

Advice to a Pretentious

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

All praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon whom Allaah sent as a mercy to the Worlds, upon his Family, his Companions and his Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

The Muslim should not appear in an appearance which is not his, or contradict his bottom or his real state. He should not claim a position superior and higher than his. He should not affect things he has not, since this quality (i.e. the fact of not feigning something one has not) shows a sincere attitude. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: "**The one who pretends that he has been given what he has not been given, is just like the (false) one who wears two garments of falsehood**"¹.

And it is said:

**Whoever affects what he has not
Will be disclosed at the test**

For this reason, one should not pretend knowing something when he is not, or pretend perfection in things he does not master, or lead without qualification, since it is the flaw of knowledge and action. That is why some said:

"Whoever takes the leadership before time, will expose himself to humiliation".

Some Andalusians also said:

We seek refuge from Allaah, from people who put themselves in positions of leaders without knowledge.

It should be also known that someone who adopts the character of sincerity, that sincerity is one of the complements of faith and Islaam, of which Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ has ordered us and praised those who stick to it; Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ said:

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (hadeeth 9/317) in the chapter of "Marriage" on boasting about what one does not have and what is forbidden of the boasting of a co-wife, Muslim (hadeeth 14/110) in the chapter of "Garments" concerning the prohibition of wearing the garment of falsehood, Aboo Daawood (hadeeth 5/269) in the chapter of "Manners" concerning boasting about what one does not have, from the hadeeth of Asmaa' Bint Aboo Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا. The meaning of the hadeeth according to scholars is: "Someone who affects what he has not and tries to show it to people and beautify himself by falsehood, so he is condemnable as is condemned the one who wears two garments of falsehood" [(Sharh Muslim by An-Nawawee) (14/110)].

Ibn Hajar said in "Al-Fath" (9/318) "The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ used (two garments) in order to say that the person who pretends these things has doubly lied; he lied to himself by something he has not taken and to others by something he has not been given, as a false witness, he commits an injustice toward himself and toward others by his false witness".

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

[O you who believe! Be afraid of Allaah, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds).]²

He also said:

وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

[And he (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) who has brought the truth (this Qur'aan and Islaamic Monotheism) and (those who) believed therein (i.e. the true believers of Islaamic Monotheism), those are Al-Muttaqoon (the pious).]³

He also عز وجل said in praising sincere people:

رَجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

[... men who have been true to their covenant with Allaah]⁴

It is enough that truthfulness leads to righteousness, and that righteousness leads to Paradise, as in the agreed upon hadeeth: "Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. And a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person"⁵.

It is evident that Paradise is the aim of every Muslim, and the most high of his wishes. Truthfulness in speech is a sign of respect, dignity of the self and an art of knowledge. None will have a high rank in knowledge but a truthful. Truthfulness as a character is prior to getting knowledge, and the Muslim should start by teaching himself truthfulness before getting knowledge, as it is reported in some Salaf traditions (traditions of the Predecessors).

Moreover, scholars should also be venerated, since their veneration and respect pertain to Sunnah. They are certainly human beings and fallible, but the duty of the believer is to have a good opinion of people of faith, people of religion and people of righteousness and good. The student should not oppose people of knowledge, loyalty and justice, and call into question their opinions nor precipitate in contradicting them in cases of probabilities and Ijtihad (jurisprudential effort), without verification and ascertainment, because accusing them of this is untrue; and when this accusation is emanated from an unknowledgeable person who does not know his own errors, so how could he judge others of committing errors, besides belittling them and correcting them. However, the student or the Muslim should trust knowledgeable people (in religion), and hold his tongue from disparaging or defaming them, for, this reduces their awe, and makes them subject to accusations. He should take care of their dignity, avoid arrogance, dispute and interpolations, particularly in

² Soorah at-Tawbah [9:119]

³ Soorah az-Zumar [39:33]

⁴ Soorah al-Ahzaab [33:23]

⁵ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (hadeeth 10/507) in the chapter of "Good behaviour" concerning Allaah's عز وجل

saying: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ [Soorah at-Tawbah 9:119][O you who believe! Be afraid of Allaah, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds) and what He prohibits of lies and Muslim (hadeeth 160/16) in the chapter of "Virtue, good manners and joining of the ties of relationships" concerning the evil of a lie and the goodness of truth and its merit, from the hadeeth of Ibn Mas'ood رضي الله عنه.

