



*The Etiquette of  
Seeking Knowledge*

Shaykh Bakr Aboo Zayd



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Bismi Allahi Alrrahmani Alrraheemi  
In the name of Allah, the most  
Beneficent, the most Merciful*

# **The Etiquette of Seeking Knowledge**

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# Contents

Transliteration Table .....	6
The Translator's Foreword .....	7
The Author's Foreword .....	14
<b>Chapter 1: The Etiquette of the Seeker's Inner Self .....</b>	<b>18</b>
1. Knowledge is worship .....	18
2. Be adherent to the path of the <i>Salaf as-Saalih</i> .....	21
3. Commit to fearing Allaah, the Most High .....	23
4. Continual observance [of Allaah] .....	25
5. Lower your wing and put arrogance and pride behind you .....	25
6. Contentment and <i>zuhd</i> (Asceticism) .....	27
7. Adorn yourself with the splendour of knowledge .....	28
8. Adorn [yourself] with honour .....	29
9. Enjoy masculine qualities .....	29
10. Forsaking luxury .....	30
11. To avoid the gatherings of vain speech .....	33
12. Avoid commotion ( <i>hayshaat</i> ) .....	33
13. Adorn [yourself] with gentleness .....	33
14. Contemplation .....	34
15. Firmness and confirmation .....	34
<b>Chapter 2: The Methodology of Seeking Knowledge .....</b>	<b>35</b>
16. The methodology of seeking knowledge and its levels .....	35
17. To acquire knowledge from the <i>mashaa'yikh</i> (scholars) .....	40
<b>Chapter 3: The Etiquette of the Seeker with his <i>Shaykh</i> ...</b>	<b>44</b>
18. Considering the <i>shaykh</i> 's [consequent] status .....	44
19. Your capital – O seeker – is from your <i>shaykh</i> .....	46
20. The <i>shaykh</i> 's enthusiasm in his lessons .....	47
21. Writing what the <i>shaykh</i> says during the lesson or revision .....	47
22. Acquiring knowledge from a <i>mubtadi</i> ' (an innovator) .....	47

<b>Chapter 4: The Etiquette of Companionship .....</b>	<b>58</b>
23. Beware of the bad companion .....	58
<b>Chapter 5: The Etiquette of the Student in                   Leading a Life of Knowledge .....</b>	<b>60</b>
24. High aspirations in knowledge .....	60
25. The burning desire for seeking knowledge.....	61
26. Emigrating for the sake of seeking knowledge .....	62
27. Preserving knowledge through writing [it] .....	62
28. Preservation (of knowledge) through paying attention to it .....	64
29. Occasional revision of knowledge .....	65
30. To gain understanding (of Islaam) by deriving the issues of <i>fiqh</i> (Islaamic rulings) by applying the [comprehensive] principles (of the <i>Sharee'ah</i> ) .....	65
31. Seeking refuge in Allaah when seeking knowledge and acquiring it .....	69
32. Honesty in knowledge .....	69
33. Truthfulness .....	70
34. The sanctuary of the seeker of knowledge .....	72
35. Preserving your capital [i.e. lifetime] .....	72
36. Relaxing the body .....	74
37. Precision and correction reading .....	75
38. Summarising long compilations [through reading] .....	76
39. Excellence in asking questions .....	76
40. Debating without argumentation .....	77
41. Revision of the knowledge in groups .....	77
42. The seeker of knowledge lives between the [texts of the] Qur'aan and <i>Sunnah</i> and knowledge associated to them .....	78
43. Completion of learning the tools of every subject.....	78

<b>Chapter 6: Adorn Yourself with the                   Implementation of Knowledge .....</b>	<b>79</b>
44. The signs of beneficial knowledge .....	79
45. The alms of knowledge .....	80
46. The glory of the scholars .....	80

47. Protection of knowledge .....	82
48. Diplomacy not compromise (on behalf of the religion) .....	83
49. Passion for the books .....	83
50. The foundation of your library .....	84
51. Dealing with the book .....	85
52. Further to this .....	85
53. Writing with diacritical points .....	85
<b>Chapter 7: Precautions .....</b>	<b>87</b>
54. False hopes .....	87
55. Beware of being “Aboo Shibr” (the father of a span) .....	87
56. Becoming manifest before becoming qualified .....	87
57. Deterioration of manners in knowledge .....	87
58. (Merely) “putting pen to paper” .....	88
59. Your stance on the mistakes of those who preceded you .....	88
60. Deterring dubious affairs .....	89
61. Beware of grammatical errors (in Arabic) .....	89
62. Beware of premature intellectuality .....	90
63. Beware of the new <i>Israa'eeliyaat</i> .....	91
64. Beware of Byzantine debate .....	92
65. No <i>walaa'</i> and <i>baraa'</i> (declaring allegiance and declaring innocence) should be pledged over sectarianism and partisanship .....	92
66. The things that nullify this <i>hilyah</i> .....	96

# Transliteration Table

## Consonants

ء	'		ض	d
ب	b		ط	t
ت	t		ظ	dh
ث	th		ع	'
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	h		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	s		ي	y

## Vowels

	ا		آ	aa
	اِ		اَ	aa
	اُ		اُو	au

## Translator's Foreword

All praise is due to Allaah alone; we praise Him, seek His aid and seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Him from the evil of our inner-selves and the evil of our actions. Whomsöever Allaah guides no one can misguide and whomsoever Allaah misguides no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His slave and messenger.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهٖۚ وَلَا تَمُوْنُ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ  
مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

“O you who believe! Fear Allaah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islaam.”

[Soorah Aal-'Imraan (3):102]

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَّجِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنْهَا  
زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّنِسَاءً ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ تَسَّءَلُوْنَ  
بِهٖۚ وَاَلْرَّحَامَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا ﴿١﴾

“O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person and from him He created his wife and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allaah through whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allaah is Ever an All-Watcher over you.”

[Soorah an-Nisaa' (4):1]

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ  
لَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهُ  
فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٧١﴾



**“O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him, and speak always the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allaah and His messenger he has indeed achieved a great achievement.”**

[Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):70-71]

To proceed: Today we are generally witnessing an Islaamic awakening as we see the Muslims re-uniting with their Islaamic identity that they had lost for so many years, and the situation is as Allaah described it by saying:

أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي  
النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا

**“Is he who is dead and We gave him life and set for him a light whereby he can walk amongst men; like him who is in the darkness never to emerge therefrom?”**

[Soorah al-An'aam (6):122]

On the other hand this person (whose heart was revived by Allaah) will become shocked by the unfortunate situation which the Muslims live in today; from being humiliated, ravaged by their enemies and by the division of the [Islaamic] Nation into groups and sects. Amongst the things that a conscious person is [also] shocked by, is the scarcity of the real practising scholars; those who “guide those who have strayed, are patient in every calamity [that befalls them], give life to the [spiritually] dead with Allaah’s Book and enlighten those [spiritually] blind with the light of Allaah”<sup>1</sup>, and how their places became occupied by the *ruwaybidah* who feign possessing knowledge and have little or no association with knowledge yet they are witnessed answering questions and passing *fatwas* (religious verdicts) without any hesitation. This is due to the weakness of their piety and fear of Allaah; causing people to be misled by

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from Imaam Ahmad’s foreword to his book *ar-Rad alaz-Zanaadiqah wal Jahmiyyah* see *al-Masaa’il war-Rasaa’il* (2/71).

their incorrect and inaccurate *fatwas*, just as the Prophet (ﷺ) prophesied: “Verily Allaah does not take away the knowledge, by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but takes it away by the death of the scholars till when none of the scholars remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and lead the people astray.”<sup>2</sup> And it is as if giving a *fatwa* in the religion has become everybody’s right, and this is a crime on behalf of knowledge, the people of knowledge and the Religion of Allaah. At the same time we see such people launching vicious attacks on the true scholars and the reason for such [behaviour] is pride, jealousy, conceit and transgression as Allaah said:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ  
 وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ  
 فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
 مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
 لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى  
 صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾

“Mankind were one community and Allaah sent Prophets with glad tidings and warnings, and with them He sent down Scripture in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed. And only those to whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it after clear proofs had come to unto them through transgression against one another. Then Allaah by His Leave guided those who believed to the truth of that wherein they differed. And Allaah guides whom He wills to the Straight Path.”

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2):213]

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by al-Bukhaaree in the *Book of Knowledge*, Chapter of ‘How the religious knowledge will be taken away?’ and was also narrated by Muslim, from the *hadeeth* of ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-’Aaas.

Ibn Battah commented on this *Aayah* saying: “My brethren, this is news of a people whom Allaah has preferred (over others, i.e. the scholars), taught, gave insight [into the Religion] and raised [above others]. And He denied others [such bounties due to their] continuous transgression against them and their jealousy of them, which lead them to oppose them, have enmity towards them and to be in conflict with them, hence they became too proud to be followers of those upon the truth or to follow their example so they became leaders in misguidance and heresy by turning their backs to the truth and seeking after leadership.” Look at the deep understanding of this noble *Imaam*, and if you contemplate over the condition of such people today, you will reach the conclusion that the reason which caused them to stray is the love of leadership and having a following, self-delusion, having a high opinion of their own verdicts until it led them to transgress against the people of knowledge and show no consideration for them or their opinions and to look down on them and throw evil accusations at them, like saying “they don’t have knowledge of *fiqhul-waaqi*’ (current affairs)”, “scholars of the dollars”, and “scholars of menstruation and post-natal bleeding”<sup>\*</sup> etc.

Unfortunately the *Ummah* today is suffering [at the hands] of people who have no religious knowledge manifesting themselves for *da’wah* and *fataawa*. The increase of such people is also an indication of the nearness of the Hour, as mentioned earlier in the *hadeeth* of ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr, and when the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked when the Hour will come, he said: “If entrustment is lost then wait for the Hour [to come]”, So it was said to him: “How will it be lost?” He replied: “If the affairs [of the public] were assigned to other than the [rightful] people, then wait for the Hour [to come],” and this is

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\* This is not a new accusation, rather it is an old one. Just as Allaah sends forth scholars to revive Islaam, there are also *mubtadi’ah* who revive the *bid’ah* of their predecessors. It was recorded that one of the people of *bid’ah* said, “The knowledge of Aboo Haneefah and ash-Shaafi’ee does not go beyond a woman’s underwear”! See *al-Itisaan* by ash-Shaatibee.

by neglecting the scholars and not referring newly arising issues of this day and age to them, and referring these issues to the youth who are ignorant (some, even of the Arabic language! Let alone [religious] knowledge that can only be acquired after learning the Arabic language). It was narrated in the *hadeeth* of Abee Umayyah al-Jumahee that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: “From the signs of the Hour is that knowledge will be taken from the small ones.”<sup>3</sup> He (ﷺ) also said: “Indeed, there are years to come in which a person will become very confused, [a time] when a liar is believed and the truthful person is proclaimed a liar, and the deceitful person is entrusted and honest person is accused of being untrustworthy, and [a time when the] *ruwaybidah* will speak.” It was asked: “And who are the *ruwaybidah*?” So he replied: “The insignificant person who speaks on the public affairs.”<sup>4</sup> As-Sindee said in his explanation of this *hadeeth*: “i.e. the person with little knowledge.” And al-Qaasim Ibn Usbugh reported that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab said: “The *Deen* will be corrupted if it comes by way of the young and the seniors refuse to learn it, and the people will become righteous if they take their knowledge from their seniors and they – i.e. the seniors– are followed by the young,”<sup>5</sup> and Ibn Mas’ood said: “You will be prosperous as long as knowledge is in the possession of your seniors, but if it is transferred to the subordinates, then they will mock their seniors”<sup>6</sup> and this is very evident to see today.

There are many reasons why such people behave in this manner. Amongst these reasons is because they are conceited and conceit is an evil disease [of the heart], which, if it enters the heart it will

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<sup>3</sup> Narrated by at-Tabaraanee, al-Laalaka’ee and Ibn ‘Abdil-Barr and declared *hasan* by al-Albaanee.

<sup>4</sup> Narrated by Ahmad, Ibn Maajah, al-Haakim and al-Bayhaqee from the *hadeeth* of Aboo Hurayrah, and it was authenticated by al-Albaanee.

<sup>5</sup> In his *Musannaf* as mentioned in *Fath-hul-Baaree* with a chain of narrators, which was authenticated by al-Haafidh himself.

<sup>6</sup> Narrated by Ibn ‘Abdil-Barr.

corrupt it; as in the *hadeeth* of Anas that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "...three elements of destruction: following vain desires, giving into [ones own] greed and conceit."<sup>7</sup> It is also the messenger of pride, because if a person is conceited then he does not look to anybody else or have regard for anyone else's opinion even if it was the correct opinion, and this is what the Prophet (ﷺ) meant when he described pride as "rejecting the truth [out of pride] and looking down at the people."<sup>8</sup>

This premature manifestation led the Muslims to become deluded by such people. The other main reason why the Muslims became deluded is due to their ignorance and deficiency in differentiating between scholars and pseudo-scholars. Also the fact that these people are very eloquent speakers, who beautify their speeches and their sermons and appeal to the people's [vain] desires. The Prophet (ﷺ) warned us against such people by saying: "[The thing] I fear most for my *Ummah* is a hypocrite who speaks eloquently,"<sup>9</sup> and he (ﷺ) said in another *hadeeth*: "Verily Allaah despises the person who [goes to extremes to] speak eloquently, he who wags his tongue [when speaking] as a cow wags its tongue [when eating]."<sup>10</sup>

Therefore it is essential for the Muslim, especially the seeker of knowledge to uproot these disease from his heart. This can be achieved by adhering to *taqwa* (fear of Allaah), constantly examining your conscience, knowing your limits, humbling yourself and knowing the consequent status of the scholars. By doing this the seeker of knowledge has taken the path to freeing him/herself from these diseases.

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<sup>7</sup> Narrated by Bazaar, at-Tabaraanee and others, and was declared *hasan* by al-Albaanee.

<sup>8</sup> Narrated by Muslim from the *hadeeth* of Ibn Mas'ood.

<sup>9</sup> Narrated by Ibn Hibbaan, at-Tabaraanee, Bazaar and others from the *hadeeth* of 'Imraan, and was authenticated by *al-Albaanee*.

<sup>10</sup> Narrated by Aboo Daawood, at-Tirmidhee, and authenticated by al-Albaanee.

For this reason I was driven to teach and translate this book; therefore I put this book at the disposal of my brothers and sisters, so they can use it as a gauge for those who manifest themselves to teach or call to Islaam. I was also driven by a number of other reasons; namely the fact that many people who are or claim to be seekers of knowledge do not behave as they should, the scarcity of books written in English on this topic (and it is a very important one for any person who wishes to be a true seeker of knowledge). Furthermore it was from the way of the *Salaf as-Saalih* to learn etiquette before learning knowledge as it was narrated that Ibn Seereen (*rahimahullaah*) said: “They (i.e. the *salaf*) used to learn manners as they would learn the knowledge.”

This book itself has become one of the most important books on this topic today and has become widely taught by the scholars and seekers of knowledge alike. It was even explained by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen<sup>11</sup> – a leading scholars of our time. However, it is not the easiest of books to understand, particularly the original Arabic text, as anyone who has read it will testify. This made the translation a difficult task, thus I would like to thank all my brothers and sisters in Islaam who helped with the translation and publishing of this book. To aid the reader, I have added some explanatory footnotes which are indicated by “(M)” to distinguish them from the author’s footnotes. I have also added the references for the verses of the Qur’aan and the *takhreej* of the *ahaaadeeth*.

I hope that this book will be guidance for those who are in confusion and those who wish to follow the path of knowledge, and I hope from Allaah that He accepts this humble effort from me. And Allaah knows best.

**Abu Abdillah Murad ibn Muhammad Hilmi Ash-Shuweikh.**

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<sup>11</sup> However this explanation can only be found in tape form.

# Introduction

All praise is due to Allaah alone and to proceed:

I wrote this blessed book in the year 1408H [at a time] when the Muslims are witnessing an awakening to knowledge, to which faces light up [in delight]. And it is still progressing vivaciously; progressing to higher levels and blossoming in the hearts of the youth of this *Ummah* - its glory and blood that renews its life - as we see [their] writings follow [one another] in succession, and [as we see them] going to and fro within the folds of knowledge, they are overloaded by carrying it, and they drink from it time and time again. They possess ambitions, academic [qualities], and amazing [patience] upon studying and diving deeply into the issues. All of which is enough to bring tidings of victory to the Muslims, so praise be to the One who gives life and death to the hearts.

However, it is essential to water this blessed seed and to supervise it throughout its journey in order to extend a safeguard to it that protects it from stumbling in the midst of seeking and acting [upon the knowledge] and from intellectual, ideological, behavioural, divisional, and partisan commotion. I had put at their disposal a letter on *Ta'aalum* (feigning knowledge) that exposes those hiding within their ranks out of fear that they will lead them to their destruction and confuse them and separate them from the path of seeking [knowledge]; in turn pulling them away without them realising. And today your brother (i.e., the *shaykh* himself) is taking you by the hand and supporting you by putting at the disposal of your fingertips a letter that carries the distinguishing characteristics (*sifah kaashifah*<sup>12</sup>) for your beautification, so here I am putting my sharpened pencil tip to

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<sup>12</sup> This is a terminology used in dictionaries that specialise in taking the words back to their roots, and it means the characteristic that distinguishes the object of description - which is unknown [to the listener] - from the other types in a manner that distinguishes it from them.

the paper and reciting that which I am writing for you, that which is enough for Allaah to bring comfort to your eyes with.

The motives of the *Sharee'ah* are affirmative upon the issue that to adorn oneself with beautiful etiquette, noble manners, good behaviour, and pious conduct are distinguishing characteristics of the people of Islaam, and that knowledge - the most precious pearl in the crown of the purified *Sharee'ah* - cannot be attained except by those who adorn themselves with its etiquette and those who leave evil qualities associated to it. For this reason the scholars devoted their attention to (this etiquette), outlined its importance and wrote books solely on this topic; either pertaining to [general conduct] with all types of knowledge or to specific types of knowledge such as the etiquette of the carriers of the Noble Qur'aan, the etiquette of the *muhaddith*, the etiquette of the *muftee*, the etiquette of the *qaadee* (judge), the etiquette of the *muhtasib* (the one who enjoins good and forbids evil for the sake of Allaah) and so on. The issue [of this book] is the general conduct of those who take the path of learning the knowledge of the *Sharee'ah*.

In the past the scholars used to dictate to the seekers in the gatherings of knowledge, the etiquette of seeking [knowledge], and I reached the time of the last highlights of that in some of the gatherings of knowledge in the Noble Prophetic Mosque, as some of the teachers therewith used to teach there seekers the book by Zarnoojee (died in 593AH) - may Allaah have mercy upon him - which he named: *Teaching the learner the way of learning*.<sup>13</sup>

I hope that the scholars will extend this firm rope that leads to the most noble of ways, by including the teaching of this topic at the beginning of the gatherings in the *masaajid* and as a topic in academic curriculums. [Similarly] I hope that this will be a good opening in reviving this topic, which is a means of disciplining the seeker

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<sup>13</sup> It was published many times and despite its benefits there are some aspects that one needs to take heed of, so let it be known, and Allah knows best.



and taking him on the path of adherence in his etiquette in seeking and carrying knowledge, and his etiquette with himself, his teacher, his lessons, his colleagues, his books and the fruits of his knowledge and so on in the latter stages of his life.

