

Cleanliness out of consideration for the sensitivities of others

Reminder (2nd November 2007) delivered by Shaykh Muhammad Taher

DISCLAIMER: This reminder was originally delivered in Arabic. Any meanings lost in translation are not to be attributed to the speaker as reminders are translated by volunteers. The mosque has no official translator and volunteers often have no formal qualifications to translate on the day. Please forgive any errors as they are from our human weakness and any right guidance is from God.

God the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

'O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful clothing at every time and place of prayer...' (A'raf) [7:26]

Beautiful clothing or adornments (as it is often translated) includes nice clothes, having a good outward appearance and smelling good. God (Glory be to Him, the Most High - swt) has blessed all the children of Adam with clothes to cover them as He said:

'O children of Adam, we have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But the best garment is the garment of righteousness.'

O Muslims, Islam is a religion that is pure and natural. It is a religion which goes with every time and place. It is based on the beliefs of (the words of God) the Quran and (the example of His messenger) the Sunnah and guides its followers to that which is better and teaches them, nurtures them and instructs them in manners and good etiquettes. It deals with every big and every small matter that you may face in life.

This religion goes hand in hand with what our sound nature requires in regards to covering and dress; and is within the framework of the highest etiquette and manners.

Islam considers both the inward and outward and encourages us to take care of both, to purify the body and to purify the soul, to clean the heart and the body, to have sound heart and to also have a healthy and sound body as God loves those who purify themselves and continue to do so:

'O you who have covered yourself with your cloak, Arise and warn!
Magnify your Lord, Purify your garments and shun uncleanness ' (Surah Muddathir: 1-5)

The Prophet (pbuh) said: 'Five things are from among [the norms of] human nature: circumcision, shaving the hair around the private parts, cutting nails, removing hair under the armpits and clipping the moustache.' (Muslim: No. 257) Clipping the moustache is a form of beautification. One who has hair should honour it by washing it, moisturising (oiling) it, combing it and making it smell nice.

The Prophet (pbuh) once was in the mosque when a man came in with dishevelled hair and beard. The Prophet (pbuh), motioned with his hand that he should be sent out to groom his hair and beard. The man did so and then returned. The Prophet (pbuh), said, "Isn't this better than that one of you should come with his head dishevelled, as if he were a devil?" [Muwatta]

Cutting the nails, cleaning in-between the fingers, removing hair from the armpit and private parts- all these are from the practices of the messengers as is reflected in the fact that such practices can be found in the laws of other major religions. Neglecting this is disliked and disapproved and considered unhygienic.

The Prophet (pbuh) said : ' Cleanliness is part of faith'. Prayer is the most important obligation after the two testimonies and for this reason it is commanded that one must be free of impurity and filth. Ablution (Wudu) grants us this.

O Muslims- the five prayers cleans us inside, discourages us to do wrongdoing. Ablution before prayer purifies our outward selves. The Prophet (pbuh) said 'If there was a river at the door of any one of you and he took a bath in it five times a day, would you notice any dirt on him?'

It is important to safeguard your breath from odorous smells of garlic, onion (or leeks) when coming to the Mosque. The Prophet said: 'He who has eaten onion or garlic or leek should not approach our mosque, because the angels are also offended (by the strong smells) that offend the children of Adam.' [Muslim]

Eating such vegetables is permissible, but if these are eaten raw one should not enter the Mosque or a gathering of people until the strong odour vanishes. In the same way, other disliked odours such as smoke, sweat, smelly socks or work clothes and other things which would cause discomfort to others by their smell also fall into this category.

Friday is the greatest of occasions for Muslims to gather together in the week. It is a weekly Eid and for this reason it has been distinguished from other days. From amongst the practices that set Friday apart are the following: to bathe, perfume oneself, wearing nice clothes for the prayer, listening to the Khutbah- this is a practice which is well known amongst many Muslims and only those who are heedless and lack any etiquettes leave off these acts of Sunnah.

The Prophet said: 'Whoever takes a bath on Friday, purifies himself as much as he can, then uses his (hair) oil or perfumes himself with the scent of his house, then proceeds (for the Jumua prayer) and does not separate two persons sitting together (in the mosque), then prays as much as (God has) written for him and then remains silent while the Imam is delivering the Khutba, his sins in-between the present and the last Friday would be forgiven.'

In another narration he is reported to have said: 'It is upon every Muslim to bathe on the day of Friday, wear good clothes and if he has some perfume, should apply some'

O community of Muhammad- a community who will be recognised on the day of judgement via your traces of ablution- our sacred law guides us to purity and smelling nice at all times- there are many evidences/narrations which discuss the desirability of perfuming the self and the Prophet himself was very fond of this.

Getting rid of odorous food smells from the hands and mouth and cleaning the teeth whether it is with a siwak (natural tooth-stick) or a modern day equivalent is desirable and brings the pleasure of God. After drinking milk, the Prophet rinsed his mouth and said: ' because it contains fat".

Cleanliness and purity extends from our bodies, to our houses, streets, our Mosques and gatherings with others:

Surah Hajj: 26 'and purify My House for those who make the circuit and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves.'

Surah Nur: 56 'In houses which God has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings'

Surah Tawba: 108 ' A place of prostration/worship (masjid) that is established on the basis of righteousness from the first day is more worthy of your praying therein. In it, there are people who love to be purified. God loves those who purify themselves.'

Do you see how God has praised the one who loves purity and cleanliness and the one who adorned himself for prayer. God Almighty ended these verses with 'And God loves the ones who purify!' Good clothes and a tidy appearance is desired (according to every person's individual capacity)

One of the companions of the Prophet said: The Prophet once saw me in shabby clothes and he said: 'Do you have money?' I said yes. He said: 'From where does your money come?' I said: 'God has given me camels and sheep and horses and slaves.' He said: 'Then if God gave you money and possessions, he likes for you to show it.'

Cleanliness is not just restricted to the Mosque or when attending gatherings, but is desirable at all times even if you are sat *at home* or *going to bed*.

The Prophet said "No one will enter Paradise in whose heart is a mustard-seed of arrogance." A man said: "What if a man likes his clothes to look nice and his shoes to look nice?" He said: "God is Beautiful and loves beauty; arrogance means rejecting the truth and looking down on people."

Second Khutbah:

A person may come across many things which they are required to be patient about- but is not be able to bear horrible smells whether it be from someone's breath or sweat etc., especially if it is in the Mosque where Muslims come to remember God and perform their prayers. How can devotees concentrate on this, have humility and intimate discourse with God (SWT) in such an environment!

Smoking, which is harmful and causes harm to others, and has a strong smell which pollutes clothing and causes discomfort to others in particular those gathered in the Mosque on Fridays.

Unfortunately some Muslims are far away from following the practices of the Prophet and his example when it comes to cleanliness, purification, perfuming the self and his character.

Some Muslims have forgotten virtuous etiquettes, compassion, consideration and sensitivity (1) in their homes, and more seriously, (2) in the gatherings that they attend alongside others.

O God - make us from those who love to be purified so that in turn you love us.