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public, because this induces vainglory and vanity...Yes, if they commit an error or have illusions about something, they should be warned, but without belittling them, and bringing out commotion and confusion and not be delighted by denigrating them. This attitude emanates only from a sciolist⁶ "Who wants to put kohl in his eyes but makes them blind!" or "He who wants to cure himself from a cold but causes a leprosy"!

However, I want to connect my speech with that previously said, which is that one should know that the source of grace, and the source of blessing is Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ, and if Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ grants today money, knowledge, strength and dignity, He May take them back in the future, He is عَزَّ وَجَلَّ, the Preventer, the Distresser and the Giver, the Beneficial; He gives and withdraws, and whoever thanks Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ for His favours duly, Allaah will give him more:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

[If you give thanks (by accepting Faith and worshipping none but Allaah), I will give you more (of My Blessings)]⁷

And whoever denies His favours overtly, inwardly and behaviourally, who does not act according to what Allaah عَزَّ وَجَلَّ Has ordered, does what He prevented him from and denies His Grace, the Grace will turn to reprobation for him. And among the most destructible things – now and later – the fact of being pride of oneself and actions, haughtiness and self-assumption and what results from them in the matter of knowledge by neglecting benefiting from it. Pride and conceit lead one to sciolism, disdain people and belittling them. These handicaps and hindrances are among great retardants and among the greatest obstacles that prevent the perfection of the Muslim or the student. They transform glory to humiliation, strength to weakness and grace to reprobation. That is why the Book and the Sunnah warn us against self-assumption and vanity because they are harms that reduce deeds to nothing. Indeed, vanity is the scourge of sincerity and whoever admires his work, will have it reduced to nothing, as well as someone who is proud of his deeds. Besides, if ostentation comes with the scope of associating the action with people, self-assumption comes with the scope of associating the action with oneself, as it is stated by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymeeyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim⁸. So, self-assumption is tightly related to ostentation. Indeed, he who shows of does not realise the meaning of the verse:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ

[You (Alone) we worship]⁹

The self-important, pride of himself and his deeds does not realise:

وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

⁶ The practice of expressing opinions on something which one knows only superficially or has little real understanding of; also, shallow or superficial knowledge.

⁷ Soorah Ibraaheem [14:7]

⁸ "At-Tafseer Al-Qayyim Lima Jumi`a Libn Al-Qayyim" of Ibn Al-Qayyim (48).

⁹ Soorah al-Faatihah [1:5]

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[You (Alone) we ask for help]¹⁰

The Holy Qur'aan warns against this evil. Allaah عزَّ وجلَّ said:

وَعَرَّثَكُمْ الْأَمَانِيَّ حَتَّى جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَعَرَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْعَزُورُ

[...and you were deceived by false desires, till the Command of Allaah came to pass. And the chief deceiver (Satan) deceived you in respect of Allaah.]¹¹

He also عزَّ وجلَّ said:

وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا

[at the Battle of Hunain when you took pride in your great numbers, but they proved of no advantage to you.]¹²

He also عزَّ وجلَّ said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ

[O man! What has made you careless about your Lord, the Most Generous?]¹³

And in the hadeeth: "Three things lead to perishment (in Hell): Obeying one's greed, following one's desires and being pleased with oneself"¹⁴.

The Muslim should behave correctly with others, acknowledge their rights and keep from harming them, especially if they are older than him, or are more knowledgeable and more honourable, or they are at the origin of his orientation, or he benefited from them. So, he owes them favour and are like his parents to whom he owes righteousness and kindness, he should not harm them, but should invoke Allaah for them, ask forgiveness for them and fulfil his commitments toward them, because all that is beneficence, and beneficence – as we know – is a part of the Muslim's belief, it is even an integral part of his Islaam, because Islaam is based upon three principles : 'Eemaan (faith), Islaam and Ihsaan (beneficence) as it is narrated in the agreed upon hadeeth of Jibreel (Gabriel); the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said after the departure of Jibreel عليه السلام: "He was Gabriel (the angel). He came to you in order to instruct you in matters of religion."¹⁵. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ considered Al-Ihsaan (beneficence) a part of religion.