So to you I present this book that contains a number of manners that if a person was to neglect them, he would have acquired an evil characteristic. [I also mentioned] a number of things that oppose these manners and a number of evil characteristics. There are people who neglect a few and some who neglect many. These manners also vary in [their] levels, from being supererogatory to [being] obligatory. Similarly the things that oppose these manners are also levels that vary from being things which are *makrooh* (disliked) to things being *muharram* (forbidden). Amongst these manners there are also things which apply to everybody in general and there are things that specifically apply to the seeker of knowledge,<sup>14</sup> and there are some which are known by necessity from the *Sharee'ah* [i.e. they are religiously obvious] and some that are known through common sense, but there is a general indication to them in the *Sharee'ah*, [such as] having good conduct and noble manners. I also do not intend to encompass all the aspects [of etiquette], but its layout is in a manner that gives slight hints and points [you] to the priorities, so if a good soul comes across (this book) then it would take this small amount [of etiquette mentioned] and increase it, and that which is general and specify it, and whoever takes that which is therein will benefit from it and in turn benefit others from it. It is within itself taken from the etiquette of those whom Allaah has blessed their knowledge, and made [them into] *imaams*, those who are taken as

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<sup>14</sup> And I would also add to what the Shaykh said, that there are some qualities which are particular to male seekers of knowledge and there are some that are particular to the female seekers of knowledge. (M)

examples of guidance, may Allaah gather us with them in His Paradise, *aameen*.<sup>15</sup>

**Bakr ibn 'Abdillaah Aboo Zayd.**

5/8/1408AH.

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<sup>15</sup> From these books: *al-Jaami'* and *al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqih* by al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee; *Ta'leem al-Muta'allim Tareeq at-Ta'allum* by az-Zarnoojee; *Aadaab at-Talub* by ash-Shawkaanee; *Akhlaaq al-'Ulamaa'* by al-Aajurree; *Aadab al-Muta'allimeen* by Suhnoon; *ar-Risaalah al-Mufussilah li Ahkaam al-Muta'allimeen* by al-Qaabisee; *Tadhkiratus-Saami'u wal-Mutakallim* by Ibn Jamaa'ah; *al-Hath ala Talubil-Ilmi* by al-Askaree; *Fadl 'Ilmis-Salafi alal Khalaf* by Ibn Rajab; *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilmi* by Ibn 'Abdil Barr; *al'Ilmu, Fadlihi wa Talabihi* by al-Ameen al-Haaj; *Fadlul-'Ilmi* by Muhammad Arsalaan; *Miftaah Dar as-Sa'aadah* by Ibn al-Qayyim; *Sharh al-Ihya'* by az-Zubaydee; *Juwaahirul-'Iqdayn* by as-Samhoodee; *Aadaab al-'Ulamaa'i-wal-Muta'allimeen* by Husayn Ibn Mansoor – which is extracted from the previous book; *Qaanoon at-Ta'weel* by Ibn 'Arabee; *al-'Uzlah* by al-Khattaabee; *Min Akhlaaqil-Ulamaa'* by Muhammad Sulaymaan; *Manaahij al-Ulamaa'* by Faarooq as-Saamuraa'i; *at-Ta'leemu wal-Irshaad* by Badr ad-Deen al-Halabee; *adh-Dhakheerah* (volume 1) by al-Qaraafee; *al-Majmoo'* (volume 1) by an-Nawawee; *Tash-heeth al-Himam Ilal-'Ilmi* by Muhammad Ibn Ibraaheem ash-Shaybaanee; *Rasaa'il al-Isলাah* by Muhammad Khidr Husayn; *Aathaar Muhaamad al-Basheer al-Ibraaheemee* and many other books on this topic, may Allah multiply the reward for all [those who wrote (on this topic)] *aameen*.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Etiquette of the Seeker's Inner Self

### 1. Knowledge is worship<sup>16</sup>

The principle of all principles mentioned in this book, as well as the principle of every required action is in your understanding that knowledge is worship. Some scholars said, “Knowledge is a secretive prayer and the worship of the heart.” Therefore the condition of worship is:

**Firstly:** Sincerity of intention for Allaah *subhaanahu wa ta'aala*; due to His saying:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

“And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allaah, and worship none but Him Alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him)...”

[Soorah al-Bayyinah (98):5]

Also [we find] in the famous *hadeeth*, which was narrated through only one chain upon the authority of the Commander of the Believers 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, (*radiiallaahu 'anhu*) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Actions are but by intentions...”

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<sup>16</sup> *Fataawa Ibn Taymiyyah* (10/11,12,14,15,19,49-54), (11/314), (20/77-78).

So if Knowledge is devoid of sincere intention then it is transformed from being amongst the most noble acts of worship to being one of the lowest forms of violation, and there is nothing that destroys [the blessing of] knowledge as much as *riyaa'* (showing off), be it *riyaa'* of *shirk* or *riyaa'* of *ikhlaas*<sup>17</sup> and also *tasmee'* (showing of with intent of being heard of); an example of such is the *musmi'* (the person carrying out this action) saying: "I know [such and such]" or, "I have memorized such and such..." etc.

Therefore, adhere to freeing yourself from everything that blemishes your intention of seeking [knowledge] such as love of standing out, and rising above your colleagues<sup>18</sup> and turning them into objects of achieving [hidden] objectives and attaining [worldly] pleasures; such as [seeking] wealth, glory, fame (by way of hearsay), praiseworthiness, or intending to turn people's faces in your direction; for these, and other similar things that are such that if they blemish one's intention they will corrupt it, and the blessing from knowledge will be lost. For this reason it is incumbent upon you to protect your intention from all the traces of seeking with your knowledge the pleasure of others besides Allaah, the Most High, yet it is incumbent to beware of the things which lead to these [evil qualities].

There are a number of sayings and occurrences that I mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter of my book *at-Ta'aalum*, and I would also like to add to the previous list: the prohibition of the

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<sup>17</sup> The difference between these two is that the first category is when a person embarks upon seeking knowledge or any act of worship initially for the sake of pleasing others, in order to show off. As for the second category it is a *shirk* lesser than the first one and occurs during the act of worship (M).

*Adh-Adhakheerah* by al-Qaraafee (1/45) and refer to a splendid piece written by at-Tabaree in *Tahdheeb al-Aathar* (2/121-122) published by as-Safa, Makkah.

<sup>18</sup> With the intent of appearing to be more knowledgeable than your brothers or sisters and belittling them. However if one is free from such evil intentions, then it is required from the seeker of knowledge to exert him/herself and to compete with his/her brethren. (M)

scholars on the issue of *at-tubooliyaat* meaning the [controversial] issues which are mentioned in order to achieve fame. It used to be said: “the drums are struck for the mistake of a scholar,”<sup>19</sup> and it was narrated that Sufyaan (ath-Thawree) *rahimahullaah* said: “I was blessed with the understanding of the Qur'aan, and when I upturned the money purse, it - i.e., understanding - was taken away from me.”<sup>20</sup>

So hold fast - may Allaah shower His mercy upon you - to the most trustworthy handhold (sincerity) that will save you from these fatal blemishes, by becoming - along with exerting yourself in becoming sincere - very fearful of anything that nullifies it (sincerity), and displaying great poverty to Allaah *subhaanahu*, along with turning to Him sincerely. It was narrated that Sufyaan ibn Sa'eed ath-Thawree said: “I did not treat anything more difficult than my sincerity.” It was narrated that 'Umar ibn Dharr said to his father: “O, my father! Why is it when you preach to people they are taken by their weeping, and when others preach to them they do not cry?” So he replied: “O, my son! The bereaved woman who cries is not the same as the woman who is hired to cry [over the dead].”<sup>21</sup> May Allaah grant you prosperity in achieving the right guidance.

**Secondly:** The comprehensive quality that guarantees the goodness of this world and the hereafter is the love of Allaah, the Most High, and the love of His Messenger (ﷺ) and realising them by genuine following, and pursuing the tracks of the infallible (i.e. the Prophet (ﷺ)).

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<sup>19</sup> *As-Sawarim wal as-Sinnah* by Abee Madyan ash-Shinqeetee as-Salafee, may Allaah shower His mercy upon him, also see *Sharh al-Ihya* and *Kunuz al-Ajdad* p.263.

<sup>20</sup> *Tadhkirat as-Saami' wal Muta'allim*, p.19.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-'Aqd al-Fareed* by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi.

Allaah, the Most High, said:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ  
فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say: “If you really love Allaah then follow me [and in turn] Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins and Allaah is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[Soorah Aal-'Imraan (3):31]

Generally; this principle [is also considered] as the basis of this book, and its position is that of a crown to [mere] clothes.

So, O you seekers [of knowledge]! Here you are sitting cross legged for the lesson and your souls are attached to the most precious of things (seeking knowledge), so I advise myself and yourselves to fear Allaah, the Most High, openly and in secret; for indeed it is the tool, and the landing place of all virtue, the level of praiseworthiness, the source of power, and the ascension of the highly aspirated, and the most secure binding for the heart from the *fitan* (tribulations) so do not become negligent of it.

## 2. Be adherent to the path of the *Salaf as-Saalih* (the Pious Predecessors)

Be *Salafee*<sup>22</sup> upon the Path, the path of the *Salaf as-Saalih* from the

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<sup>22</sup> Many Muslims today hold it impermissible to call oneself “Salafee”, but the permissibility of such an affiliation will gradually become clear to the reader throughout the book. Meanwhile I saw it appropriate to convey what the scholars say on this issue; first of all, what Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah –*rahimahullaah* - said in *Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, [he said]: “There is no blameworthiness upon the one who manifests the *madh-hab* of the *salaf*, or affiliates himself or ascribes himself to it, rather [the scholars are] unanimously agreed that it is obligatory to accept that from him, because the way of the *salaf* can be none other than the truth.” (4/149)

Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez bin Baaz, *rahimahullaah*, was asked about calling yourself *salafee*, so he replied: “If he is truthful [in what he says] that he is a *atharee* =

*Sahaabah* (the Companions - *radiallaahu 'anhum*) and those who followed after them, who pursued their tracks in all aspects of the Religion from *tawheed* to acts of worship, and so forth.

Be distinguished as strictly adhering to the tracks of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ), and implementing the *sunan* upon yourself and leaving argumentative or doubtful speech, and not becoming engrossed in *'ilm al-kalaam* (rhetorical speech)<sup>23</sup>, and all that attracts sins, and diverts from the *Sharee'ah*. Imaam adh-Dhahabee (*rahimahullaah*)

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= *salafee*, then there is no harm, just as the *salaf* used to say: so and so is *salafee*, or so and so is *atharee* and it is a necessary and obligatory [form of] praise." Extracted from a question & answer session after a lecture given by the Shaykh entitled 'The Rights of the Muslim' see *al-Ajwibah al-Mufeedah* p.17. A similar *fatwa* was passed by Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (ibid.) and the Shaykh Bakr Aboo Zayd himself in his book *Hukm al-Intimaa'* p.36.

Our Shaykh Ibraaheem ar-Ruhaylee – may Allah preserve him - wrote an extensive research on this topic in his unique book *Mawqif Ahlis-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah min Ahlil Ahwaa'i wal Bida'h* (The Stance of the People of the *Sunnah* and the Community Regarding the People of Vain Desires and Innovation) in which he proved the permissibility of calling oneself *salafee* and that it is not considered an innovation, he said: "...and it is not considered as an innovation in the slightest, for *Ahlu-Sunnah* to call themselves *salafees*, yet the terminology of *salaf* equals the terminology of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*, and this is perceived by contemplating upon agreement of the two terminology's with respect to the Companions; for they are the *salaf* and they are *Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*... So with this, it is affirmed that applying this name to – *Ahlu-Sunnah* is religiously legitimate and it relates back in its original meaning to their religious names, such as *Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*, *The Victorious Group*, and *The Saved Sect*, in order to differentiate between them and those who ascribe themselves to Islaam from amongst those who have deviated from the correct Creed that the Messenger (ﷺ) left his nation upon. For this purpose the scholars mentioned that the terminology of *salaf* came about at the time when differences occurred over the foundation of the Religion (*'aqeedah*) between the rhetorical sects and when they all attempted to ascribe themselves to the *Salafus-Saalih*, so it became incumbent to establish clear principles for the *Salafee* orientation which distinguishes it from others who merely claim affiliation to *as-Salafiyyah*." (1/64)

<sup>23</sup> This type of knowledge is derived from the books of Greek and Indian philosophy when they were translated into Arabic. It filtered through to the Muslims' creed, and unfortunately many of scholars of Islaam were affected by it, and it was adapted and spread by *Ahl al-Bid'ah* (the people of *bid'ah*). (M)

said: “It was declared authentic that Imaam Daraqutnee<sup>24</sup> said: ‘There is nothing I despise more than *’ilm al-kalaam’*. I say (i.e. adh-Dhahabee) that the man never ever became involved in *’ilm al-kalaam* or argumentative speech or ever became engrossed in *’ilm al-kalaam*, rather he was a *salafee*.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed these people are *Ahl as-Sunnah wal Jamaa’ah* (The People of the *Sunnah* and the Community), those who pursue the tracks of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) and they are just as Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah described them: “*Ahl as-Sunnah* (the people of the *Sunnah*) are the finest selection of the Muslims, and they are the best people towards people.”<sup>26</sup> So adhere to the Path

وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ

“...and follow not other paths, for they will separate you away from His Path”

[Soorah al-An’aam (6):153]

### 3. Commit to fearing Allaah, the Most High

Beautify yourself by filling your outer and inner-self with the fear of Allaah, the Most High, by observing the apparent characteristics

<sup>24</sup> He is one of the noblest early scholars of Islaam and particularly in *hadeeth*. He originally came from Iraq where he also lived; he compiled many beneficial books in this field such as *Sunan ad-Daraqutnee* (a collection of *hadeeths* pertaining to jurisdiction in two volumes). He is probably best known as a scholar of *’Ilm al-’Ilal*, which is the most complex category of *hadeeth* in which he compiled a book (so far only eleven volumes have been printed, and many notable scholars hold that he narrated it from his memory!). He died in the year 385AH – may Allaah have mercy on him. (M)

<sup>25</sup> *As-Siyar* by adh-Dhahabee. [This is another clear proof against those who claim that it is not permissible to call oneself *salafee* and those who claim that to do so is an innovation. There are many other occasions where Imaam adh-Dhahabee uses this terminology in his books. There are also many other *imaams* who used this terminology such as Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah and many other scholars. (M)]

<sup>26</sup> *Minhaaj as-Sunnah* (5/158), published by Imaam [Muhammad Ibn Sa’ood] University.



of Islaam, and manifesting the *Sunnah* and spreading it by implementing it and calling towards it, leading [the way] to Allaah with your knowledge, manners and actions, and adorning yourself with masculinity, lenience, and pious conduct.

The basis of all [the previous characteristics] is the fear of Allaah, the Most High, and for this Imaam Aḥmad (*rahimahullaah*) said: “The foundation of knowledge is the fear of Allaah, the Most High.” So adhere to fearing Allaah openly and in secret, for the best of all people are those who are fearful of Allaah, and no one [truly] fears Him except a knowledgeable person, therefore the best of all people is the scholar. Let it not slip your mind that the scholar cannot be considered a scholar unless he acts [upon his knowledge], and no scholar implements his knowledge unless it earns him the fear of Allaah.

Al-Khateeb narrated through a chain of narrators which has a subtle point due to it being narrated through nine forefathers, that Abul-Faraj ‘Abdul-Wahhaab ibn ‘Abdil ‘Azeez ibn al-Haarith ibn Asad ibn al-Layth ibn Sulayman ibn al-Aswad ibn Sufyaan ibn Zayd ibn Ukaynah ibn ‘Abdillaah at-Tameeme, who narrated from his memory that, his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated, that his father narrated who said: I heard ‘Alee ibn Abee Taalib say: “Knowledge calls for action, so either the call is answered or [knowledge] will take off,”<sup>27</sup> and it was also narrated that Sufyaan ath-Thawree said something [similar] to this in meaning.

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<sup>27</sup> *Al-Jaami’* by al-Khateeb, and *Dham man laa Ya’malu bi ‘Ilmihi* - narration number 15 - (Denouncing the One who does not Implement His Knowledge) by Ibn Asaakir. And check the chain [of narrators] in *Lisaan al-Meezaan* (4/26-27) by al-Haafidh ibn Hajar.

#### 4. Continual observance [of Allaah]

Adorn yourself with the continual observance of Allaah openly and in secret, journeying to your Lord between fear and hope since they are for the Muslim like two wings to the bird. So advance to your Lord with your whole being, and let your heart be filled with the love of Him, and your tongue with His remembrance, and rejoice and be happy with his Rulings and His Wisdoms (*subhaanahu*).

#### 5. Lower your wing<sup>28</sup> and put arrogance and pride behind you

Adorn yourself with personal etiquette such as abstinence,<sup>29</sup> forbearance, patience, humbleness to the truth, and tranquillity [by displaying awe, self possession, lowering ones wing], bearing the humility of learning for the glory of knowledge, and showing humility in the face of the truth. Therefore, beware of all [the evil qualities] that oppose these qualities since they are blameworthy, [and if you do not], you are erecting against yourself a witness that there is a defect in your mind, and it is also a sign that you have been prevented from benefiting from your knowledge, and from practising it, so beware of haughtiness, for it is hypocrisy and pride, and the *salaf* were very wary of it. Amongst the things that Imaam adh-Dhahabee narrated in the biography of 'Amr ibn al-Aswad al-'Ansee who died in the *khilaafah* of 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwaan (*rahimahullaah*) [is] “..that when he was leaving the *masjid* he took his left hand with his right, so when he was asked about this he replied: ‘out of fear that my hand will make a gesture of hypocrisy.’ I say (i.e. adh-Dhahabee says): He held it out of fear that his hand would swing [in a manner that indicates pride]; for such an action is considered haughtiness.”<sup>30</sup> And this reaction from al-'Ansee (*rahimahullaah*) happened unconsciously.

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<sup>28</sup> This is a phrase which means “humbleness” in the Arabic language. (M)

<sup>29</sup> i.e. from being attached to worldly pleasures and that which is in the hands of people. (M)

<sup>30</sup> *As-Siyar* (4/80)

Beware of the disease of the tyrants (pride), for indeed pride, greed, and jealousy are the first sins that Allaah was disobeyed with<sup>31</sup>, so your loftiness above your teacher is from pride, and arrogance towards someone who benefits you from amongst those who are lesser than you [in knowledge] is pride, and your shortcomings in practising your knowledge is the sludge of pride, and a sign of deprivation (from the blessings of knowledge and prosperity).

“Knowledge wars against the lofty youth,  
Just as the flood attacks the high place”

So adhere – may Allaah shower His mercy upon you - to ‘sticking to the ground’<sup>32</sup>, and pitying yourself, and swallowing your pride and controlling it when it leans towards haughtiness or arrogance or the love of being noticed... and other [evil] qualities associated with knowledge that destroy it, take away its reverential quality, and extinguish its light. So the more knowledge you gain or the higher you become in status, the stricter your adherence becomes to this, and [by this] you will achieve the greatest happiness, and a platform that people will envy you for.

