

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



*Social  
Etiquette*



# *Social Etiquette*

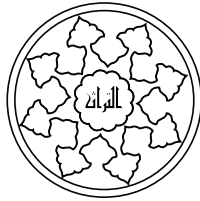
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طُرُقُ الْعِشْقِ كُلُّهَا آدَابٌ    أَدِّبُوا النَّفْسَ أَيُّهَا الْأَصْحَابُ

The ways of Love, all of them refinement,  
So companions, refine your soul in alignment!





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## *Foreword*



In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah, and may His Peace and Blessings be upon His Messenger.

Before discussing the importance and timeliness of this simple booklet on social etiquette, it is necessary to gain a glimpse into the life of its esteemed author. Known as Ḥakīm al-Ummah (Sage of the Community), Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (1864–1943) was renowned for enjoining good and forbidding evil at every opportunity with wisdom and humility. He spent his life diagnosing cultural innovations and prescribing solutions to return Muslims to the Qur’an and *Sunnah*.

Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī was selected for religious education and Arabic studies at a very young age, and he completed his education at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. From the age of twelve, he routinely offered the night vigil prayer, and even in his youth was known for his piety and religiosity. He became a central figure in the revival of Islam in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century, travelling to various cities and villages, delivering lectures in the hope of reforming people. In particular, he laid emphasis on adopting Islam as a complete way of life and reiterated the importance of upholding Islamic values in spheres of life beyond worship such as social interaction and trade. In doing so, he sought to facilitate basic personal reformation of the masses and revive the fundamental tenets of Islamic character and practice in everyday life.

This booklet is truly a rare and pertinent find. In compiling a

comprehensive booklet on core aspects of Islamic etiquette, Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī did what few scholars had done before: put etiquette back into the heart of Islamic study and practice. The definition of etiquette is clear enough: ‘To ensure that the speech or actions of one human being does not, even in the slightest, cause harm, inconvenience, burden, ill-feelings, dislike, confusion, strangeness and embarrassment to others.’

This compilation was originally written with the intention of reviving the *Sunnah* and correcting a multitude of cultural innovations and bizarre practices in 19<sup>th</sup> century India, yet it is as applicable to the modern reader as it was over a century ago. At a time when the concepts of respect and good conduct are being questioned, pushed to the side and even abandoned in favour of personal pursuits and self-fulfilment, this reminder is as essential as ever.

Mawlānā Ṣāhib introduces the book by stating the need for a treatise concerned solely with social etiquette as a requirement of faith, justified through Qur’anic verses and hadiths. This introduction brings comprehensive evidence for the centrality of good manners and conduct in Islam, elevating it above voluntary worship to the levels of fulfilment of rights and other transactions in the *sharī‘ah*. Mawlānā Ashraf outlines a fundamental principle, that a Muslim should not inconvenience or cause upset to anyone verbally or physically, and he supplements these points with practical examples he has experienced in his lifetime. In doing so, he critiques many seemingly harmless, innocent acts which are prevalent, yet contradict the spirit of Islam. After I finished reading this book, I was left wondering how it is that Islamic books concerning etiquette are so few and far between. I personally found the section on the etiquettes of gift giving and the anecdotes regarding hosting and visiting people to be particularly valuable. It is a great credit to the publisher that he has attempted to answer this call for accessible literature concerning Islamic conduct. May Allah ﷻ reward him for his efforts. *Amīn*.

The anecdotes relayed in this booklet reveal the character and deep desire of Mawlānā Ashraf to bring people to Islam, to have

them practice it with *iḥsān* and to revive the character and habits of the Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions ﷺ. He reflects that, in practice, he is at times too harsh, but it is clear that stems from his desire to impress upon all those he meets and all those who read his works the importance of excellence in deed and word. His discipline and strictness are metered by his humility, enabling him to affect the hearts of the masses and successfully guide people to the Islamic way. In addition to informing about correct etiquette, this book also provides a glimpse into the esteemed author's life of *dāwah*; a life of motivating himself and the community towards the right path.

May Allah ﷻ shower His mercy upon Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī, and may He allow this publication to be a continuous source of reward for him and a source of benefit for its readers. *Amīn*.

SEHER GHUFOOR  
Turath Publishing



## *Editors' Notes*



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

It is our honour and privilege to bring you this short treatise on manners and etiquettes in Islam, an important topic which has only in recent years enjoyed a return to the spotlight.

In this translation, we have sought to bring this work into a contemporary, Western context in order to make it more accessible and relevant to the many millions of Muslims living in Western countries. To do this, we have included examples in the footnotes that are relevant to our current times and places, but which are not found in the original work.





# *Social Etiquette*



## PREFACE

In the name of Allah, the all-Merciful, the very Merciful.

After praising Allah ﷻ and sending salutations on the Prophet ﷺ, the following is presented:

There are generally considered to be five constitutional branches of religion. The laymen in general have considered only two parts to be essential, i.e. tenets of faith and matters of worship. Scholars of worldly matters have focussed on the third part, that is, matters of mutual transactions such as business dealings and contracts. The scholars of the spiritual, inner self have included the fourth part, the reformation of the inner self. However, the fifth part, rules of social etiquette, has been considered by the majority of these three groups (save those for whom Allah ﷻ has willed,) as something unrelated to religion. Consequently, reminders and public speeches consist of the first four categories, while the fifth is seldom even mentioned or taught, resulting in this category almost totally elapsing, in aspects of knowledge and practice. In my humble opinion, the major reason for the present-day lack of mutual love and respect (which has been strongly emphasised in the *sharī'ah*) is our ill manners. Poor manners cause the harbouring of ill-feelings and disheartenment, which remove, and are obstacles for cheerfulness and happiness, which in turn are pivotal for mutual love.

The notion that the rules of social etiquette have no relation to religion, is itself rejected by the Qur'an, the hadiths and the teachings of the wise men of religion. A few are presented below as examples:

Allah ﷻ states:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا﴾

*O you who believe, when you are told: 'Make room in gatherings', then make room, and Allah will make room for you. And when it is said: 'Get up', then get up. . . (58:11)*

It is also stated:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا﴾

*O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your houses until you have asked permission. (24:27)*

Take a look at how we are commanded to honour the comfort of those sitting with us. Ibn 'Umar ﷺ relates:

نَهَى النَّبِيُّ ﷺ أَنْ يَفْرَنَّ الرَّجُلُ بَيْنَ الثَّمَرَتَيْنِ جَمِيعًا، حَتَّى يَسْتَأْذِنَ أَصْحَابَهُ.

The Prophet ﷺ forbade anyone taking two dates together without seeking the consent of his companions.<sup>1</sup>

Consider that a trivial act was prohibited merely due to the upset it could cause others. It is also a saying of the Prophet ﷺ:

مَنْ أَكَلَ ثُومًا أَوْ بَصَلًا فَلْيَعْتَزَلْنَا.

Whoever has eaten garlic or onion should keep away from us.<sup>2</sup>

Notice how the Prophet ﷺ proscribed certain foods due to the minor inconvenience its odour could cause. Another saying of the Prophet ﷺ is:

1 Bukhārī (2489).

2 Bukhārī (855).