¹⁰ Soorah al-Faatihah [1:5]

¹¹ Soorah al-Hadeed [57:14]

¹² Soorah at-Tawbah [9:25]

¹³ Soorah al-Infitaar [82:6]

¹⁴ Reported by Ibn `Abd Al-Barr in "Jaami` Bayaan Al-`Ilm Wa Fadhlih" (1/143) from the hadeeth of Anas Ibn Maalik رضي الله عنه. This hadeeth has many ways. It is judged by Al-Albaanee as Hassan (good) by considering its different ways, and that is what Al-Mundhiraee affirmed. [See "Silsilah Al-Ahadeeth As-Saheehah" by Al-Albaanee (4/412-416)].

¹⁵ Reported by Muslim (hadeeth 1/150) in the chapter of "Faith" concerning the explanation of faith, Islaam and Ihsaan (beneficence), Aboo Daawood (hadeeth 5/69) in the chapter of "As-Sunnah" concerning preordainment, At-Tirmidhee (hadeeth 5/5) in the chapter of "Faith" concerning the description of Al-'Eemaan (faith) and Islaam by Jibreel to the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ (hadeeth 1/24), Ibn Maajah in the introduction of his "Sunan", chapter of faith, from the hadeeth of `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab رضي الله عنه.

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Whereas, the expressions used by those students are heinous: insults, immoralities, obscenities and other words such as backbiting, defamation and other defects of the tongue which are not at all of beneficence. Indeed, Allaah عزَّ وجلَّ said:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

[Speak good to people [i.e. enjoin righteousness and forbid evil, and say the truth about Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ]]¹⁶

Allaah عزَّ وجلَّ also said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

[Verily, Allaah enjoins Al-`Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allaah Alone - Islaamic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsaan [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allaah, totally for Allaah's sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in a perfect manner]]¹⁷

Pious and righteous people avoid this kind of words; the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: "A believer is not given to accusing others or to cursing them, nor is he immoral or shameless"¹⁸.

But Islaam invites to good manners, and to foster and inculcate them in Muslims. Allaah عزَّ وجلَّ praised His Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ for his good character and said:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

[And Verily, you (O Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) are on an exalted (standard of) character.]¹⁹

and ordered him to have good manners:

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

[Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allaah orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly) then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.]²⁰

The Islaamic message is restricted to this meaning of purification. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said: "The only reason I have been sent is to perfect good manners"²¹. From this hadeeth, we know that the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ has perfected this purification, theoretically and practically, because, Allaah عزَّ وجلَّ Has perfected His religion and His Favour upon His Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and upon believers. So, purification, which is the aim of the [divine]

¹⁶ Soorah al-Baqaraah [2:83]

¹⁷ Soorah an-Nahl [16:90]

¹⁸ Reported by At-Tirmidhee (hadeeth 4/350) in the chapter of "Virtue, good manners and joining of the ties of relationship" concerning curse. It judged as authentic by Al-Haakim (hadeeth 1/12), Al-Albaanee in "As-Sahiha" (hadeeth 320) and in "Saheeh At-Tirmidhee": (hadeeth 2/370), Al-Arna'oot judged its Isnaad (chain of narrators) as strong in "Sharh As-Sunnah": (hadeeth 13/134).

¹⁹ Soorah al-Qalam [68:4]

²⁰ Soorah Fussilat [41:34]

²¹ Reported by Ahmad (hadeeth 2/318), Al-Bukhaaree in "Al-Aadaab Al-Mufrad" (hadeeth 273) from the hadeeth of Abou Hurayrah رضي الله عنه. This hadeeth is judged as Saheeh (authentic) by Al-Albaanee in "As-Silsilah As-Saheehah" number (45).

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messages and its fruit, is considered among the principles of the Salafee Da'wah (call of Predecessors), and one of its principal pillars.

Finally, my advice is to say that Islaam is not only creed and adoration, but also good manners and behaviours. Immoralities are in Islaam a heinous crime, and something heinous cannot be an Islaamic character or an attribute of it in any case, because inner purity is acquired from Al-'Eemaan (Faith) and righteous deeds are in disharmony with bad attributes and bad morals which are a pure evil, devoid of good. So, we should avoid evil and near good, be righteous and pious, for, it is the measure of preference and the balance by which men are weighed.

O Allaah! We seek refuge from You, from an undesirable character and a useless deed, and Allaah rewards according to intentions and it is He who guides to the right path.

All praise is due to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon our Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, his Family, his Companions and Brothers till the Day of Resurrection.

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