Upon the authority of ‘Abdullaah ibn al-Imaam al-Hujjah (the son of the authoritative Imaam and the [abundant] narrator in the six books) Bakr ibn ‘Abdillaah al-Muzanee (*rahimahumullaah*) said: “I heard a person narrate that when my father was standing on Mount ‘Arafah, he became soft-hearted and said: ‘If I wasn’t among them [i.e. one of the congregation], I would have said that they have been forgiven.” Adh-Dhahabee narrated it, then said: “I say: in this way the slave [of Allaah] should pity himself and swallow his pride.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See the index for *al-Fataawa* (Ibn Taymiyyah) (36/193).

<sup>32</sup> An Arab phrase used to describe extreme humbleness. (M)

<sup>33</sup> *As-Siyar* (4/534). Refer to what Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in *Majmoo‘al-Fataawa* on this topic (14/160).

## 6. Contentment and *zuhd* (asceticism)

Adorn [yourself] with contentment and asceticism. And the reality of *zuhd* is: “*Zuhd* [is] in the *haraam* (unlawful) and to distance yourself from its boundaries by abstaining from the *shubuhaat* (the matters of *halaal* and *haraam* that are unclear) and wishing for what is in people’s possession.”<sup>34</sup>

It was narrated that Imaam ash-Shaafi’ee (*rahimahullaah*) said: “If a person [sincerely] advised the wisest of people; he would encourage him to be amongst the ascetic people (by becoming one of them).”<sup>35</sup>

It was narrated that when it was said to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ash-Shaybaanee (*rahimahullaah*), that will you not write a book on *zuhd*? He replied: “I have written a book on transactions,”<sup>36</sup> meaning: “The true ascetic person is the one who is cautious from falling into the *shubuhaat* (matters of *halaal* and *haraam* that are unclear), and things which are disliked, whether in business or other transactions and professions.”<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, the seeker of knowledge should be moderate in his lifestyle in a way that does not dishonour him, by maintaining himself and those who are dependant upon him so he does not put himself in a position of humility and shame.

Our Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ameen ash-Shinqeetee who died on 17/12/1393H, *rahimahullaah*, took very little from this worldly life, and I used to see him and he could not differentiate between the values of different [notes within the same] currency, and he once said to me: “I came from my country (Shinqeet [Mauritania]) and with me is a treasure that is very seldom found in the possession of anyone, and it is contentment, and if I wanted high status, I would

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<sup>34</sup> *Ta’leem al Muta’allim* by az-Zarnoojee, p.28.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> This explanation is from the words of az-Zarnoojee. (M)

have known the way to achieve it, but I chose not to exchange this worldly life for the hereafter, and I do not give my knowledge to attain worldly desires.”

## 7. Adorn yourself with the splendour of knowledge

To adorn yourself with the splendour of knowledge is to have beautiful manners, pious conduct, such as continuous peacefulness, awe, humility, humbleness, adhesion to the Clear Path; by filling ones outer and inner-self [with these qualities], and leaving all the characteristics that oppose them.

It was narrated that Ibn Seereen (*rahimahullaah*) said, “they (i.e. the *Salaf*) used to learn manners as they would learn the knowledge.” It was narrated that Rajaa ibn al-Haywah (*rahimahullaah*) once said to a man: “Narrate (i.e. *hadeeth*) and do not narrate to me through a person who is lifeless or a slanderer,” narrated by al-Khateeb in *al-Jaami*’, and then he commented further by saying: “It is incumbent upon the seeker of *hadeeth* to refrain from play, idle fiddling, and displaying vulgar manners in the gatherings by acting foolishly, giggling, laughing loudly, or excessive and continual joking. For indeed joking is only permissible if it is in small amounts, and if it is occasional, and subtle, and the type that does not exceed the boundaries of good manners, and the way of knowledge. As for continual joking [and that which is] vulgar and foolish and that which arouses bitter feelings and attracts evil, then it is blameworthy. Excessive joking and laughing degrades your rank and your honour.”<sup>38</sup> There is a saying: “Whoever is excessive in something will be recognised by it”, so avoid these flaws in your gatherings and in your speech.

Amongst those who are ignorant there are some that think that there is relaxation in doing this excessively. It was narrated that al-Ahnaf ibn Qays said: “Preserve your gatherings from the mention of women and food, for indeed I hate a man who describes his private parts

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<sup>38</sup> *Al-Jaami*’ (1/156).

and his stomach;”<sup>39</sup> and in the judicial book of the Inspired Speaker, the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab said: “...and whoever adorns himself with other than that which he possesses then Allaah will disfigure him.”<sup>40</sup> Refer back to Ibn al-Qayyim's explanation.<sup>41</sup>

## 8. Adorn [yourself] with honour

Adorn yourself with honour and that which leads to it, such as good manners, a cheerful face, spreading the *salaam* (the salutation), showing forbearance, hating haughtiness, having self-esteem which is free from tyranny, and being gallant but not for the sake of zealous partisanship, and being fanatic without being patriotic.

Therefore avoid the affairs that tarnish your honour, whether it be [in your] nature, speech, or actions; [and] also [indulging in] degrading actions, or evil habits such as: [being] conceited, showing off, boastfulness, arrogance, and looking down upon others, to be seen in doubtful places.

## 9. Enjoy masculine qualities

Enjoy masculine qualities; which include bravery, forthrightness, noble manners and giving for the sake of good causes until the ambitions of men [die] before reaching your level.

Equally, beware of the qualities that oppose them (i.e. these qualities) such as being unconfident, impatient and weak in nobility, for

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<sup>39</sup> *As-Siyar* (4/94) [i.e. he means his desires (M)]

<sup>40</sup> There is a *hadeeth* narrated by Asmaa' that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said: “He who fills himself with that which he is not given is as one who wears two garbs of falsehood” [*al-Bukhaaree, Muslim, Aboo Daawood, an-Nasaa'ee* in his *Grand Sunan* and the Prophet (ﷺ) in this *hadeeth* is making a similarity between this type of person who shows off qualities that he/she does not possess with the one who gives false testimony because, in effect, both of them give false testimony. (M)]

<sup>41</sup> *I'laam al Muwaqi'een* (2/161-162).

indeed they destroy knowledge, and cut off the tongue from speaking the truth, and they lead him headlong to his enemies in [such] a state where they (i.e. the opposing qualities) brush the faces of the pious amongst [Allaah's] slaves with their poisons.

## 10. Forsaking luxury

Do not become carried away in comfort and luxury; for “asceticism is from *eeman* (faith)”<sup>42</sup> and take the advice of the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab in his famous book, and in it [he says]: “So beware of [excessive] comfort, and imitating the appearance of the '*ajam* (the non Arab)<sup>43</sup>, and toughen yourselves and roughen yourselves...”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> As it was authenticated to the Prophet (ﷺ), refer to *as-Silsilah as-Saheehah* no. 341 and *Ta'dheem Qadr as-Salaat* no. 343 by Ibn Naṣr al-Murwazee.

<sup>43</sup> This statement is not considered as Pro-Arab nationalism, rather it refers to - in the terminology of the *salaf* - the non Muslim Arabs that the *salaf* came into contact with when Islaam began to spread to places like Asia, Persia etc. The proof of this is the other narration in *Saheeh Muslim*; “...and beware of imitating the appearance of the people of *shirk*”. This explanation was also held by Imaam al-Qurtubee and Imaam an-Nawawee in their explanation of *Saheeh Muslim*. An example of such is the manner in which these 'Ajam used to tie their turbans: without a tail (behind their backs or on their chest) or without a hat underneath it – (as the *Raafidah* [the zealous Shi'ites, or the followers of the twelve *imaams*] do today), and not bringing it underneath the chin, along with many other examples. So it comes under the category of the prohibition of imitating the *kuffaar*.

**NOTE :** Now this is established, it becomes apparent to the reader the common mistake that many Muslims make when wearing the turban: they do not wear a hat underneath it, nor do they tie it with a tail between their shoulders, and bringing it beneath their chins. Tying the turban in this manner was considered a sign of the pious people of the *Sunnah* as Ibn Raslaan said. It was also narrated that some of the *salaf* used to say: “The turban without a tail is the turban of *Iblees* (Satan),” and some of them said it was the turban of the *Dhimmi* (the *kaafir* under the rule of the Muslims), and Imaam Aboo Bakr at-Tartooshee used to say: “Tying the turban without a tail or without bringing it beneath the chin is an evil *bid'ah* (innovation).” For more information refer to *Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem* by Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah and *Navl al-Awtaar* by Shawkaanee. (M)

<sup>44</sup> This *athar* was narrated by Muslim, Aboo Awaanah, 'Abdur-Razzaq and others. It was originally narrated by *al-Bukhaaree*, but was a shorter narration.

Therefore, do not become inclined towards this false civilisation, for it makes the nature effeminate, and it [excessively] relaxes the nerves (i.e. the person's enthusiasm), and ties you down with ropes of false hopes. While the serious people reach their destiny, you are still in your place over-concerned about the elegance of your dress. Although many of these things are not considered *muharram* (unlawful) or *makrooh* (disliked), they are not [considered] of good conduct.

The outside appearance (dress) is also an indication of the person's affiliation, rather it defines him/her, and after all, is dress not one of many ways of expressing oneself?! So be careful in what you wear, because it expresses to others: your standing in [what you] are affiliated to, your upbringing, and your taste, and it was due to this that it was said: "the outside appearance leads to [one's] inner inclination." Also people [initially] categorise you according to your dress; rather, the way in which you wear your clothes indicates to the onlooker as to how to categorise you in terms of dignity and sensibility, or shows you to be a *shaykh*, a person of worship, a childish person, or a person who loves to be noticed.

So take from your dress that which adorns you and does not appear unattractive, and do not give anyone an excuse to talk about you, or to criticise you. And if what you wear and how you wear it meets with the nobility of what you carry [in terms] of religious knowledge, then it is more likely that you will be exalted (i.e. in the eyes of the people), and that your knowledge will be benefited from; rather, [in addition] to this, it will become a means of drawing nearer [to Allaah], indeed it is a means of guiding people to the truth. It was narrated that the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab said: "It is more beloved to me to see the learned person in white garment,"<sup>45</sup> i.e. in order that he will be glorified in the hearts of the people, and in turn they will glorify that which he carries of the truth. People are as Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah

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<sup>45</sup> *Al-Ihkaam* by al-Qaraafee, p.g.271.



(*rahimahullaah*) described them: "...like the flocks of birds naturally disposed to imitating one another,"<sup>46</sup> so beware: beware from dressing in a juvenile fashion.

As for European dress, then the ruling of such does not escape you.<sup>47</sup>

However, this does not mean that you dress in an unattractive manner. You should shroud (your outside appearance) with pious conduct and good manners, and the proofs for this can be found in *al-Jaami'* by al-Khateeb.

These subtle points should not be dismissed because [even] now the people of knowledge still point out such things in the books pertaining to softening the heart, the books of etiquette, and the book of dress,<sup>48</sup> and Allaah knows best.

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<sup>46</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, (28/150).

<sup>47</sup> The general principle concerning this issue is clear, but the Shaykh – may Allah preserve him - is talking in the context of his country, and likewise Muslim countries in general, and it is not a general ruling for everybody, especially for people like ourselves who live in these countries where it could be a threat to one's well-being to dress in the full Islamic costume. For this reason many scholars, old and new, held the opinion that it was permissible to agree – to a certain extent - with the non - Muslims' outward appearance, especially if they are clothes commonly worn by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah expressed this opinion in his book *Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem* as do, amongst the present day scholars, their eminences Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen, and Shaykh al-Albaanee – may Allah preserve them. However this is not an excuse for those who step outside the boundaries and become carried away in a sense that their Islamic identity is completely lost, and it becomes difficult to distinguish between them and the *kuffaar*, for there are matters for which there are no excuses for a person – especially a seeker of knowledge - to become neglectful of, such as growing the beard and wearing clothes that are tight and define the private regions of the body, or that the trousers etc. are below the ankle. (M)

<sup>48</sup> *Adab al-Imlaa' wal Istimlaa'* (p.116-119), *Iqtidaa' as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem*, *Majmoo' al-Fataawa* (21/539), and refer to *ar-Rooh* by Ibn al-Qayyim (p.40).

## 11. To avoid the gatherings of vain speech

Do not stand on the carpet of those who carry out detestable acts at their places of gatherings, and tear the veil of morality, and pretending to be unaware of [your actions], and if you do, then your crime against knowledge and its people is a grave one.

## 12. Avoid commotion (*hayshaat*)

Protect yourself from indulging in riotous and clamorous behaviour; for indeed mistake lies behind clamour, and it opposes the etiquette of seeking [knowledge].

And of the subtle points that come to mind, from what the author of *al-Waseet fee Udabaa' Shinqeet* and from it in *Mu'jam al-Ma'aajim*: "...that a conflict took place between two tribes, so a third tribe came to arbitrate between them. They finally agreed to the religious ruling, and they betook a scholar as a judge, who passed a judgement that four people should be killed from one of the tribes [in return] for the death of four people killed by the other tribe. So Shaykh Baab ibn Ahmad said: In such situation the law of Islaamic requital is not applicable. So the judge replied: Such a decision is not to be found in any book, so the Shaykh said: Rather, it is found in every book, so the judge said to him this is the *Qaamoos* (the famous Arabic dictionary) – meaning that it comes under the category of a book. So the Shaykh took *al-Qaamoos*, and the first thing his sight fell upon was: *al-Hayshah* (riotous uproar), is civil strife... and there is no requital in riotous uproar (i.e. when a person who is killed in civil strife and their killer is not known). And the people became astonished at his speed in summoning up such information in such a crucial situation."

## 13. Adorn [yourself] with gentleness

Adhere to being gentle in speech, avoiding harsh words, for gentle speech wins over hostile personalities. And the proofs from the Qur'aan and *Sunnah* on this topic are abundant.

## **14. Contemplation**

Be contemplative, for whoever does so will reach [their goal] and it was said: “contemplate and you will reach.” Therefore, think ahead when you speak: What am I going to say? What will be the results of what I am going to say? Also be careful of how you phrase what you are saying, and convey what you want to say without going to any extremes or fanciness. Carefully consider what words to use when you are thinking about how you are going to say whatever you intend to say. Also think carefully when you are asked a question: that you understand the question in its correct context in a way, so as not to carry two meanings.

## **15. Firmness and confirmation**

Adorn yourself with firmness and confirmation, and especially in calamities and serious situations, and from it is patience and firmness upon acquiring and passing long hours in seeking knowledge from the scholars “for whosoever is firm will grow.”

## The Methodology of Seeking Knowledge

### 16. The methodology of seeking knowledge and its levels

“Whoever does not perfect the foundation; is prevented from reaching [their aim in knowledge]”, and “Whoever wants to attain knowledge in one go, will lose it in one go.”<sup>49</sup> It was also said: “Overcrowding the knowledge in the ear misguides one’s understanding.”<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, it is essential to ground yourself in every subject you wish to study; by perfecting its basics and perfecting a concise book [on every subject] with a *shaykh*, and not relying upon personal efforts alone. Seeking [knowledge] should also be taken step by step.

Allaah, the Most High, said:

وَقُرْءًا نَّافَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ نَزِيلًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

“And [it is] a Qur'aan which We have divided into parts in order that you may recite it to men at intervals, and We have revealed it by stages.”

[Soorah al-Israa' (17):106]

<sup>49</sup> *Faql al-'Ilm* by Arsalaan.

<sup>50</sup> *Sharh al-Ihya'* (1/334).

Allaah, the Most High, said:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً  
وَّاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

“And those who disbelieve say: why is the Qur'aan not revealed to him all at once? Thus [it is sent down in parts], that We may strengthen your heart thereby and We have revealed it to you gradually.”

[Soorah al-Furqaan (25):32]

Allaah, the Most High, said:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ

“And those (who embraced Islaam from Banee Israa'eel, or the companions) to whom We gave the book (i.e. the Tawraat or the Qur'aan) recite it (i.e. obey its orders and its teachings) as it should be recited are those who believe therein.”

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2):121]

So in front of you there are a number of things that you have to take into consideration in every subject you study:

1. Memorise a concise book on it.
2. Perfect it [by studying it] under a proficient *shaykh*.
3. Do not engage yourself with long books and compilations on many different subjects before perfecting the basics and becoming proficient in it.
4. Do not swap from one [concise] book to another without any necessity, for this is from impatience.
5. Capture the benefits and precepts of knowledge [by writing them down].
6. Mentally prepare yourself to seek knowledge and progress in it. Also be concerned with, and zealous in attaining and reaching what is above you, until you progress onto the long compilations with ease.

It was the opinion of Ibn al-'Arabee al-Maalikee that the seeker should not mix between two subjects when he is studying, and that priority should be given to learning Arabic, poetry and mathematics, then go on to the Qur'aan; but he was rebuked by Ibn Khaldoon [who said] that the then present day customs did not encourage this method, and that the first priority should be given to studying the Qur'aan and memorising it, because as long as the child remains in the lap, he is easily controlled, but once he passes the age of adolescence; it becomes difficult to force him [to do things].

As for studying two subjects or more simultaneously, then this differs from one seeker to another depending upon their capacity [of understanding] and their enthusiasm.

There were among the people of knowledge those who taught *Hanbalee fiqh* from *Zaad al-Mustaqni'* for the beginners, and *al-Muqni'* for differences of opinion within the *madh-hab*, and then *al-Mughnee* for differences [of opinion] at an advanced level, and did not permit the [seekers in the] first level to sit in the lessons of the [seekers in the] second level, and so on, so as to eliminate any confusion.

And know that the list of the concise books and the long compilations upon which seeking knowledge is based, and acquiring from it the *mashaa'ikh*<sup>51</sup> generally differed from one region to another depending on the *madh-hab* and that which the scholars [of that region] were brought up on, [since they will tend to be] proficient in one particular concise book rather than any other. The situation [also] differed from one seeker to another depending upon their talents, [levels of] understanding, the strength or weakness of their will, and the rigidity or enthusiasm of their minds.

As for seeking knowledge in our region<sup>52</sup>, after the stage of the Qur'aanic schools and the completion of the memorisation of the

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<sup>51</sup> The plural of *shaykh*. (M)

<sup>52</sup> i.e. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (M)

Noble Qur'aan, it passed through three stages with the *mashaa'ikh*, with regards to the lessons held in the *masaa'id* (mosques):

1. The beginners
2. The intermediates
3. The advanced

As for *Tawhēed*, [they would be taught]: *al-Uṣool ath-Thalaathah wa Qawaa'id al-Arba'ah*, and then *Kashf ash-Shubuhaat*, then *Kitaab at-Tawhēed* (all these four by Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab *rahimahullaah*), this is on *tawhēed* of 'ibaadah<sup>53</sup>.

Regarding *Tawhēed al-Asmaa' was-Sifaat* (the *tawhēed* of the Names and Attributes of Allaah): *al-'Aqeedah al-Waasiṭiyyah*, *al-Hamawiyyah* and *at-Tadmuriyyah* (all these three by Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah *rahimahullaah*), then *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaawiyyah* along with its explanation.

As for Arabic grammar: *al-Aajuroomiyyah*, then *Mulḥat al-I'raab* by al-Hareeree, then *Qatrun-Nadaa'* by Ibn Hishaam, and *Alfiyyah Ibn Maalik*, along with its explanation by Ibn 'Aqeel.

