that each word has its own place and each point has its own space.

Summary and conclusion

Speaking has some manners that everyone should observe to make a good society. Speaking with God, with the Prophet, the saints, with a teacher and professor, with parents, etc., each has its specific manners, which can be grouped into two types: the manners to do and the manners not to do.

The manners to do, or affirmative manners, are:

- 1- Veracity; the most important required condition of speech for everyone.
- 2- Calmly speaking; the tone of voice must be calm and one should not speak louder than the Prophet or those who have a divine right over us.
- 3- Admired and upright word which is a norm for any desirable or admirable speech.
- 4- Naming Allah and greeting before starting speech.
- 5- Observing the position and the mentality of the addressee.

The manners not to do, or negative manners, are:

- 1- To abstain from backbiting, accusation, ridiculing, idle talking etc.

¹ Kulaynī, 1365, vol. 1, 23.

(ما كلم رسول الله (ص) العباد بكنه عقله قطّ وقال: إنا معاشر الانبياء امرنا ان نكلم الناس على قدر عقولهم.)

- 2- To abstain from shouting, save for those who have been oppressed.
- 3- To avoid flattery.
- 4- To avoid whispering in public, unless it is in order to do good deeds and piety.

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Stages of Mystics and Stations of the Spiritual Journey Part II: Intention, Truthfulness, Returning, Devotion, Seclusion and Contemplation

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Third: Intention

Having appropriate intention is more than just being faithful, since there may be a faithful who does his actions without a definite intention, whereas the spirit of an action is the intention [for doing it]. Therefore, the relation between the purpose of doing an action and the action itself is like the relation between body and soul. The action without purpose is like a dead body that does not do anything. This is why the noble Prophet (s) stated: "Indeed, everyone benefits [only from] his intention!"²

About strugglers and travellers toward Allah, it is said that if one emigrates because of Allah, he will be rewarded by meeting with Allah. But one who enters a war and fights for the booty, his struggle will be valued according to his cause, since everyone's value is equal to his knowledge and his knowledge can be seen in his intention.

¹ Jawadi Amuli, Abdullah, *Tafsīr-e Tasnīm*, vol. 11: *Stages of Ethics in the Qur'an*, (excerpt from) ch. 3, (Isra Publication: Qum, 1999). Ayatollah Jawādī Amolī is a Grand Ayatollah commonly believed to be one of the best Shiite experts in Qur'anic Exegesis and a great mystic. He is the author an ongoing thematic commentary on the Qur'an called "*Tafsīr-e Tasnīm*". The title of the 11th volume of his commentary is "*Ethical stages in the Qur'an*". The third chapter of the book deals with "Positions of mystics and stations of the spiritual journey". This article is the second part of the translation of this chapter, the first part of which was published in the previous issue of the journal.

² Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 67, (Beirut: Mu'assisat al-Wafā', 1983), p. 186.