

From Islamic Refinement (Part 1): The Need for Adab

Introduction

The following article and those to come after with the title *From Islamic Refinement* will, inshaAllah, serve as a summary¹ of Shaikh ‘Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah’s² ﷺ booklet, entitled, *Min Adab al-Islam*, which can translate to *From Islamic Refinement*, wherein the Shaikh gathers a number of points pertaining to Islamic refinement (*Adab*) regarding which he found many Muslims to be unaware or neglectful of. The intention in listing these points is to remind them and to myself, as I am not better than them in this regard, nor am I independent of this reminder. The purpose is to enjoin each other upon the truth and patience, in accordance with Allah’s ﷻ clear command, “and remind, for indeed, reminders benefit the believers.” May Allah ﷻ accept these few pages and make it a means for us to refine our lives in accordance with His ﷻ commands and the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ.³

Islam in its purest form teaches refinement of character and behavior, permeating every minute aspect of our lives.⁴ This refinement teaches the elderly and young, as well as men and women. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed, women are similar to men,”⁵ so whatever is sought out from men with respect to Islamic refinement, then the same will be sought out from women, for it is through them Islam can be presented and understood.

Islam calls us to these forms of refinement of character and even encourages them, so that a person can learn to become a fully fledged believer, and there can be harmony among people. There is no doubt that adorning oneself with these characteristics and mannerisms enhances the

¹ This will **not** be a word-for-word translation e.g. the word *adab* will be translated interchangeably between “refinement,” “character” and “etiquettes” in order to suit the fluidity of expressions and phrases.

² The accomplished researcher, prolific writer, the encyclopedic scholar, and grand Muhaddith, Shaikh ‘Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah (1336 – 1417) ﷺ is well-known among scholarly circles and is in no need of an introduction. Being one of the most distinguished scholars of the 20th century, his numerous literary works, academic contributions, and students are too great and numerous to be discussed here. One may refer to the opening pages of his index of asanid entitled, *Imdad al-Fattah bi Asanid wa Marwiyat al-Shaikh Abdul Fattah* for an overview of his life and achievements.

³ The Shaikh writes, “This treatise, *Min Adab al-Islam (From Islamic Refinement)* has been printed seven times at the end of Imam al-Harith al-Muhasibi’s *Risalah al-Mustarshidin* in a compact form in seven pages. This expanded edition is the first one, and I hope from Allah ﷻ that He decrees benefit and acceptance for it by His grace, nobility and excellence.

Note: All of the Ahadith in this treatise are either *Sahih* (authentic) or *Hasan* (sound).”

⁴ Even in the minutia of our day-to-day lives, such as the way in which one enters and exits the bathroom, how to sit therein, and how to relieve oneself. Some of the polytheists said – with a tone of mockery – to the noble companion, Salman al-Farsi ﷺ, “Your prophet teaches you everything, including how to relieve yourselves?!” He responded “Absolutely! Our prophet ﷺ has forbidden us from facing the direction of the Qiblah while relieving oneself, to clean up afterwards with the right, and cleaning with less than three stones...” Narrated by Imams Muslim (262), Abu Dawud (17), Tirmidhi (16), Nasai (41), and Ibn Majah (316).

⁵ Narrated by Imams Abu Dawud (236), Tirmidhi (113), and Ibn Majah (612). Imam al-Khattabi ﷺ writes in *Ma’alim al-Sunan* (1/79), “In other words, women share similarities with men in physical composition, natural disposition, and legal rulings, **except when there is proof to demonstrate that something is specific to men or specific to women.**”

beauty of the Muslim's journey, fortifying his excellence, thereby bringing him closer to the people and their hearts (i.e. they generate genuine love).

These etiquettes which we will discuss serve as the quintessence and are from the objectives of Islamic law. Thus, calling them *adab* (etiquettes) should not make them afterthoughts, wherein a person just picks and chooses which ones he wants to act upon and which ones he wants to abandon.

Imam al-Qarafi رحمته الله says in his book, *al-Furuq* – while discussing the status of Islamic refinement in practice and that it holds a high position, “Be well aware that even a little bit of refinement is better than an abundance of practice (‘*amal*). It is for this reason that Ruwaim – the righteous scholar – said to his son, ‘My beloved son, make your practice into salt, and your refinement into flour,’ i.e. be well-versed in your refinement of character so that its abundance in relation is like the relationship between flour and salt in dough (i.e. more refinement than mere practice). **An abundance of refinement with a little bit of righteous practice is greater than practice with limited refinement.**”

Some of these etiquettes will be discussed directly, as a large number of us fall into error in matters which should be obvious. A Muslim should be distinguished by his beauty, perfection and conduction, as instructed by the Prophet ﷺ to his companions, “You will be going to your brothers, so beautify your clothes and organize your means of transport so that you may be distinguished among the people. Indeed, Allah does not like indecency nor shamelessness.”⁶

It is befitting that a Muslim be recognized that he is a Muslim by the excellence of his attire, the cleanliness of his presentation, and freshness of his appearance.

⁶ Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud (4089)