As for *Hadeeth*: *al-'Arba'een-Nawawiyyah*, then *'Umdatul-Aḥkaam* by al-Maqdisee, then *Buloogh al-Maraam* by Ibn Hajar and *al-Muntaqa* by al-Majd Ibn Taymiyyah<sup>54</sup> (*rahimahumullaah*), and then they would delve into the 'Six Compilations of *Hadeeth*' (*al-Bukhaaree*, *Muslim*, *an-Nasaa'ee*, *Aboo Daawood*, *at-Tirmidhee*, and *Ibn Maajah*) and others. As for the Science of *Hadeeth*: *Nukhbatul-Fikar* by Ibn Hajar, then *Alfiyyatul-'Iraaqee* (*rahimahullaah*).

As for *Fiqh*: *The Etiquette of Walking to the Salaat* by Muḥammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab, then *Zaad al-Mustaqni'* by al-Hajjaawee (*rahimahullaah*) or *'Umdatul-Fiqh*, and *al-Muqni'* for differences

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<sup>53</sup> Unification of Allaah in worship. (M)

<sup>54</sup> The great Imaam's grandfather. (M)

within the *madh-hab* and *al-Mughnee* for differences at an advanced level; all these three are by Ibn Qudaamah (*rahimahullaah*).

In the Principles of *Fiqh: al-Waraqaat* by al-Juwaynee (*rahimahullaah*), then *Ruwdatun-Naadhir* by Ibn Qudaamah (*rahimahullaah*).

As for the Laws of Inheritance: *ar-Rahbiyyah* along with its explanation, and *al-Fawaa'id al-Jaliyyah*.

As for *Tafseer: Tafseer* of Ibn Katheer (*rahimahullaah*).

As for the Principles of *Tafseer: al-Muqadimah* by Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah (*rahimahullaah*).

As for the *Seerah* (the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ)): *Mukhtasar as-Seeratin-Nabawiyyah* by Muhammad ibn 'Abdil Wahhaab (and its origin by Ibn Hishaam), and *Zaad al-Ma'aad* by Ibn al-Qayyim (*rahimahullaah*).

As for Arabic vocabulary: special attention would be given to [classical] Arabic poetry; such as *al-Mu'alaqaatus-Saba'*, and reading in the *Qaamoos* by al-Fayrooz-abaadee (*rahimahullaah*) and so on, through the stages of knowledge on different subjects.

And with this they would study the long compilations such as the *Taareekh* by Ibn Jareer (History as narrated by him) and by Ibn Katheer also, and concentrate on the works of Ibn Taymiyyah and his seeker Ibn al-Qayyim (*rahimahumullaah*), and the books and the *fatwaas* of the *Imaams* of the *Da'wah* (the *Da'wah* of Muhammad Ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab), especially their writings on *'aqeedah*.

In this manner time would be engaged in seeking knowledge, within the gatherings of knowledge, from after *fajr* till forenoon, then after that there would be time for a nap just before *dhuhr*, and lessons would be held after the five daily prayers.

The [seekers of knowledge and their *mashaa'ikh*] also used to be immensely [well] mannered, have plenty of mutual respect along



with self-esteem, and were upon the way of the *Salaf as-Saalih*. For this reason they reached their aims and many of them became recognised scholars, and all praise is due to Allaah alone the Lord of all the Worlds.

So is it not time to call for the return to the traditional methods of seeking [knowledge], by studying and memorising concise reliable books, and not just relying upon understanding [alone], or upon studying pre-prepared pamphlets? [It is these two things] that caused the seekers [of knowledge] to become lost and neither memorise nor understand [the knowledge]!

And it is Allaah [alone] who we seek help from.

It was narrated that al-Haafidh<sup>55</sup> 'Uthmaan ibn Khurrazaadh (died 282AH) (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The person associated to *hadeeth* is in need of five qualities, and if one of them is lost then it is considered as a deficiency; [he is] in need of a good mind, piety, precision, proficiency in this field, as well as being well known for his trustworthiness." Adh-Dhahabee (*rahimahullaah*) commented: "Trustworthiness is a portion of the *deen* (piety), and precision is included in proficiency; so what a *haafidh* really needs, is to be: fearful (of Allaah), intelligent, grammatical, a linguist, righteous, modest, *Salafee*, and it is sufficient enough for him to write two hundred volumes and to gather five hundred reliable compilations (books), and not to become fatigued by seeking knowledge till death, with sincerity and humility, otherwise let him not trouble himself."

## **17. To acquire knowledge from the *mashaa'ikh***

The basis of acquiring knowledge should be by way of dictation and acquisition from the teachers, and by being in the continuous company of the scholars and taking from the mouths of men, and not from the scrolls and the depths of books. The first type of student (i.e. the seeker of knowledge who takes from the teachers)

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<sup>55</sup> A title given to somebody who memorises a vast quantity of *hadeeth*. (M)

falls under the taking from ones relative when they talk [and this is the example of one who takes from a] teacher; the second takes from a book which is inanimate; therefore how can the ties of lineage be possible? It also used to be said: “Whoever enters knowledge alone, will emerge alone,”<sup>56</sup> i.e. whoever becomes involved in seeking knowledge without a *shaykh* will emerge without knowledge, because knowledge is a profession, and every profession has its experts, therefore it is necessary to have a proficient teacher in order to learn.

There is almost a consensus from the scholars upon this, except for a very few who were isolated in their opinion [that it is unnecessary to have a *shaykh*], such as 'Alee ibn Ridwaan al-Misree at-Tabeeb ('the doctor', died 453H), and he was refuted by the scholars of his day and age and those who came after them. Adh-Dhahabee said in his biography: “...and he did not have a *shaykh*, rather he engaged himself in taking from the books, and he wrote a book about acquiring a skill by reading from the books, and that it is more prosperous for the learner, and this is wrong.”<sup>57</sup> And as-Safadee wrote an extensive refutation on what he said, which was mentioned by az-Zubaydee in his explanation of *al-Ihya'* along with a number of other scholars, all putting forward a number of arguments; amongst them that which Ibn Baṭlaan put forward in his refutation in [which he said]: “...the sixth point: there are things that exist in the book that divert from knowledge, and they are non-existent in the teacher, and it is due to distortion that occurs due to the resemblance of the letters, in addition to the non-existence of the pronunciation, and the mistakes that occur due to: straying of the eyes, lack of experience in *i'raab* (i.e. implementing the rules of Arabic grammar), corruption of the existing book, handwriting that cannot be read, or

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<sup>56</sup> *Al-Jawaahir wad-Durar* by as-Sakhaawee, (1/57).

<sup>57</sup> *Siyar A'laam an-Nubalaa'* (18/105), and refer to *Sharḥ al-Ihya'* (1/66), *Bughyatul-Wu'aat* (1/131,286), *Shadharaat adh-Dhahab* (5/11), and *al-Ghunyah* by Qaadee 'Iyaad p.g.16-17.

reading that which is not written, not knowing the *madh-hab* of the author, poor quality of the scripts, poor transcription, lack of stopping at the correct punctuation, mixing up terminology of different subjects and using the terminology of one subject in context of another, and the existence of Greek terminology [that] the writer did not take from the [Arabic] language. All of the things mentioned obstruct knowledge, and the learner is relieved of them when he reads to the teacher. If the situation is such, then reading to the scholars is more advantageous, and virtuous than personal study, and this is what we wanted to explain... As-Safadee said: 'For this reason the scholars said: do not take knowledge from a person who acquires it from the scripts, and do not take the Qur'aan from a person who has recited the Qur'aan from the *mus-haf*. Meaning: do not recite the Qur'aan to a person who just read it from the *mus-haf* (without reciting it to a *shaykh*), or *hadeeth* etc. from a person who acquired [*hadeeth*] by reading from the scripts...'”<sup>58</sup>

As for the tangible proof that establishes the falseness of Ibn Ridwaan's theory: then it is that you will read thousands of biographies written in different eras throughout history that are full of mentions of the teachers and their seekers: some [seekers] have many [*mashaa'ikh*], while others have few. Refer to some of the examples of those who have many teachers – to the extent that some of them had thousands - as mentioned in *al-'Uzzaab* taken from *al-Isfaar* by the author (i.e. the Shaykh himself).

Aboo Hayyaan Muhammad Yoosuf al-Andaloosee (died 745AH) used to say when Ibn Maalik was mentioned to him: “Where are his teachers?”<sup>59</sup> and al-Waleed said: “al-Awzaa'ee used to say: this knowledge used to be noble, passed down [from men] to men, but when it entered the books the wrong people became involved in

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<sup>58</sup> *Sharh al-Ihya'*. (1/66).

<sup>59</sup> Taken from the forward of the checking of the book *al-Ghunya* by Qaadee 'Iyaad, p.g.16-17.

it.”<sup>60</sup> A similar account was narrated by Ibn al-Mubaarak from al-Awzaa’ee.

Without doubt; flaws occur when taking from the scripts, even with an *ijazah*<sup>61</sup>, especially at that time when there was no dotting or vowelizing, so that in turn the word could become distorted in a way that would change the meaning. Such flaws are non-existent when taking from the mouths of men. Errors also occur when narrating from memory, as opposed to narrating from an edited script. Ibn Khaldoon researched this topic very well in his [famous] *Muqadimah*<sup>62</sup> (Foreword).

It was said by some (in poetry):

“And whosoever does not read the books to the scholars  
Then his certainty in difficult issues is conjecture.”

And Aboo Hayaan used to frequently recite [the following poetry]:

“The gullible one [wrongly] assumes that books guide  
The one of understanding in attaining knowledge,  
And it escapes the ignorant one that in it  
Are obscure issues that confused the mind of  
a person with understanding.

If you wish [to attain] knowledge without a teacher  
You will stray from the Straight Path.

And the issues will become so confusing to you  
That you will become more astray than Tuma the Wise.”

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<sup>60</sup> *As-Siyar*, (7/114).

<sup>61</sup> Which is the permission from the *muhaddith* to narrate a collection of *hadeeths*, books etc. (M)

<sup>62</sup> 4/1245.

## The Etiquette of the Seeker with his *Shaykh*

### 18. Considering the *shaykh*'s [consequent] status

Since knowledge is not attained initially from the books, rather it is necessary to take from a *shaykh* in order to perfect the keys of knowledge with him (so as to prevent yourself from tripping and slipping) then it is incumbent upon you to take into consideration the *shaykh*'s [consequent] status for indeed it is the token of success, acquisition and prosperity. So make your *shaykh* an object of your reverence, honour, appreciation, and courtesy.

Therefore take from the comprehensive aspects of etiquette when sitting with your *shaykh*, or speaking to him, or asking [him questions] and listening [attentively] to his answers. Also display good etiquette with any book and when turning its pages in his presence, abstain from arguing with the intent of showing off in front of him, do not precede him in speech or in your steps, or talk excessively in his presence, and do not continually interrupt him while he is speaking or during his lecture. Do not continually pester him for an answer to your question and avoid extensive questioning especially in the presence of an audience, for indeed this attracts self-delusion [on your behalf] and [causes the *shaykh*] to become bored. Avoid calling him by his first name, or by his surname as one would say: "O, Shaykh so-and-so!" Rather you should say: "Yaa Shaykhee!" (O, my Shaykh!), or: "Yaa Shaykhana!" (O, our Shaykh), and do not call him by name; for that is more elevated in manner.

[Also] avoid addressing him with the term of address (أَنْتَ) “You”, or calling him from a distance without necessity.

Consider the etiquette that Allaah mentioned with the One Who Taught Mankind All Good (ﷺ) in His saying:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

“Make not the calling of the Messenger<sup>64</sup> among you as the call of one of you to another...”

[Soorah an-Noor (24):63]

Similarly, just as it is not befitting to call your biological father by saying: “O, so and so” or: “O, my father so and so,” (and mention his name), then it is not befitting with your *shaykh*.

So adhere to preserving the awe of the gathering and displaying rejoice and benefit [derived] from the lessons. If a mistake from the *shaykh* becomes apparent to you, or a delusion [on his behalf] then let that not degrade the *shaykh* in your eyes, for such would be the cause of you becoming deprived from his knowledge, and who is safe from falling into mistakes?

Be careful not to interact with him in a way that irritates him, and from this is what the *muwallidoon*<sup>65</sup> call “the battle of nerves”<sup>66</sup>; which means to test the capacity of the *shaykh*’s knowledge and patience.

If, however, you decide to change to another *shaykh* then seek his permission (for this is more [befitting] to his consequent status and more likely to the preserve love and compassion in his heart for you, and so on, through the list of the list of etiquette that is known

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<sup>64</sup> i.e. calling him by his name by saying: “Muhammad” as was the habit of the bedouins. (M)

<sup>65</sup> The people who derive modern terminology from the Arabic language. (M)

<sup>66</sup> *Mu’jam at-Taraakeeb* by Ahmad Aboo Sa’d, p.283.

by heart to every blessed and prosperous person) out of a fulfilment of the *shaykh*'s rights through his 'religious fatherhood,' or what is referred to in some laws as 'cultural suckling,' and (referring to it as 'religious fatherhood' is more befitting and leaving the [other one] is more appropriate).

Know that your success is dependent upon how much you take his status into consideration, and barely considering it is a sign of your failure.

**Caution:** I ask Allaah to grant you refuge from the doings of the *a'ajim*<sup>67</sup>, and followers of [Soofee] orders, and the present day innovators; from [total] submission (to the *mashaa'ikh*) that exceeds the boundaries of the *Sharee'ah* from licking the hands and kissing the shoulders, and grabbing the right hand with [both] right and left hands when giving *salaam*; [behaviour that resembles] adults when they show affection to children; and bowing at the time of greeting, and using slack phrases [that indicate lowliness] such as: "Sayyidee, *mowlaa* (O master)" and other such statements used by servants and slaves. Refer to what the *al-'Allaamatus-Salafee ash-Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Basheer al-Ibraheemee al-Jazaa'iree (died 1380AH) (*rahimahullaah*) said in [his book] *al-Bussaa'ir*; for indeed it is exceeding in its content.

## 19. Your capital - O seeker - is from your *shaykh*

Follow his pious manners and noble character, as for acquisition and dictation [of knowledge] then that is extra profit. However, do not be taken by an exuberant love of your *shaykh*, lest you fall into abomination without realising and all those around you realise.

So do not imitate him in his voice, tone, walk, movements, or appearance; for he did not become a great *shaykh* just by this, so do not fall by following him in this.

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<sup>67</sup> *A'ajim*: Non-Arabs. Refer to the footnote 43 of this book. (M)

## 20. The *shaykh*'s enthusiasm in his lessons

This is dependent upon the seekers' capacity to listen, frame of mind, and how much he becomes emotionally involved with his *shaykh* in his lessons. For this reason beware of becoming a tool for cutting off his knowledge by being lazy, slack, or slouching and allowing the mind to wonder during his lessons. Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee (*rahimahullaah*) said: "The right of benefit should go to its zealous wanter, and not presented except to the person interested in it; so if the *muhaddith* sees slackness from the listener then let him become silent, for some of the 'People of Culture' said: The enthusiasm of the speaker depends upon the capacity of the listener." He then narrated through his chain of narrators to Zayd ibn Wahb that he said: "'Abdullaah (i.e. Ibn Mas'ood) said: Narrate (*hadeeth* etc.) to the audience as long as they glance at you with their eyes, and if you see slackness from them then halt."<sup>68</sup>

## 21. Writing what the *shaykh* says during the lesson or revision

Understand that this differs from one *shaykh* to another. And it has etiquette and a condition:

As for the etiquette, you should notify your *shaykh* that you are going to write, or that you have written in revision form.

As for the condition: you should indicate that you wrote it from listening to what he said in his lesson.<sup>69</sup>

## 22. Acquiring Knowledge from a *mubtadi*'<sup>70</sup> (an innovator)

Beware of the the *mubtadi*' Aboo Jahl, the one who has been touched by deviancy in his creed, and engulfed by the clouds of fiction; he

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<sup>68</sup> *Al-Jaami'*, (1/320).

<sup>69</sup> *Al-Jaami'*, (2/36-38).

<sup>70</sup> Derived from the word *bid'ah*. Perhaps the best definition of *bid'ah* is the definition of Imaam Shaatibee in *al-I'tisaam* (1/37) where he defined it as being: "A way innovated into the religion that vaguely resembles the *Sharee'ah*, and [the person] intends by practising it the extensive worship of Allaah." (M)



who allows himself to be ruled by his vain desires and calls it logic and diverts from the texts [of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*]. After all where is logic [to be found] except in the text [of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*]?! He [also] holds fast to weak (*hadeeths*) and distances himself from the authentic (*hadeeths*).

They are also referred to as *Ahl ash-Shubuhaat*<sup>71</sup> (dubious people), and *Ahl al-Ahwaa'* (people who follow their vain desires in the religion), and for this reason Ibn al-Mubaarak (*rahimahullaah*) used to call them *al-Aṣaaghir* (the small ones).

Adh-Dhahabee (*rahimahullaah*) said: “If you see the innovative *mutakallim*<sup>72</sup> saying: ‘leave out the Qur'aan and *Sunnah* and bring forth Logic’, then know that he is Aboo Jahl. And if you see the ‘One on the Spiritual Path’, [who claims that by practising a set of prescribed forms of innovated worship he will attain oneness with Allaah] (i.e., the Soofees) saying: ‘Leave us from [knowledge] that is transmitted (i.e. the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*) and bring forth the ‘Taste and Ecstasy of Passion’<sup>73</sup>, then know that he is Iblees (Shayṭaan) become manifest in a human form, or has become incarnate within him; so if you become cowardly then run away from him, otherwise wrestle him down, and sit on his chest with your knee, and read *Aayatul-Kursee*,<sup>74</sup> and strangle him.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Al-Jaami'*, (1/137).

<sup>72</sup> A person who indulges himself in *'Ilm al-Kalaam* or rhetorical speech. See footnote 23 of this book. (M)

<sup>73</sup> These are terms used by the Soofees. As for ‘taste’ it means to practice worship by way of practising according to their taste, i.e. their desires. As for ‘ecstasy of passion’ it means in Soofees terminology a level of [spiritual] intoxication with the love of Allaah that a person reaches through their innovated practices. (M)

<sup>74</sup> Verse 255 from *Soorah al-Baqarah* (2), and the reason he said this is because this verse is the most severe upon the *Shayṭaan* as in the *hadeeth* of Aboo Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhaaree*. (M)

<sup>75</sup> *As-Siyar*, (4/472).

He also said (*rahimahullaah*): "...and I read in the handwriting of ash-Shaykh al-Muwaffaq his saying: 'We heard his lesson – i.e. Ibn Abee Asroon - with my brother Abee 'Umar then we stopped going to his lessons. I heard my brother say: I entered his house after that, and he asked: Why have you cut yourselves off from me? So I replied: Some people say that you are Ash'aree,<sup>76</sup> so he said: By Allaah I am not an Ash'aree.' This is a rough meaning of the story."<sup>77</sup>

It was narrated that Maalik (*rahimahullaah*) said: "Knowledge (*hadeeth*) is not taken from four: a foolish person who publicises his foolishness, even if he was the most prolific narrator of *hadeeth*; a person of *bid'ah* who calls to it; a person who lies in his speech with people even if I don't accuse him of lying in *hadeeth*; and a noble, pious worshipper if he does not memorise precisely what he narrates."<sup>78</sup>

O you seeker of knowledge if you are in a position of freedom of choice, then do not take from a *mubtadi'* [be he]: Raafidee<sup>79</sup>,

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<sup>76</sup> The followers of Abul-Hasan al-Ash'aree before he came back to the creed of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah*. As for his creed before he came back to the creed of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah* it was based upon misinterpretation and negation of the Attributes of Allaah.

<sup>77</sup> *As-Siyar*, (21/129)

<sup>78</sup> *As-Siyar*, (8/61)

<sup>79</sup> The name given to the zealous Shi'ites by 'Alee ibn Zayd (the grandson of Husayn – the grandson of the Prophet (ﷺ)). Their first manifestation was in the time of 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib by the hands of a Jew from Yemen by the name of 'Abdullaah ibn Saba', who reverted to Islaam outwardly for the purpose of corrupting Islaam. Amongst their principal beliefs today is the belief that the Qur'aan was corrupted by the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and that they (except for a few of them) became apostates, and they slander the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah, Aboo Bakr, and 'Umar. They also renounce the *Sunnah*, go to extremes concerning the Family of the Prophet (ﷺ) in a manner that resembles the Christians with regard to 'Eesaa. (M)

Khaarjee<sup>80</sup>, Murjee<sup>81</sup>, Qadaree<sup>82</sup>, or Qubooree<sup>83</sup>...etc. For you will never reach the level of [knowledgeable] men: correct in your creed, strong in your association with Allaah, with strong vision, and following the 'tracks'; except by abandoning the *mubtadi'ah* and their innovations. The books of biographies, and 'Holding Fast to the *Sunnah*' are abundant with accounts of *Ahl as-Sunnah* finishing off the *mubtadi'ah* and renouncing their innovation, and distancing away from them as a sound person would distance himself from a sick, diseased person. There are so many stories and accounts that would take a long time to recount, but it gives me pleasure to mention a few of them for the *Salaf* used to seek reward with Allaah in disregarding them, humiliating them, and rejecting the *mubtadi'* and his innovation. They also used to warn against becoming associated

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<sup>80</sup> A person who is affiliated to the *Khawaarij* which is a heretical sect who deem the one who commits a major sin to be a *kaafir* (disbeliever) and deny the rule of Muslim leaders based upon their belief that they are apostates, hence their leadership becomes invalidated, so as a result they rebel against them causing much chaos and bloodshed. Their first manifestation was in the time of 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib. (M)

<sup>81</sup> A person who is affiliated to the *Murji'ah* which is a heretical group whose principal belief is that *eemaan* (faith) is merely the affirmation of the heart and that *eemaan* does not increase or decrease, and they comprise of many sects. (M)

<sup>82</sup> A person who is affiliated to the heretical sect al-Qadariyyah, and they went astray with regards to the belief in the sixth pillar of faith (predestination) and the scholars passed different verdicts upon them depending upon their belief as some of them completely denied this pillar (as we will discover when I mention the *hadeeth* of Ibn 'Umar) and such a group were regarded by the scholars as apostates but they have become extinct. However, a group of them still remain but are not considered as apostates as they do not deny this pillar but they believe that Allaah did not predestine evil and that it is the sole doing of a person. And there are many authentic *hadeeths* that warn against them. (M)

<sup>83</sup> A name given to a person who claims that he is a Muslim yet he indulges in actions that contradict his claim such worshipping graves (the grave dwellers who are believed to be close associates with Allaah) and seeking aid and wealth from them, invoking them, using them as intermediates between them and Allaah, swearing oaths and sacrificing animals to them, and swearing by their names etc. Such actions are considered as major *shirk* and take a person outside the fold of Islaam.

with them, or seeking their opinion, or eating with them; for the *mubtadi'* and *Sunnee* should be so far apart that each of them cannot see the fire of the other.

There were amongst the *Salaf* those who never used to pray over the funeral of the *mubtadi'*, and would be seen leaving the [funeral ceremony]. It was also witnessed that *al-'Allaamah ash-Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ibraaheem* (died 1389AH) abstained from [funeral] prayer over a *mubtadi'*.

Also there were amongst the *Salaf* those who used to prohibit from praying behind them,<sup>84</sup> or mentioning their innovations because the heart is weak and doubtful affairs are swift in abduction (i.e. of the heart).

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<sup>84</sup> The reason why some of the *salaf* didn't pray over the funeral of a *mubtadi'* (innovator) or pray behind them in congregational prayers is not due to its impermissibility as some people may think because it is an established principle of the creed of *Ahlu-Sunnah* that it is permissible to pray behind the *mubtadi'*, and pray for their funeral as Imaam at-*Tahaawee* stated in his renowned book *al-Aqeedah at-Tahaawiyyah*: "We allow prayer behind every pious or sinful person among the people of the *Qiblah*. Similarly we deem it permissible to pray the funeral prayer over both of them (i.e. pious and sinful people)," pg.26, and in *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree* he stated: [The chapter of the leadership (in congregational prayer) of a corrupt person or an innovator] and under it he mentioned some narration's from the *salaf* that indicate its permissibility; rather the reason behind the *salaf* not praying behind the *mubtadi'ah* or praying over their funeral, is to deter those who are affected by *bid'ah* from continuing upon what they believe or practise; so it comes under the category of abandoning *Ahl al-Bida'h*, and under the category of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

Ibn Abee al-'Izz said in his explanation of *at-Tahaawiyyah*, (pg.375): "...the prayer of the sinful person and the *mubtadi'* is valid in itself; so if the person is lead by one of them; his *salaat* does not become invalidated. However, those who disliked prayer behind them disliked it due the fact that enjoining good and forbidding evil is obligatory. Therefore; if a person manifests a *bid'ah* or a sin then he should not be appointed as a leader for the Muslims because he deserves to be chastised until he repents, so if it is possible to abandon him until he repents it would be commendable. And if **some** people when they abandon prayer behind them, and pray behind someone else; would have a [positive] effect in: deterring their evil until they repent, or removing them [from their position], or deterring people from falling into there sin; then abandoning *salaat* behind such people would realise =

Sahl ibn 'Abdullaah at-Tustaree used to hold the opinion that it is not permissible for a *mubtadi'* to eat the flesh of an animal that died without being slaughtered according to the Islaamic *Sharee'ah* in case of dire necessity because he is a transgressor due to Allaah saying:

فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَإِغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ

“...But if one is forced by necessity without wilful obedience nor transgressing due limits...”<sup>85</sup>

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2):173]

= religious interests, but ensuring that by carrying out such an action no Friday and congregational prayers are missed...”

After reading this you will notice that the Shaykh said: “...and if some people...” and not anybody, and in this statement the Shaykh is referring to people with status within the community; the people of knowledge and virtue, and it does not apply to normal people because such an action on their behalf would not have the required affects that the Shaykh mentioned.

To give further clarification to this point I wish to remind the reader of some incidents where such action was taken; for example the incidents where the Prophet (ﷺ) refrained from praying over the funeral of the one who killed himself, and the one who died without paying his debts, and the one who died after stealing from the booty; amongst many other examples where the *salaf* carried out similar actions, and they were considered as people with high status within their communities. *Ash-Shawkaanee* commented on the latter *hadeeth*: “As for the Prophet (ﷺ) refraining from prayer over him then it could be for the reason of deterring from stealing from the booty as he did with the person who died indebted.” *Nayl al-Awtaar* (4/58). For more information on the subject refer to *Majmoo' al Fataawa* (23/343-344,354,360–361,368), (3/286), *Mawqif Ahlis-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah min Ahlil-Ahwaa'i wal Bida'h* (1/367-368) by Shaykh Ibraaheem ar-Ruḥaylee - may Allaah preserve him.

<sup>85</sup> At the beginning of this *Aayah* Allaah says: “**He has forbidden you only *maytah* (an animal that dies without being slaughtered according to the Islaamic *Sharee'ah*), and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which slaughtered as a sacrifice for other than Allaah. But if one is forced...**” The scholars of *tafseer* spoke extensively on this *Aayah* and gave varying explanations, and this is one of the explanations given by the scholars of *tafseer*. However, the correct explanation of this *Aayah* is the one chosen by Ibn Jarreer at-Ṭabaree in which he said =

and he (the *mubtadi'*) is a transgressor with his *bid'ah*.<sup>86</sup>

They also used to banish them from their gatherings, as in the story of Imaam Maalik with the one who asked him about the way in which Allaah established Himself upon the Throne in which, after he made his renowned statement: "...and I suspect you of being associated with *bid'ah*," he ordered for him to be banished.<sup>87</sup>

There are numerous accounts of the *Salaf* turning away from the *mubtadi'ah* and abandoning them out of fear of their evil, and in order to control the spread of their *bid'ah* and to dishearten them from spreading it, since in the association of a *Sunnee* with a *mubtadi'* is a testimony for his credibility for the beginner and the '*aammi* (commoner). And '*aammi* is derived from '*ama* (blindness), and on most occasions he is in the hands of those who guide him.

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= after mentioning the other explanations: "...and the first in choice out of these explanations of the verse is the opinion of those who said '...but if one is forced by necessity without wilful obedience in eating that which has been made unlawful for him to eat, nor transgressing due limits... ' when eating of the flesh..." (2/88), i.e. he does not eat that which has been declared unlawful out of desire for it, nor does he transgress the limits of the religion in eating more than the necessary quantity in order to survive. (M)

<sup>86</sup> See *Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, (28/218).

<sup>87</sup> The Shaykh is making a passing reference to the story because it is well known to the seekers of knowledge, but there is no harm in mentioning the full story for those who have not come across it: It was narrated that Yahya ibn Yahya said: "While we were in the company of Maalik ibn Anas a man came and said: O, father of 'Abdullaah '**The Most Gracious is established over the Throne**' [Soorah *Taa Haa* (20):5]. How did He establish himself? So Maalik dropped his head until he became overwhelmed by the sweat (due to the severity of the question) and then he replied: The [meaning of] 'establishment' is not unknown [linguistically], and the way [in which He established Himself] is incomprehensible, and belief in it is obligatory and asking about it (i.e. the way in which He established Himself above the Throne) is a *bid'ah* and I suspect you to be none other than a *mubtadi'*. And he ordered for him to be banished." Narrated by Imaam Sa'eed ad-Daarimee in his book *ar-Radd 'alal Jahmiyyah*, p.56, and al-Lalaka'ee in his book *Sharh Usool I'tiqaad Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*, (3/441), and al-Bayhaqee in *al-Asmaa' i was-Sifaat* (2/305-306) and adh-Dhahabee mentioned it in *al-'Uloo* (see *Mukhtasar al-'Uloo* by al-Albaanee p.141-142) and it is authenticated by him, and Ibn Hajar in *Fath-h al-Baari*, (13/406-407). (M)

Similar events can also be found in the books written on: the Science of *hadeeth*, and Etiquette in Seeking Knowledge, and declaring the narrator as being reliable or unreliable.<sup>88</sup>

O you seeker! Be Salafee, adhering to the Path, and beware of the *mubtadi'ah* lest they divert you; for they employ many ways to target and deceive [people] and fabricate a paved way to it by using honeyed speech -and in fact it is honey [read (in Arabic) left to right]<sup>89</sup> - the downpour of tears, elegant dress, deceiving [people] with their imagination, astonishing people with 'miracles', and licking the hands, and the kissing of shoulders etc.

There is nothing more behind all this than the craving for *bid'ah* and the dust of tribulation that he plants within your heart, and he uses you in his company, and by Allaah the blind person (at heart) is not suited to lead the blind and guide them. As for taking from the scholars of the *Sunnah*, then lick the honey without asking (i.e. take knowledge from them without worrying).

May Allaah guide you to prosperity, so that you may drink from the Prophetic Inheritance in its pure state, otherwise let he who wishes to cry: cry over the religion.

What I have mentioned to you is when you have freedom and choice, if however you are studying academically and you have no choice [in whom you take from] then be wary of him and seek refuge [in Allaah] from his evil, and be alert to any infiltration since the saying goes: "Pick the fruit and throw the wood in the fire" and do not become fatigued by seeking knowledge, for I fear that it will be

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<sup>88</sup> Amongst them are: *al-Jaami'* by al-Khateeb, [The chapter of choosing the teachers if their characteristics differ], and in the book *Manaahij al-'Ulamaa' fil-Amri bil Ma'roofi wan-Nahyi anil-Munkar* by as-Saamuraa'ee (p. 215-255) (which is important), and also *at-Tahawwul al-Madh-habee* taken from *al-Isfaar* by the author himself [in which he made mention of some of the ill effects of mixing with them].

<sup>89</sup> Honey in Arabic is '*asal*' and when it is read left to right it becomes '*lasa*' which means poison, so what the Shaykh is saying is that these *mubtadi'ah* honey their speech, however it is not honey but poison. (M)

considered as turning ones back and fleeing from the battlefield at the time of fighting. [In this situation] you are only obliged to know his case, avoid his evil, and unveil him. One example is when Aboo 'Abdir-Rahmaan al-Muqree narrated from a *murji*', it was said to him: "Why do you narrate from a *murji*"? So he replied: "I trade the meat in for the bones."<sup>90</sup> Al-Muqree narrated from him without deceit or anonymity because he made it clear by saying (when he narrated from him): "...and he was a *murji*"<sup>91</sup>.

And what I wrote for you here is from the principles of your creed; the creed of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah*. As was written by Shaykh al-Islaam Abee 'Uthmaan Ismaa'eel ibn 'Abdir-Rahmaan as-Saabooni (died 449AH) in his *Salafee 'Aqeedah*,<sup>92</sup> he said: "and they hate *ahl al-bida'h*: those who innovated into the religion what is not of it; and they do not love them, or befriend them, or listen to their speech, or sit with them, or argue with them in affairs of religion nor do they debate them, and they protect their ears from their falsehood; because if it were to pass through the ears and reside in the heart it would be harmful, and would lead to evil whisperings and thoughts, and on this Allaah revealed His statement:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي  
ءَايَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ

**"And when you see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses by mocking at them, then stay away from them till they turn to another topic."**

[Soorah al-An'aam (6):68]

<sup>90</sup> *Al-Jaami'*, by al-Khateeb (1/224).

<sup>91</sup> **Note:** There is a subtle difference in acquiring knowledge in general and *hadeeth* in particular. For further clarification refer to *Mawqif Ahlis-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah min Ahlil-Ahwaa'i wal Bida'h* (1/367-368) by Shaykh Ibraaheem ar-Ruhaylee, (2/685). (M)

<sup>92</sup> The actual name of the book is *'Aqeedah as-Salaf wa As-haab al-Hadeeth*.



It was narrated from Sulayman ibn Yasaar that a man by the name of Subaigh arrived at Madeenah and began to ask about the *mutashaabih* (the unclear verses) of the Qur'aan, so 'Umar sent for him and he had prepared the date palm branches for him. [When he arrived] 'Umar said to him: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am Subaigh, the Slave of Allaah." So 'Umar took one of the branches and struck him with it till his head bled, then he left him till his head healed, and resumed striking him and again allowed him to become healed. Then he called for him to strike him again, so Subaigh said: "If you wish to kill me then kill me in a beautiful manner." So he gave him permission to go back to his land, and wrote to Aboo Moosa al-Ash'aree in Yemen: "None of the Muslims are allowed to sit with him," narrated by ad-Daarimee.

It was also said that he was accused of holding the belief of the *Khawaarij*. An-Nawawee said in his book *al-Adhkaar*: "The chapter of declaring innocence from the people of *bid'ah* and sin" and he mentioned the *hadeeth* of Aboo Moosa that the Messenger of Allaah declared (himself) innocent of the woman who wails loudly when calamity befalls her, and the woman who shaves her hair when calamity befalls her, and the woman who tears her clothes when calamity befalls her,<sup>93</sup>" (agreed upon). [There is also a] narration when Ibn 'Umar declared his innocence of *al-Qadariyyah*; narrated by Muslim.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Such as the death of a beloved one.

<sup>94</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa Shaykh al-Islaam* Ibn Taymiyyah (2/132, 5/119, 14/459-460, 36/218). [The Shaykh made a passing reference to the story of Ibn 'Umar when he was asked about the *Qadariyyah*; and it is the first *hadeeth* in *Saheeh Muslim* which he narrated that Yahya ibn Ya'mur said: The first person to [negate] *qadar* in Basra was Ma'bad al-Juhanee. So I set out on Hajj or on 'Umrah with Humayd ibn 'Abdir-Rahman al-Himyaaree, so we said to one another: If only we could meet with one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) so that we might ask him about what is talked about *taqdeer* (divine decree); so we were blessed with 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab who was entering the *masjid*, so we walked on either side of him, and I suspected my companion would leave the talking to me, so I said: "O father of 'Abdur-Rahmaan! A group of people have emerged in our land; they read the Qur'aan and they seek the deep meanings =

However, the issue of abandoning the *mubtadi'* is based upon considering the benefits and increasing them and deterring evil and decreasing it; and the permissibility of abandoning the *mubtadi'* is based upon this principle as Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah clarified (in many of his books).<sup>95</sup>

The *mubtadi'ah* only increase in numbers and emerge if knowledge becomes scarce and ignorance becomes widespread, and it is about them that Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "For it is this category that increases and emerges if ignorance and its people increase, and where there are no people who possess knowledge of Prophethood and the following of it, who make its light apparent: [the light] which erases the darkness of misguidance and exposes all that which opposes it including lies, association [of false partners with Allaah], and contradiction." So if you become strong in knowledge; then subdue the *mubtadi'* and his *bid'ah* with an authoritative and eloquent tongue, and peace be with you.

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= of knowledge" – and he mentioned some of their characteristics- "and that they say that there is no Predestination and that all affairs [of creation] are recommenced." He said: "If you meet these people then inform them that I am innocent of them and that they are innocent of me, and by the One that 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar swears by, if one of them was granted a mountain of gold the size of Mount Uhud Allaah would not accept it from him until he believes in *qadar*..." he then narrated from his father the renowned *hadeeth* of Jibreel. (M)]

<sup>95</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*, (28/213, 216-218).

## The Etiquette of Companionship

### 23. Beware of the bad companion

Just as hereditary disposition is hidden,<sup>96</sup> “bad characteristics are [also] hidden;”<sup>97</sup> because character is transferable, and [first] impressions are major abductors of hearts, and people are like the flocks of birds, naturally disposed to imitating one another; so beware of associating with whosoever is to this liking; for it is indeed destruction, and “prevention is better than cure”.

Therefore, choose the best for companionship and friendship; someone who will help you in your quest, in drawing nearer to your Lord, and agrees with you in your noble objective and intention. Take [from me] the most precise gauge in categorising friends:<sup>98</sup>

- i. A friend who befriends you [solely] for his welfare.
- ii. A friend who befriends you [solely] for fun.
- iii. A friend who befriends you for virtue.

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<sup>96</sup> And on this a fabricated *hadeeth*, see *al-'Ilal al-Mutanaahiyah*, (2/123,127), and *Sharh al-Ihya'*, (5/348).

<sup>97</sup> *Sharh al-Ihya'*, (1/74).

<sup>98</sup> *Muhaadaraat Islaamiyyah* by Muḥammad al-Khidr Husayn, (p.125-136).

As regards the first two [categories of friends], then their [relationship] with you is cut off when the necessitating reason [for which they befriended you] is fulfilled: the attainment of welfare in the first and fun in the second.

As for the third category, then this is the one we will concentrate on. He is the one who is driven into a friendship due to mutual belief in the firm establishment of virtue in both people.

A companion of virtue today is “a hard currency” and very difficult to find. Amongst the beautiful sayings of Hishaam ibn 'Abdil-Malik (died 125AH) is his saying: “Nothing remains of the worldly pleasures except a brother [with] whom I raise the burden of taking precaution between me and him.”<sup>99</sup>

Amongst the subtle statements that should be noted are some that say: “العزلة” (‘uzla meaning ‘isolation’) without the [letter] (ع) ‘ayn from [the word] العلم (‘ilm, meaning ‘knowledge’ in Arabic) becomes (in the Arabic language) زلة (zallah - a mistake); and without the [letter] (ز) zaay from the word الزهد (zuhd, asceticism) becomes [in the Arabic language] علة (‘illa meaning ‘defect’).”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Tabaqaat an-Nassaabeen*, p.31.

<sup>100</sup> *Al-'Uzlah* by al-Khattaabee. [What the Shaykh is emphasising is the importance of a good companion, but if it is not possible to find one - as is the situation today unfortunately - then in this case he should isolate himself from excessive mixing with people, but bearing in mind that the two conditions of such isolation: **The first condition** is knowledge; because isolation only benefits the people with knowledge; Aboo Sulaymaan al-Khattaabee said: “Isolation benefits only the wise and scholars, and it is most dangerous to the ignorant person,” *al-'Uzlah* by al-Khattaabee, (p.226). **The second condition** is asceticism, and without these two, isolation changes from being something which is beneficial to being something which is harmful. (M)]

## **The Etiquette of the Student in Leading a Life of Knowledge**

### **24. High aspirations in knowledge**

Adorning oneself with high aspirations is one of the characteristics of Islaam, [and aspirations] are the base for negativity and positivity [within] your personality, and is a supervisor over your actions. Having high aspirations will attract endless good from Allaah that is never cut off; so that you may rise through the levels of perfection, and the blood of endurance will flow in your veins, and you will run in the fields of learning and acting [upon what you have learnt], so that people will only see you standing at the doors of virtue and not outstretching your hand except to important affairs. It also eliminates trivial hopes and actions, and it uproots within [your heart] the tree of humiliation, degradation, adulation (excessive grovelling), and compromise [on behalf of the religion]; so the person with great aspirations is composed and not terrorised in [dire] situations. As for the person who has lost it then he is a fearful coward, whose mouth is shut by his impotence.

Do not confuse high aspiration with pride, because the difference between them is like the difference between the heavens that give rain (again and again) and the earth which splits (with the growth of trees and plants). High aspiration is the adornment of the inheritors

of prophets, and pride is the sickness of those who are sick with the sickness of the wretched tyrants.

O seeker of knowledge! Prescribe for yourself high aspiration, and do not let it escape you. The religion has pointed towards it in [religious] issues that are connected to your [everyday] life so you may always be alert in taking advantage of it, for example: the permissibility for the religiously obliged person to purify himself with dust if he does not have water at his disposal, and not forcing him to buy water [in order] to use it for ablution, and in this is a blessing which is surely attained from [high] aspiration, and with this measure all other [examples], and Allaah knows best.

## **25. The burning desire for seeking knowledge**

Once you have understood the statement attributed to the Rightly Guided *Khaleefah* 'Alee Ibn Abee Taalib: "The worth of every person is in that which he is good at," as it was said: there is no statement more pressing for the seeker of knowledge than it; then beware of the mistake of the one who says: "The predecessor has left nothing for the one who comes after him" and it should be corrected to: "much has the predecessor left for the one who came after him!" Therefore extensively increase in attaining from the 'Inheritance of the Prophet (ﷺ)', and accelerate in your efforts of attainment and close examination [of the issues of knowledge], and no matter where you reach in knowledge, always remember: "much has the predecessor left for the one who came after him!"

From the biography of Ahmad Ibn 'Abdil-Jaleel from *Taarikh Baghdaad* by al-Khateeb is a highlight of one of his poems:

The noble person is unlike the lowly person

No, nor intelligent one like the stupid one

The value of the person in everything he is good at

A judgement passed by Imaam 'Alee.

## 26. Emigrating for the sake of seeking knowledge

“Whoever is not strong enough to travel, will never be travelled to [by the seekers of knowledge].”

So whosoever does not emigrate to seek knowledge in search of teachers, and travel to acquire from them, then it is very unlikely that he will become qualified enough to be travelled to because these scholars (who passed [their] time in learning and teaching, and being acquired from) possess knowledge (attained through research), precision, subtle points of knowledge, and experiences, that are very rarely found in the depths of books.

Beware of desisting from this (i.e. emigrating) as the idle members of the Soofee community do: those who prefer the knowledge of “rags”<sup>101</sup> over the knowledge of “paper”. It was once said to one of them: “Will you not travel to listen from ‘Abdur-Razzaaq?” So he replied: “What do I want with listening from ‘Abdur-Razzaaq when I can listen to the Creator?”!

And another one said [in poetry]:

“And if they quote me from the knowledge of paper  
I will excel them with the knowledge of rags.”

So beware of these people; for they did not give triumph to Islaam, nor did they defeat *kufur*, on the contrary there were amongst them those who were a burden and a tribulation to Islaam.

## 27. Preserving knowledge through writing [it]<sup>102</sup>

Do your utmost to preserve the knowledge in written form, because binding knowledge by way of writing is a safeguard from losing it and a shortcut in the time it takes to search [for it] when it is needed, especially regarding issues that are not to be found in their likely locations. Perhaps its greatest benefit is when you become old aged

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<sup>101</sup> This phrase means in Soofee terminology the inner knowledge that they claim to possess through divine inspiration. (M)

<sup>102</sup> *Al-Jaami'* by al-Khateeb, (2/16, 183-185).

and weak: you will have at your disposal material from which to draw other material without any toil in searching and without having to carry out thorough research.

For this reason set aside a scrapbook, or a notebook for yourself where you can write the precious benefits and random topics that are not found in their likely locations, and if you use the cover of your notebook to index the contents, then this is fine. Then you would transfer what you have gathered into a [different] notebook, organise it according to subject, and write the heading of each issue, the name of the book, and the page and volume number. Then write above what you have written (in rough) “transferred” so as not to confuse it with that which has not been transferred, just as you might write: “reached page such-and-such” in that which you have read from the book, so as not to miss out what you haven’t read. There are a number of works written by scholars in this manner, such as: *Badaa’i al-Fawaa'id* by Ibn al-Qayyim, and *Khabaaya az-Zawaaya* by az-Zarkashee, and *al-Ighfaal*, and *Baqaaya al-Khabaaya* and many others.

Therefore bind the knowledge with writing,<sup>103</sup> especially unique benefits that are not found in their likely locations, and things that are hidden in corners which are out of context, and scattered pearls which you see and hear that you fear will pass you by and so on; and also because the memory will weaken, and forgetfulness is frequent. Ash-Sha’bee said: “If you hear anything, write it, even on a wall,” narrated by Khaythamah.

If that which Allaah willed to grant you (from knowledge) is gathered before you, then organise it in a notebook or scrapbook according to subject; for it will come to your aid in times of constraint in which even a very reliable person will be helpless in achieving anything.

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<sup>103</sup> There is also a *hadeeth* to this meaning authenticated to the Prophet (ﷺ). Refer to *as-Silsilah as-Saheehah*, (no.2026).



## 28. Preservation (of knowledge) through paying attention to it

Do your utmost to preserve the knowledge by implementing it and following it. Al-Khateeb said: “It is incumbent upon the seeker of knowledge to purify his intention in seeking knowledge, and it should be achieving the pleasure of Allaah. He should beware of making it a way to achieve materialistic gain, and a way of gaining [worldly] compensation; for the penalty of such has been set aside for the one who seeks that with his knowledge.

He should beware of boasting or showing off with it, and making his intention in seeking *hadeeth* for the sake of leadership and to gain a following or to summon gatherings (where *hadeeths* are narrated), for these were the flaws that some scholars fell into. He should preserve *hadeeth* by paying attention to it, and not just by narrating it, for the (verbal) narrators of knowledge are many and those who preserve it (by action) are few, and many-a-time a person who is present (physically and absent mentally) is as good as an absent person, and a knowledgeable person is as good as an ignorant person, and a carrier of *hadeeth* who has nothing of it in his possession due to his rejection of its rulings is on the same level as one does not know it or rejects learning it.

The seeker of *hadeeth* should also be distinguished in his general affairs from the common people by implementing the narrations of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) as much as he can, and implementing the traditions upon himself; for verily Allaah said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) you have a good example”

[Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):21]

## 29. Occasional revision of knowledge

Occasionally revise your knowledge from time to time because lack of revision is a sign of forgetting knowledge under any circumstances. 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said: "The example of the carrier of the Qur'aan is like no other than the owner of a camel whose [camel's] feet are bound by a cord; if he guards over it, he will keep it under control, but if he releases it, it will run away." Narrated by al-Bukhaaree, Muslim, and Maalik in his *Muwatta*.

Al-Haafidh Ibn 'Abdil-Barr said: "In this *hadeeth* is a proof that whosoever does not revise his knowledge will lose it, whoever he may be because their knowledge at that time was the Qur'aan and nothing else, and if the Qur'aan which has been made easy to remember is lost without revision, then what about other types of knowledge?! And the best type of knowledge is that of which its foundation is perfected and its branches are memorised, and that which leads to Allaah and that which pleases Him." It was said by some [scholars]: "Every glory not emphasised by knowledge then humiliation is its destiny."<sup>104</sup>

## 30. To gain understanding (of Islaam) by deriving the issues of *fiqh* (Islaamic rulings) by applying the [comprehensive] principles (of the *Sharee'ah*)

Behind knowledge of the religion is gaining understanding, and its learner is the one who ties the rulings in with established concepts of the *Sharee'ah*. In the *hadeeth* of Ibn Mas'ood [we find] that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said: "May Allaah illuminate [the face of] a person who hears my saying and memorises it, understands it and conveys it as he has heard it; and many a time a person is a carrier of knowledge but he is not a person with religious understanding, and many a time a carrier of knowledge carries it to someone who has

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<sup>104</sup> *Sharh al-Ihya'*, (1/93).

more religious understanding than him.”<sup>105</sup> Ibn Khayr commented in the explanation of this *hadeeth*: “...and in it is an indication that *fiqh* is extrapolation and comprehending the meanings [of the texts], and it implicitly illustrates the obligation of learning jurisprudence, and searching for the meanings of the *hadeeth*, and deriving its hidden secrets.”<sup>106</sup>

Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim have had a major impact in this field. Whoever reads from the books of these two *Imaams* will be lead to the straight path of learning.

And amongst the fine extracts of Shaykh al-Islaam’s sayings is what he said in a gathering of learning: “To proceed: indeed we were in a gathering of learning, and reflecting upon the comprehensive rulings of the *Sharee’ah*; by portraying, establishing, founding, elaborating [on these rulings]; so the topic changed to... and he mentioned an issue ... So I say: there is no strength or might save through Allaah, this [issue] is based upon a principle and two side issues...”

And know, may Allaah guide you, that before learning is contemplation; for indeed Allaah called His slaves in many verses of His Book to move, by wandering with deep vision, into deep contemplation upon the dominions of the heavens and earth, and close examination of themselves and their surroundings. Doing this opens the doors of intellectual power to their widest, strengthens the faith, deepens the [understanding of the] rulings, and leads to achievement knowledge:

كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“Thus Allaah makes clear His *Aayaat* (Laws) to you, in order that you may understand.”

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2):242]

<sup>105</sup> Narrated by Ahmad (no. 4157), at-Tirmidhee (10/124), Ibn Maajah (1/85) with an authentic chain of narrators and it is *mutawaatir*.

<sup>106</sup> *Fihrist Ibn al-Khayr*, p.9.

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

“Say: Are the blind and the one who sees equal? Will you not then take thought?”

[Soorah al-An`aam (6):50]

Therefore, gaining understanding is better in the long run than contemplation because gaining understanding is the fruit and product of contemplation, otherwise

فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾

“What is wrong with these people that they fail to understand any speech?”

[Soorah an-Nisaa (4):78]

But gaining understanding is protected by proof, secluded from greed and desire:

وَلِيْنَ اتَّبَعَتْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ  
مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾

“And if you were to follow their desires after what you have received of knowledge then you would have against Allaah neither any protector nor any helper.”

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2):120]

O seeker of knowledge! Adorn yourself with vision and contemplation, and understanding and the gaining of understanding; perhaps you will pass the stage of being a jurist to [the stage of] being *Faqeehin-Nafs* (a person with psychological understanding) as the jurists say. He is the one who ties the rulings to the established concepts of the *Sharee`ah*. And in the terminology of the *muhaditheen* he is referred to as *Faqeehil-Badan*.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Refer to their saying in *Faqeeh al-Badan*, *Ma`aalim al-Eemaan* (2/336,340), and *ath-Thiqaat* by Ibn Hibbaan (9/242).

So clear your vision when faced with new issues by deriving the issues of *fiqh* (Islaamic rulings) by applying the [comprehensive] principles (of the *Sharee'ah*), and paying complete attention to the principles and regulations (of Knowledge).

When examining an issue [you should] combine between following it up [through research] and applying the general fundamentals of the *Sharee'ah* and its established principals, such as the principles of collective interest, deterring harm and hardship, and drawing [religious] ease [to the religiously obliged person], closing the door of artifices (tricks used to escape religious obligations or to get around the prohibited affairs of the religion), and blocking the means (to evil). In this manner you will always be directed towards guidance in your affairs, and it will also come to your aid in difficult situations.

So adhere to gaining understanding – as I previously mentioned – in the Religious Text, and gaining insight into that which surrounds the circumstances of [religious] legislation, and contemplating upon the overall aims of the *Sharee'ah*. If your understanding is free of this, or your hearing is distant from hearing it, then you are wasting your time and indeed the name of ignorance has fallen upon you.

It is this characteristic in particular that gives you precise distinction, and the correct gauge as to the extent of your acquisition [of knowledge], and the ability to derive [rulings]. Hence the jurist is the one who, when faced by a case for which there is no text, he adapts a ruling for it. In just the same way a person associated to the art of composition in the Arabic language is not the one who can give you the categories [of this knowledge] and it's branches, rather he is the one whose insight into eloquence penetrates the Book of Allaah, so he extracts from its hidden knowledge many angles, and if he writes or gives a sermon; he will organise it like the beads of a necklace. And likewise in all subjects.

### 31. Seeking refuge in Allaah when seeking knowledge and acquiring it

Don't panic if a subject becomes inaccessible [due to its difficulty], for some subjects were impenetrable to some of the renowned scholars, and some of them openly admitted to it, as is evident from their biographies. Amongst them were al-Aṣma'ee in the Science of Prosody,<sup>108</sup> al-Muḥaddith ar-Ruhaawi in the art of Calligraphy, Ibn aṣ-Salaah in Science of Logic, Aboo Muslim an-Nahwee in the Science of Morphology,<sup>109</sup> as-Suyootee in Mathematics and Aboo 'Ubaydah, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdil-Baaqi al-Ansaaree, Abul-Ḥasan al-Qate'e, Aboo Zakariyyah Yahya Ibn Ziyaad al-Farraa' and Aboo Haamid al-Ghazaalee in Arabic grammar.

O seeker [of knowledge]! Increase your zeal, and flee to Allaah in supplication, seek refuge in Him, and break down before Him in humility. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah used to say frequently in his supplication (if the meaning of a Verse from the Book of Allaah became impenetrable): “O Teacher of Aadam and Ibraaheem, teach me, and O You who made Sulaymaan understand make me understand!”<sup>110</sup> And access to it would be granted for him.

### 32. Honesty in knowledge

It is incumbent upon the seeker of knowledge to be pre-eminent in adorning himself with honesty in knowledge: when seeking and acquiring it, implementing it, conveying it, and passing it on: “For indeed success of the *Ummah* lies in the righteousness of its actions, and the righteousness of its actions lies in the correctness of its knowledge, and the correctness of its knowledge lies in its men being honest in what they narrate or explain. So whosoever speaks about knowledge without honesty has inflicted a wound upon knowl-

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<sup>108</sup> The study of verse forms and poetic metres in the Arabic language. (M)

<sup>109</sup> The study of the forms of words in the Arabic Language. (M)

<sup>110</sup> *Fataawa* Ibn Taymiyyah (4/38).

edge, and it is as if he has placed a rock to obstruct the path of the *Ummah* to success.

No party affiliated to a particular subject is free from those who don't seek knowledge to beautify themselves with the highest virtue nor to benefit the people and you will discover that such people are dishonest. They have no shame in narrating what they did not hear, or in explaining what they do not know. This is what caused the great scholars to criticise men, and to distinguish between those who exaggerate in their speech and those who speak according to what they know. [It was this criticism that led] the seekers[of knowledge] to become aware of the value of what they read [as well as its] status and [become] able to decisively distinguish truth from falsehood, [or whether that which they read] was predominantly true or false or a mixture of both.”<sup>111</sup>

### 33. Truthfulness

Truthfulness in speech is a sign of awe, nobility of one's personality, purity of one's consciousness, high aspiration, the predominance of the mind, and a sign of acceptance from the people, the happiness of the community and the protection of the faith. For this reason it is an obligation upon everybody; and what a disappointment for the one who neglects it, and whoever neglects it then he has brought harm to himself and his knowledge. Al-Awzaa'ee said: "Learn truthfulness before learning knowledge;" and Wakee' said: "This profession (i.e., *hadeeth*) only raises the truthful one."

So learn truthfulness before learning knowledge – may Allaah shower you with His Mercy.

Truthfulness is speaking in accordance with reality and belief, so truth can only be attained through this way. As for its opposite, [which is] lying, then it is of many types, varieties, and realms, but it can be categorised into three:

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<sup>111</sup> *Rasaa'il al-Islaa'h*, (1/13).

1. The lies of the groveller, who is the one that opposes both reality and belief, such as the one who grovels to a person whom he knows is sinful, or an innovator.
2. The lies of the hypocrite. He is the one who opposes [his] belief but [his speech] is in accordance with reality, such as the hypocrite who speaks in accordance with *Ahl as-Sunnah* and Guidance.
3. The lies of the foolish person are those which oppose reality and agree with belief, such as describing a heretical *Soofee* as being a 'Friend of Allaah'.

So strictly adhere to the path of truthfulness and do not move your tongue or form your lips and open your mouth and speak except to say a few words that express your true internal feelings, such as love and hate, or your external feelings such as those which are perceived by the five senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch.

So the truthful person would not say "I love you [for the sake of Allaah]" when he hates you, or "I heard" when he did not hear, and so on.

Beware that you do not become surrounded by suspicion and being recorded in the list of liars, which will then divert your determination to be truthful. The way to ensure against this – if you are contested by your desires to say something you are untruthful about – is to subdue any such desire by reminding it of the status of truthfulness and its nobility, and the evil of lying and its lowliness, and that the liar is exposed very quickly, and seek refuge in Allaah.

Do not give yourself the excuse to speak in a manner which – to the listener has an apparent meaning, but you, the speaker intend something else; in a manner other than the one prescribed by the *Sharee'ah*. O seeker [of knowledge] be careful not to transit through truthfulness into this type of speech: that will land you into lying. Indeed the most evil result of this transition is lying in knowledge for the sake of the sickness of competing with your peers, or spread-



ing your reputation. Whoever seeks out a reputation higher than his status, then let him know that there are men on the lookout who possess a penetrative insight, and critical pens, and they will weigh the reputation with the narrations (i.e. the *ahaadeeth*, and sayings of the *Salaf*), and you will be stripped of three things:

1. Trust from the people's hearts.
2. Knowledge, and [there will be] a decline in [the] acceptance [in the hearts of the people for you].
3. Being disbelieved, even when you are truthful.

In general, whoever goes [to extremes] in speaking eloquently is the brother of the magician, and the magician will never be successful no matter what amount of skill he may attain.<sup>112</sup> And Allaah knows best.

### **34. The sanctuary of the seeker of knowledge**

The sanctuary of the scholar is “I don’t know”, and he destroys this [his sanctuary] by refusing to say it out of pride, and by answering instead “It was said...such-and-such”. Therefore, if half of knowledge is saying “I don’t know”, then half of ignorance is saying, “It was said...such-and-such”, or “I think...such-and-such.”<sup>113</sup>

### **35. Preserving your capital [i.e. lifetime]**

Preserve your time! Your time in acquiring knowledge, so be a confederate of action and not a confederate of idleness and boastfulness, and a devotee to productivity and not to idle-play and idle-talk. Preserve your time through serious exertion, adherence to study, being in the company of scholars and occupying yourself with knowledge by reading or being read to, researching, contemplating and memorising especially during the prime of your youth and in the

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *At-Ta'uulum*, p.36 .

early years of your life, the source of your well-being. So seize this precious opportunity (i.e. seeking knowledge in your youth) in order that you attain the highest levels in knowledge, for it is the “time of the heart’s composition, and the assembly of thoughts” due to freedom from all that preoccupies and diverts [your heart and mind] through the responsibilities of life, and due to the lack of dependants.

“What does the breadwinner want with dependants;  
For indeed only the single person strives to attain them.”

Beware of being overcome by procrastination; so do not procrastinate by saying to yourself ‘after I finish doing such-and-such,’ or, ‘I will do such and such after I retire from doing this task’ and so forth. Rather, you should hasten to it immediately before the saying of Aboo at-Tahhaan al-Qaynee applies to you (poetry):

“I was bent by the bending factors of time until  
I became as if I was a hunter drawing nearer to the prey;  
Taking short steps, that if anyone were to see me; would think,  
That I am tied up, when I am not.”

And it was said (in poetry) by Usaamah ibn Munqidh:

“And with the age of eighty, weakness caused mischief in my body,

And the weakness of my leg and the shivering  
of my hands upset me.

And if I were to write, my handwriting would like  
that of a shaky person,

Like the writing of a shivering person  
with shivering hands;

And you will become amazed at my hand,  
too weak to carry a pen.

When it used to carry the spear to the lion’s throat,  
So say to the one who wishes to live long:

This is the outcome of a long life.”

So if you hasten, then this is a witness from yourself that you carry “high aspirations in knowledge”.

### 36. Relaxing the body

Take a few hours from your time to relax yourself in the gardens of knowledge from the books of lectures (general knowledge), for the heart needs to be relaxed from time to time. It was narrated that the Commander of the Believers 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib said: “Relax these hearts, and seek for them subtle wisdoms, for they become bored just as the bodies become bored.”<sup>114</sup>

Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah commented upon the wisdom concerning the prohibition of praying general supererogatory prayers during the abhorred times: “Rather, in the prohibition of praying general supererogatory prayers during the abhorred times are additional advantages such as relaxation of the body at intervals from the weightiness of worship, as one would relax by sleeping and other forms [of relaxation], and for this reason Mu'aadh said: Verily I seek reward for my sleep as I do when I am awake...”<sup>115</sup> He [i.e. Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, also] said: “Rather, it was said: that from the general wisdoms of the prohibition of praying general supererogatory prayers during the abhorred times is the relaxation of the body during these abhorred times so that it may become more energetic at the times of (obligatory) prayer; for it becomes at ease by what it has been prohibited from, and becomes more energetic after it has been relaxed. And Allaah knows best.”<sup>116</sup>

For this purpose weekend breaks were widespread from the early times, most commonly on Fridays and Thursday evenings, and sometimes used to be on Mondays and Tuesdays, and on 'Eed al-Ad-haa and 'Eed al-Fitr it would be up to three days, and so on. We find this in the books about the etiquette of teaching and the biogra-

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<sup>114</sup> *Jaami' Bayaan al-'Ilm wa Fadlih.*

<sup>115</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa* (23/187).

<sup>116</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa.* (23/217).

phies, for example: *Aadaab al-Mu'alimeen* (The Etiquette of the Teachers) by Suhnoon<sup>117</sup>, and *ar-Risaalah al-Mufuṣilah*<sup>118</sup> (The Articulate Letter) by al-Qaabisee, and *ash-Shaqaa'iq an-Nu'maniyah* (Anemone)<sup>119</sup> and from it *Abjad al-'Uloom* (Simplified Knowledge),<sup>120</sup> and the book entitled *Alaysas-Subhu bi Qareeb* (Is Dawn not Near?) by Taahir bin 'Aashoor, *Fataawa Rasheed Rida*, and *Mu'jam al-Buldaan* (The Dictionary of Countries)<sup>121</sup> and *Fataawa Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah*.<sup>122</sup>

### 37. Precision and correction reading

Covet precision and correction reading to a proficient *shaykh*, so you may be safe from possible corruption and distortion, mistakes, and self-delusion.

If you look up all the biographies of all the scholars – especially the *huffaadh* (those who memorise a very large proportion of the *Sunnah*) amongst them – you will find a large number of them who have recited (the entirety of) the long compilations in a few gatherings or days, reading with precision to a proficient *shaykh*. An example of such is Haafidh Ibn Hajar read *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree* in ten gatherings and every gathering lasted ten hours. And *Saheeh Muslim* in four gatherings in two days and completed it at noon of the next day which was the day of 'Arafah on Friday in the year 813H. And he read *Sunan Ibn Maajah* in four gatherings, and *Mu'jam at-Tabaraanee as-Sagheer* in one sitting between *dhuhr* and *'asr*.

And his *shaykh*, al-Fayroozabaadee read *Saheeh Muslim* in Damascus to his *shaykh*, Ibn Jahbal with precision in three days.

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<sup>117</sup> p. 104

<sup>118</sup> p.135-137

<sup>119</sup> p.20 [A plant with white, red or purple flowers. (M)]

<sup>120</sup> 1/195-196.

<sup>121</sup> 1/102.

<sup>122</sup> 25/318-320, 329.

And there are many astonishing accounts of this type about al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee, al-Mu'tamin as-Saajee and Ibn al-Abbaar and others; if all of them were to be mentioned it would take too long. And refer to them in the following books: *as-Siyar* by adh-Dhahabee (18/277,279, 19/310, 21/253), *Tabaqaat ash-Shaaf'iyah* by as-Subkee (4/30), *al-Jawaahiru wad-Durar* by as-Sakhaawee (1/103-105), *Fat-h al-Mugheeth* (2/46), *Shadharaat adh-Dhahab* (8/121, 206), *Khulaasatul-Athar* (1/72-73), *Fihris al-Fahaaris* by al-Kattaanee, and *Taaaj al-'Aroos* (1/45-46). So do not forget your share of this.

### **38. Summarising long compilations [through reading]**

Summarising long compilations [through reading] is among the most important matters and by doing it you will multiply your knowledge, broaden your understanding, derive the unique benefits from its hiding places, and [gain] experience in knowing where [different] issues and topics can be found and understand the different styles of the authors in their compilations and their terminologies within them.

The predecessors (i.e. the scholars) used to write at the point that they stopped “reached” so he does not miss anything when he recommences his reading, especially after a long period of time.

### **39. Excellence in asking questions**

Adhere to the etiquette of collective study, such as the excellence in asking questions, listening, and correct understanding of the answer. Beware when you receive an answer to say: “But Shaykh so-and-so said such-and-such to me,” for this is a deficiency in your manners, and it creates a conflict between the sayings of the scholars.

If you must do so, then clarify your question, and say: “What is your opinion of such-and-such *fatwa*?” without naming the person.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: “It was said: If you sit with a scholar; then ask to gain religious understanding and not to go to extremes.”<sup>123</sup> He also said: “There are six levels to knowledge:

- The first is excellence in asking questions.
- The second is excellence in paying attention and listening.
- The third is excellence in understanding.
- The fourth is memorising.
- The fifth is teaching.
- The sixth – and this is the fruit of knowledge – is implementing it and appreciating its boundaries.”<sup>124</sup> He then proceeded to clarify this further in some important research.

#### **40. Debating without argumentation**<sup>125</sup>

Beware of dispute, for it is an unfavourable affair. As for debating for the truth then it is a favourable affair because in true debate the truth is uplifted over falsehood, and correctness over incorrectness. It is built upon sincere advice to one another, forbearance, and spreading knowledge. As for dispute in conversations and debates then it is argumentation, showing off, disturbance, pride, a struggle to become the victorious contestant, a quarrel, deceit, enmity, and is concordance with the foolish people; so beware of it and the one who indulges in it and you will be safe from sins and falling into that which is unlawful. So turn away and you will be safe and quell the liabilities of sin.

#### **41. Revision of the knowledge in groups**

Attain pleasure by revision and presentation of the problems to be researched with the people who have an insight into knowledge, because it excels reading in some aspects, and it sharpens the mind and strengthens the memory. [At the same time you should] adhere

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<sup>123</sup> *Miftaah Daar as-Sa'aadah*, p.184.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Refer to: *Fataawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah* (24/172-174).

to being fair, kind and distance [yourself] from unfairness, disturbance and rashness.

Be alert, for it exposes the defects of the untruthful person. If it (revision) was with a person short of knowledge, dull in mind, then it becomes harmful and leads to mutual repulsion. As for private revision by browsing through the issues of knowledge then this is an affair that you should not become detached from. It was said: “the revival of knowledge is revision”.

#### **42. The seeker of knowledge lives between the [texts of the] Qur'aan and *Sunnah* and knowledge associated to them**

For they are for him as two wings are to the bird, so be careful that you don't become broken winged.

#### **43. Completion of learning the tools of every subject**

You will never become a [true] seeker of knowledge [one who is] precise and diverse, unless you complete learning the tools of every subject. [For example,] in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) combine between jurisprudence and its principles, and in *hadeeth* combine between understanding it and the knowledge of the ‘Principles of Narration’, and so on, [and if you cannot or will not do this, then] do not trouble yourself [at all]. Allaah said:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ

“And those (who embraced Islaam from Banee Israa'eel, or the companions) to whom we gave the book (i.e. the Tawraat or the Qur'aan) recite it (i.e. obey its orders and its teachings) as it should be recited are those who believe therein.”

[Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 121]

We can understand from this [verse] that the seeker [of knowledge] should not leave a subject except after perfecting it.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Sharh al-Ihya'*, (1/334).

## Adorn Yourself with the Implementation of Knowledge

### 44. The signs of beneficial knowledge

Ask yourself about how much you share from the signs of beneficial knowledge, which are as follows:

1. Implementing it.
2. Hatred of being praised, complemented, or displaying haughtiness over others.
3. Increasing your modesty with the increase of your knowledge.
4. Fleeing from the love of leadership, fame, and worldly pleasures.
5. Abandoning the claim to have Knowledge.
6. Having bad suspicions about oneself, and good suspicion about other people, so as to steer clear from disparaging them.

'Abdullaah Ibn al-Mubaarak used to say, in poetry if the manners of the *Salaf* were mentioned:

“Do not compare us to them  
For the sound person who walks  
is not the same as the crippled one.”



## 45. The alms of knowledge

Give the alms of knowledge (meaning): openly proclaiming the truth, enjoining good and forbidding evil, weighing up between the [religious] advantages and disadvantages, spreading the knowledge, the love of benefiting [the people], sacrificing honour, in interceding for a good cause for the sake of the Muslims in the affairs of the Truth and general interest.

Aboo Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “When a person dies his deeds are cut off except three: a continuous charity; or knowledge which is benefited from; or a righteous child who prays for him.” Narrated by Muslim and others. Some of the people of knowledge said<sup>127</sup>: “These three are not combined except for a scholar who spends his knowledge; because spending it is charity which is benefited from, and the receiver of it is a (metaphorical) child of this scholar by way of learning.”

Therefore covet this etiquette, for it is the main fruit of your knowledge.

Due to the nobility of knowledge, it increases with the increase of spending it (i.e. by way of teaching etc.) and decreases with fear of spending it, and its defect is concealing it.

Therefore do not be put off from the obligation of conveying and passing on [knowledge] by the claim that these are evil times (hence one must abandon mixing with people), or that there is a predomination of evil people, and the weak effects of giving sincere advice, but if you do, then it is an action that the sinful people would give gold for, and it is appropriate for them to leave all virtues, and publicise corruption.

## 46. The glory of the scholars

Being adorned by the glory of the scholars [includes] preservation of knowledge and exalting it, protecting the honour of its glory and

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<sup>127</sup> *Tadhkiratus-Saami' wal Mutakallim.*

nobility. How much you profit from [knowledge] and implementing it depends on how much you spend of it in this (way), and your loss is dependent upon how much you miss out from this, and there can be no strength or might but by Allaah, the Almighty, the All-Wise. Therefore, beware of people with high status playing you for a fool, or being curbed by fools, which would result in you becoming lenient in your *fatwaas* or in [your] verdict, assessment, or speech.

Also do not scurry to the materialistic people, or stand at their doorsteps, and do not give it (knowledge) to those non-deserving of it, no matter what their status.

Relish your eyesight and your insight by reading the life and biographies of the *imaams* that have passed away. If you do you will see self-sacrifice for the sake of this protection, especially in the books that collected examples of this, such as: *Min Akhlaaqil-'Ulamaa'* (From the Etiquette of the Scholars) by Muḥammad Sulaymaan,<sup>128</sup> *al-Islaam Bayn al-Ulamaa'i wal Hukkaam* (Islaam Between the Scholars and the Rulers) by 'Abdul-'Azeez al-Badree, and *Manaahijul-'Ulamaa'i fil Amri bil Ma'roofi, wan Nahyi 'anil-Munkar* (The Methodologies of the Scholars in Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil) by Faarooq as-Saamura'ee<sup>129</sup>. I hope that you will see what they mentioned multiplied in '*Izzatul-'Ulamaa'* (by the author himself), may Allaah ease its completion and publishing.

The scholars used to make their seekers memorise the poem of al-Jurjaanee 'Alee ibn 'Abdil-'Azeez (died 392H) and it can also be found in his biography. It begins as follows:

“They say there is some discomfort  
in you but in fact,

They saw a man who withdrew from  
the place of humiliation

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<sup>128</sup> Printed many times.

<sup>129</sup> Published by Daar al-Wafaa', Jeddah (1408AH).

I saw that whoever draws nearer to people  
would become insignificant to them.

And whosoever is honoured by  
self-esteem will be honoured,

And if only the people of knowledge protected it,  
it would in turn have protected them.

And if they exalted it in the hearts of people,  
it would have been exalted.”

#### **47. Protection of knowledge**

If you attain status, then remember that the rope that helped you to reach it was seeking knowledge. So by the grace of Allaah, and then due to your knowledge, you reached whatever status you have reached in this teaching post, or *fatwa*, or judiciary post, and so on, so give knowledge its due respect and fair share of implementation, and its due status. Beware of the way of those who do not show reverence towards Allaah, those who base their foundation upon protecting their status, so their tongues become enwrapped from speaking the word of truth, and they are led to act accordingly by the love of their status.

Therefore adhere to preserving your value by preserving your piety, knowledge, and self-esteem, with wisdom and good diplomacy: “Preserve Allaah and He will preserve you”, “Preserve Allaah at times of ease, He will preserve you at times of hardship”.

If you are dismissed from the burden of responsibility – and this is your path even after a long period – then no harm is done, for it is a praiseworthy expulsion, and not one of blameworthiness and degradation.

It is an astonishing affair that those who have been prevented from a large proportion of prosperity do not have adherence, repentance, or do they return to Allaah except after retirement, and even though

such people's repentance is religiously valid, is like the faith of the old commoner, because his benefit is not passed on (to the people). As for [his character during his] period of employment you will find him to be amongst the most evil and harmful of people, or too cold-hearted and dumb in speaking the truth. I seek refuge in Allaah from such humiliation.

#### **48. Diplomacy not compromise (on behalf of the religion)**

Compromising on behalf of the religion is a despicable characteristic; as for diplomacy, then it is not, but do not mix between the two, or you will be led by compromise to the presence of open hypocrisy, and compromise will blemish your faith.<sup>130</sup>

#### **49. Passion for the books**

The nobility of knowledge is well known due to its general benefit and the dire need for it, more than the need to breathe. The manifestation of deficiency in it is dependent upon the extent of its diminution, and the attainment of satisfaction and happiness is dependent upon the quantity attained. For this reason the seekers of knowledge were filled with the passion for knowledge, and the passion for collecting books with careful selection, and there are many accounts on this that would take too long to mention. Many accounts can [also] be found in *Khabar al-Kitaab* ("News of the Book", by the Shaykh himself), may Allaah ease its completion and publishing.

Therefore, collect the books [which are considered as] foundations [of all books], and know that it is not sufficient to have one book and not the other. And do not stuff your library, and confuse your thinking with worthless books, especially the books of the *mubtabi'ah*, for they are permeated with poison.

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<sup>130</sup> Refer to the important book *al-Ghurabaa'* by al-Aajurree (p. 79-80), and *Rawdatul-'Uqalau'* (pg.70) by Ibn Hibbaan.

## 50. The foundation of your library

Make use of the books that are written upon the way of mentioning the proof, and gaining understanding in the causes of the rulings, and diving into the deep meanings of the issues. From the greatest of these books are the books of the two *shaykhs* Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.

Amongst these books that are upon this path, old and new [are the books of]:

1. Al-Haafidh Ibn 'Abdil-Barr (died 463AH) and the greatest of his books is *at-Tamheed*.
2. Al-Haafidh Ibn Qudaamah (died 620AH) and at the head of all his books is *al-Mughnee*.
3. Al-Haafidh Ibn adh-Dhahabee (died 747AH).
4. Al-Haafidh Ibn Katheer (died 774AH).
5. Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab (died 795AH).
6. Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajar (died 852AH).
7. Al-Haafidh ash-Shawkaanee (died 1250AH).
8. Al-Imaam Muhammad Ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab (died 1206AH).
9. The books of the scholars of the *da'wah*, and from the most comprehensive of them is *ad-Durar As-Saniyyah*.
10. Al-'Allaamah as-San'aanee (died 1182AH) especially his beneficial book *Subul as-Salaam*.
11. Al-'Allaamah Siddeeq Hasan Khaan al-Qannoojee (died 1307AH).
12. Al-'Allaamah Muhammad al-Ameen ash-Shinqeetee (died 1393AH) especially *Adwaa' al-Bayaan*.

## 51. Dealing with the book

You will never benefit from any book unless you know the terminology used by the author therein, and many a time the foreword is a guide to that, so read the book starting at the foreword.

## 52. Further to this

If you purchase a book do not put it in your library until you have had a browse through it, or read its foreword, its index, and a few extracts from it. If, however, you put it in your library in its category, a long time will pass and your lifetime will pass without looking into it, and this has been experienced. And Allaah (Alone) is the giver of prosperity.

## 53. Writing with diacritical points<sup>131</sup>

If you write then write using diacritical points which removes any obscurity, and obscurity can be removed in a number of ways:

1. Clarity of the handwriting.
2. Writing according to the rules of writing (*imlaa'*), and there are books on this and amongst the most important of these books: *Kitaab al-Imlaa'* by Husayn Waali<sup>132</sup>, and *Qawaa'id al-Imlaa'* by 'Abdus-Salaam Muḥammad Haaron<sup>133</sup>, and *al-Mufradul-'Alam* by al-Haashimee.<sup>134</sup>
3. Placing the diacritical points upon the letters that should have them and leaving the letters that shouldn't have them without them.

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<sup>131</sup> The distinguishing marks placed on the Arabic letters to show their correct pronunciation. (M)

<sup>132</sup> Published by Daar al-Qalam, Beirut (1405H).

<sup>133</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> edition published by Khaanajee Print, Egypt (1399H).

<sup>134</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> edition published by al-Maktabah al-Bukhaariyyah al-Kubraa, Egypt.

4. Vowelising that which is obscure.<sup>135</sup>
5. To write the numbers of the *Aayaat* and the *hadeeths*.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Because leaving them out would lead to confusion.

<sup>136</sup> *At-Tarqeem wa 'Alaamaatihi*, Ahmad Zakee Baasha, (published 1330AH).

CHAPTER 7  
**Precautions**

**54. False hopes**

Beware of false hopes, and among them is to claim to have knowledge in something that you have no knowledge of, or proficiency in that which you have no proficiency. If you do so then you have drawn a thick curtain between yourself and knowledge.

**55. Beware of being “Aboo Shibr” (the father of a span)<sup>137</sup>**

It was said knowledge is three spans: whosoever enters the first span will become arrogant, and whosoever enters the second span will become humble, and whosoever enters the third span will know that he knows nothing.

**56. Becoming manifest before becoming qualified**

Beware of becoming manifest before becoming qualified, for it is the defect of knowledge and actions. It was said: “Whosoever manifests himself before his time, then he has manifest himself to humiliation.”

**57. Deterioration of manners in knowledge**

Beware of what the people deprived of knowledge indulge in: they revise one or two issues so that if they are among distinguished

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<sup>137</sup> *Tathkiratus-Saami' wal Mutakallim*, (pg. 65).



people in a gathering they bring them up for debate in order to manifest their knowledge! And how many evils are there in this? The least of these evils is that he knows that the people know his reality. I clarified this and other related defects in my book *at-Ta'aalum*, and all praise is due to Allaah the Lord of the Worlds.

### **58. (Merely) “putting pen to paper”**

Precaution should be taken from writing books that lack creativity in the eight aims of writing, which – in the long run – leads to merely “putting pen to paper”. Beware of becoming engaged in writing books before perfecting the tools required, becoming qualified, and developing at the hands of your teachers, or else you will have registered a discredit against yourself.

As for the one who becomes qualified, has perfected the tools required, whose knowledge is vast, has had experience in research, revision, reading, and abstraction of the long compilations, has memorised the concise books of knowledge, and can summon up the issues of knowledge engaging in beneficial writings then it is amongst the best things that noble, virtuous people can engage themselves in; and do not forget the saying of al-Khateeb: “Whosoever writes a book, then he has put his mind on a tray and offered it to people.”

### **59. Your stance on the mistakes of those who preceded you**

If you stumble across a mistake of a scholar, then don't become happy with it so that you may use it to degrade him, but you should only be happy that you corrected the issue, because a just person will definitely affirm that there is no *imaam* except that he has mistakes and self-delusions, especially those who have written excessively. Only a person who is a *muta'aalim* (one who feigns knowledge) will make a controversy and be happy with it so as to degrade

him (i.e. the preceding scholar): “he wants to treat a minor cold but it ends up turning into leprosy.”<sup>138</sup>

Yes, the mistake or self-delusion of an *imaam* [who is drowning in the sea of his knowledge and virtue] should be pointed out, but should not stir up the dust around him by degrading and defaming him [and as a result] the people who resemble [such a person (who does such actions)] will become encouraged by him.

## 60. Detering dubious affairs<sup>139</sup>

Do not make your heart like a sponge that absorbs anything that it comes across, and avoid arousing dubious issues in your mind or [the minds of] others, because dubious issues are swift abductors (of the hearts), and the heart is weak. The main people who spread them are the “carriers of wood”<sup>140</sup> – the *mubtadi’ah* - so take protection from them.

## 61. Beware of grammatical errors (in Arabic)

Avoid grammatical errors in speech and writing, for a lack of grammatical error is honourable, shows pure literary taste, and an appreciation of elegant meanings due to sound structure [of speech and writing]. On the authority of ‘Umar that he said: “Learn Arabic [grammar], for indeed it increases honour.”<sup>141</sup> There are also narrations that the *Salaf* used to hit their children if they made grammatical errors.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Majma’ al-Balaaghah* by ar-Raaghib.

<sup>139</sup> *Miftaah Daar as-Sa’aadah*, (pg.153).

<sup>140</sup> An idiom used to refer to those who are heedless of what they acquire regardless of what it is, and in this context it means that the person is heedless in where he/she takes his/her religion from. (M)

<sup>141</sup> *Al-Jaami’* (2/25) by al-Khateeb.

<sup>142</sup> *Al-Jaami’* (2/28, 29).

Al-Khateeb narrated that ar-Rahbee said: “I heard some of our peers say: ‘If a person who makes grammatical errors writes from another person like him, and he writes from another person like him, the *hadeeth* will end up in Persian!’”<sup>143</sup> And al-Mubarrid said in poetry:<sup>144</sup>

“Grammar straightens the tongue that  
speaks ungrammatical language,

And you honour the person if he  
does not make grammatical errors,

If you seek the greatest knowledge,

Then the greatest of it is that  
which straightens the tongue.”<sup>145</sup>

Therefore, do not pay attention to what al-Qaasim Ibn Mukhaymarah said: “Learning grammar begins with absolute engagement and ends with transgression”, nor the saying of Bishr al-Haafi who, when it was said to him, “Learn grammar.” Replied, “I will stray.” So it was said to him, “Say: Zayd struck ‘Amr (grammatically),” so he replied, “O my brother! Why did he strike him?” So he said, “O Aboo Nasr! He did not strike him but this is an established principle.” So Bishr said to him, “The beginning of this [knowledge] is based upon lies, there is no need for it.” Narrated by al-Khateeb in *Iqtidaa' al-'Ilm al-'Amal*.

## 62. Beware of premature intellectuality

Beware of premature intellectuality, by producing ideologies before [their] full development.

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<sup>143</sup> *Al-Jaami'* (2/28).

<sup>144</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>145</sup> Some scholars rebuked al-Mubarrid's poetry by saying that the greatest knowledge is the knowledge of *tawheed*, but the greatness in his saying here is in comparison to foundational knowledge. And Allaah knows best.

### 63. Beware of the new *Israa'eeliyaat*<sup>146</sup>

Beware of the new *Israa'eeliyaat* in the venom of the Orientalists from the Jews and the Christians; for it is more damaging than the old *Israa'eeliyaat*, because the Prophet (ﷺ) has clarified the position to be taken regarding them, and the scholars have conveyed the [Islaamic] opinion concerning it. As for the new ones that have filtered into *al-Fikr al-Islaamee* (Islaamic ideology)<sup>147</sup> after the revolution of civilisation and the meeting of one knowledge with an-

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<sup>146</sup> *Maqaasid ash-Shar'iiyyah al-Islaamiyyah* by 'Allaal al-Faasee (p. b). [This terminology refers to the old Judaic narrations which are extracted from the "Tawraat" and introduced into Islaam by either: Jews who remained upon their faith or Jews who reverted to Islaam. They were introduced into Islaam by such people to elaborate the stories which Allaah mentioned in the Qur'aan or the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned in *hadeeth*, or they can be stories with no origin in the Qur'aan or the *Sunnah*. The first group of people introduced them into Islaam with the intention of distorting the texts of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*. For example: Defining the tree that Aadam and Hawaa' ate from amongst many other examples which the books of *tafseer* are unfortunately full of. The Prophet (ﷺ), similarly the scholars – based upon the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) – clarified the position to be taken from such narrations and they also categorised them. (M)]

<sup>147</sup> I don't know the reason that drove the Shaykh – may Allah preserve him - to use this phrase, because the scholars declared that it is impermissible to use, and amongst them the Shaykh himself in his book *Mu'jam al-Manaahee*, he said: "and amongst them – i.e. phrases that are innovated into Islaam - *al-Fikr al-Islaamee* (Islamic ideology) and *al-Fikratul-Islaamiyyah* (Islamic ideology) to mean Islaam. How is it possible that Islaam which originated from revelation can be called an ideology? And ideology is a production of the human mind, so how is it possible that Islaam can be a manifestation of the human ideology? And Islaam originates from infallible revelation whereas ideology is not infallible." (p.373)

And Shaykh Ibn al-'Uthaymeen – may Allah preserve him - said in *Majmoo' al-Fataawa*: "...and this word - I mean the word *al-fikr* - that is used to mean religion must be cast out of the dictionaries of Islamic books because it leads to this ill meaning which is to call Islaam an ideology, or Christianity an ideology or Judaism an ideology... so it will lead to these religions (in their pure, original form) made into mere worldly ideologies to be taken up by whomsoever wishes. In reality these heavenly faiths (in their pure, original form) are heavenly faiths from Allaah, in which a person believes they are revealed by Allaah", (3/136). And Allah knows best. (M)

other, and the restraint of the spread of Islaam, then it is pure evil, and a tribulation gushing forth and the Muslims' heedlessness has turned them away from it, and others took it under their wing, so beware not to fall into it. May Allaah protect the Muslims from its evil.

#### **64. Beware of Byzantine debate**<sup>148</sup>

I mean lame debate or that with little benefit, for the Byzantines used to debate on the sex of the Angels while the enemy was at the gates of their country, until they were defeated by them. Also, debate that has little benefit leads away from the Path. The way of the *Salaf* is to refrain from extensive dispute and argumentation, and that to indulge increasingly in it is a result of a deficiency in piety, as al-Hasan (al-Baṣree) said when he heard a group of people arguing: "These people have become bored with worship, and speech has become light upon [their tongue], and their piety has decreased and that is why they speak." Narrated by Aḥmad in *az-Zuhd* and Aboo Nu'aym in *al-Hilyah*.<sup>149</sup>

#### **65. No *walaa'* and *baraa'* (declaring allegiance and declaring innocence) should be pledged over sectarianism and partisanship**<sup>150</sup>

The people of Islaam have no distinguishing characteristic except Islaam and peace. O seeker of knowledge! May Allaah bless you and bless your knowledge – seek knowledge and implement it and call to it upon the way of the Pious Predecessors. Do not be a person who frequently goes in and out of these groups or you will leave [the path of] freedom to enter [a way of] constriction, for all of

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<sup>148</sup> *Mu'jam at-Taraakeeb*, (pg.280).

<sup>149</sup> And Ibn Rajab mentioned it in *Faḍl 'Ilm as-Salaf 'alal Khalaf*.

<sup>150</sup> See *Fatawa Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah* (3/341-344, 415-416, 419 – and this is important -; 4/46-154 – also important ; 11/512, 514, 515; 3/342, 416-421) and the index (36/179-180, and 37/28).

Islaam is a path and a way for you and all the Muslims are the Community and the Hand of Allaah is with the Community. There is no sectarianism and partisanship in Islaam. I seek refuge from Allaah on your behalf that you become weak, and become like a robber between these sects, groups, false ideologies, and extremist parties if you pledge allegiance and declare innocence for their sakes.

Become a seeker of knowledge upon the Path, pursuing the tracks [of those who preceded you (the *salaf*)] and following the *Sunan* and calling to Allaah with insight, and acknowledging the virtues and precedence of the people of virtue. *Hizbiyyah* (partisanship),<sup>151</sup> with its innovated paths and appearances (which the *Salaf* were unacquainted with), is the greatest obstacle to knowledge and the cause of the dispersion of the Community, and it has very much weakened the rope of unity of Islaam and caused afflictions upon the Muslims. So beware of these parties and sects whose members move around for its sake, and whose evil star has shone. Their likeness is no more than that of a roof gutter: it gathers grimy water and scatters it everywhere, except for those upon whom Allaah has bestowed His Mercy so they become upon that which the Prophet and his companions were upon. Ibn al-Qayyim said when he mentioned that sign of the people of servitude to Allaah:<sup>152</sup> "...and the second sign, is in his (i.e., Aboo Ismaa'eel al-Hurawee's) saying: '...and they are not affiliated to any name', meaning that they are not renowned to people with names which they are known by, the names [or titles, as the sects are] with which have become signs for the people of the other paths. Similarly they are not bound to any one activity, with which they are named, and known by, nor known by other activities, for indeed this is a defect in servitude and it is restricted servitude. As for unrestricted servitude it is where a person is not known by a specific name from amongst its meanings be-

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<sup>151</sup> And in the book, *Hukm al-Intimaa'*, by the Shaykh, there are more benefits and more details.

<sup>152</sup> *Madaarij as-Saalikeen*, (3/172).

cause he answers the call of servitude regardless of the type [of worship], and he participates in all the activities of all the people of servitude, and is not bound by set regulations, signs, names, uniform or [any other] innovated path. Rather, if he were to be asked about his *shaykh* he would reply: the Messenger (ﷺ), or [if he were to be asked about] his Way he would reply: adherent following, and [if he were to be asked about] his uniform he would reply: *at-taqwa* (fear of Allaah), or [if he were to be asked about] his *madh-hab* (religious school of thought in jurisprudence), he would reply: implementation of the *Sunnah*, or [if asked about] his aim he would reply:

يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

“seeking His Face”

[Soorah al-An'aam (6):52]

or [if about] his place of dwelling he would reply:

فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ

وَيُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ، يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٣٦﴾  
رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ

“in houses (mosques) which Allaah has ordered to be raised (to be cleaned and to be honoured), in them His Name is remembered. Therein Glorify Him in the mornings and in the afternoons or the evenings. Men whom neither trade nor sale diverts from the Remembrance of Allaah, nor from performing *as-Salaat*, nor giving the *Zakaat*.”

[Soorah an-Noor (24):36,37]

or if he were asked about his lineage he would reply (poetry):

“My father is Islaam; I have no other father save him,  
If they boast with Qays or Tameem.”<sup>153</sup>

<sup>153</sup> These are the names of two notorious Arab tribes, i.e. if they become proud of being from these two tribes then I will become proud of my affiliation to Islaam. Salmaan al-Faarisee said this line of poetry. (M)

Or if he were asked about what he eats and drinks, he would reply: “you have no concern with it, as it has its water container, and its feet and it will reach water, and eat of trees so leave it till its owner finds it.”<sup>154</sup> [Poetry]:

“What a shame! You have spent your lifetime,  
and its hours have passed

Between the humiliation of impotence and laziness,  
And the people have taken the path of salvation,

And upon it travelled to the highest goal at ease.”

He then said (i.e. Ibn al-Qayyim): “...as for his saying, ‘Indeed they are the treasures of Allaah wherever they may be’: the treasures of the king are what he stores with him for his important affairs, and does not give it to anyone. Similarly, the treasures of an individual are that which he stores for his needs and affairs. These people, when they were hidden from the people [because they are anonymous], and they are not noticed or distinguished from the [rest of the] people by a mark, or affiliated to the name of an (innovated) way, or *madh-hab*, or *shaykh*, or uniform, then these people are similar to the example of hidden treasures. These people are the farthest away from defects because defects lie beneath these (innovated) names or being attached to them, and lie beneath adherence to these ideological ways and [these] newly established and innovated ways, which have become [a] common [thing]. This is the cause of the majority of people becoming cut off from Allaah without realising [it]. The astonishing thing is that they are recognised by the people for their zeal and aspiration, and striving towards Allaah, and in reality they – except for a few – are the ones who are cut off from Allaah by these marks and bindings. One of the *imaams* was asked about the *Sunnah* (i.e. the People of the *Sunnah*), so he

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<sup>154</sup> A *hadeeth* narrated in *al-Bukhaaree* from the *hadeeth* of Zayd ibn Khaalid al-Juhanee. (M)



replied: “They are the ones who have no other name but the *Sunnah*.” He means that *Ahl as-Sunnah* have no other name that they are affiliated to.

There are amongst the people those who are bound by a [particular] uniform or by sitting in a [certain] place and not anywhere else, [or] by a particular way of walking and not walking in any other way, [or] by a uniform and an appearance that they never change, by a particular form of worship and they do not worship except in this manner even if other forms are better than it, or by a particular *shaykh* to whom they turn and [turn to] no other but him even if the others are nearer (in following) to Allaah and his Messenger than him. [People who are bound by] all of these categories are prevented from reaching the Highest Goal and are deterred from it. Customs, names, circumstances and ideologies bind them from adherent following so they became secluded from it, and their station is the farthest station from it. You will see one of them worshipping by performing a set of exercises, seclusions and complete emptying of the heart. They consider knowledge as a thing that cuts them off from the Path. If *walaa'* and *baraa'* (declaring allegiance and declaring innocence) for the sake of Allaah was mentioned to one of them or enjoining good and forbidding evil, he would consider it as something trivial and evil, and if they see people from amongst them who establish these things, they will exile him from amongst them, and they would not consider him as one of them. Such people are the farthest people from Allaah even if they were the most notable. And Allaah knows best.”

## **66. The things that nullify this *Hilyah***

O brother – may Allaah save us from tripping up – if you have read the highlights from *Hilyatu Taalibil-'Ilmi* (the Arabic title of the book in the readers hand) and its etiquette, and have fallen into some of the nullifying affairs, then understand that the greatest things that destroy the organisation of its alignment (in the same manner the alignment of beads on a necklace would be corrupted) are the following:

1. Disclosing secrets.
2. Spreading rumours from one group of people to another.
3. Vainglory and lying.
4. Excessive joking
5. Interrupting two people during a conversation.
6. Spite.
7. Jealousy.
8. Evil suspicion.
9. Sitting with the *mubtadi'ah*.
10. Walking into the direction of unlawful affairs.

Beware of these sins, and sins that are related to them, and restrain yourself from all that is unlawful. If you do not, then know that your piety is weak, and that you are frivolous, a joker, a backbiter, and a carrier of rumours, and it is impossible for you to become a seeker of knowledge who is pointed at with fingers, blessed with knowledge and its implementation.

May Allaah make your steps firm, and grant everyone piety and success in the Second and the First [life].

And may the blessings and salutations of Allaah be upon our Prophet Muḥammad and his family and his Companions.

**Bakr ibn 'Abdillaah Aboo Zayd**

25/10/1408AH.

# The Etiquette of Seeking Knowledge

Shaykh Bakr Aboo Zayd

...to adorn oneself with beautiful etiquette, noble manners, good behaviour, and pious conduct are distinguishing characteristics of the people of Islaam, and knowledge - the most precious pearl in the crown of the purified *Sharee'ah* - cannot be attained except by those who adorn themselves with its etiquette and those who leave evil qualities associated to it. For this reason the scholars devoted their attention to this etiquette, outlined its importance and wrote books solely on this topic; either pertaining to [general conduct] with all types of knowledge or to specific types of knowledge such as the etiquette of the carriers of the Noble Qur'aan, the etiquette of the *muhaddith*, the etiquette of the *muftee*, the etiquette of the *qaaddee* (judge), the etiquette of the *muhtasib* (the one who enjoins good and forbids evil for the sake of Allaah) and so on. The issue of this book is the general conduct of those who take the path of seeking the knowledge of the *Sharee'ah*.

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