

An Examination of the Semantic Range of the Verse “Speak Fair to the People” via a Jurisprudential Approach From the Shī’a and Sunnī Exegetes’ Viewpoints

Fāṭima Sarwī^{1*}; Muḥammad Taqī Diyārī Bīdgulī²

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic studies, Faculty of Theology, Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch, Karaj, Iran

2. Full Professor, Department of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth Sciences, Faculty of, University of Qom, Qom, Iran

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Abstract

Ethics is the basis of social relations, in a way that when it is absent, the society gets afflicted with spiritual and psychological breaches and downfalls. We cannot separate jurisprudence from ethics. The judicial decree is the legislation by God to regulate the human life, including his acts and essence as well as the other things and matters in his life. The ethical issues are bound to the judicial decree and have jurisprudential burden. God has emphasized amiability in the verses of the noble Qur’ān in various ways. Using imperative structure, He has put it at the same level as important issues such as the prohibition of worshipping non-God, benevolence toward parents, saying prayers, and paying Alms tax. One of the important points in ethical issues is specifying if an act is obligatory, recommended, prohibited, or detestable. This article aims at extracting the judicial decree of the obligation of amiability with others using jurisprudential criteria such as the refinement of the basis of the ruling, the annulment of ineffective attributes, and analogy, as well as the Shī’a and Sunnī narrations and commentaries.

Keywords: Inferring judicial decree, Annulment of ineffective attributes, Refinement of the basis of the ruling, Good manners, Analogy.

Introduction

“Ḥusn khulq” (good manners) is made up of a collection of attributes and treatments, “Lenience and patience, affability, mild speaking and showing kindness, observation of politeness, happy appearance, and tolerance in the face of disturbance by others (Narāqī, n.d., vol. 1: 376). When these attributes and actions are combined, they are called good manners.

It is mentioned in a comprehensive narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a), “One of the companions of Imām asked, ‘What is the definition of good manners?’ Imām (a) said, ‘You treat people with lenience and patience, talk cleanly, and visit you brother with affability’” (Qumī Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1992, vol. 4: 412). Defining good manners, the Prophet of Allāh (s) says, “The interpretation of good manners is that the person is satisfied with whatever amount of the world he is given, and if he is not given a share of it, he does not get angry” (Ṭuṣī, 1993: 182). Moreover, the description of the Prophet of Islam (s) by the Qur’ān as “... thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character” (Qur’ān 29:4) indicates that this ethical quality is among the highest attributes of the prophets.

* Corresponding Author Email: sarvifatemeh@yahoo.com

Some exegetes (e.g., Ṭabrisī, 1960, vol. 10: 331) interpret the Prophet's (a) "exalted standard of character" to be tolerance for the sake of the right, great generosity, good management, lenience and patience when inviting people to God, forgiveness, Jihād for the sake of God, and abandonment of greed and envy. This shows that they do not take the "exalted standard of character" to be limited to affability, lenience, and patience, but rather, they deem it as a collection of excellent human qualities. In other words, they have included almost all ethical virtues in the "exalted standard of character."

Now that the meaning of "ḥusn khulq" (good manners) is made clear using Islamic traditions, we will have a short glance at the literal meaning of this word before we enter the main discussion.

Khuluq is singular and has a similar meaning to khulq. As indicated by Rāghib's *Al-Mufradāt*, it is derived from the same root as khalq, but khalq is ascribed to the outer qualities, while khulq and khuluq are related to inner attributes. Some philologists interpret "khulq" and "khuluq" as religion, nature, and virtues, and consider it as the inward appearance of the human (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: 286).

Ḥusnul khulq is an added noun in Arabic that means good-temperedness, speaking mildly, and affability when treating others (Narāqī, n.d., vol. 1: 373). However, other meanings have been suggested for it, including the moderateness in intellectual, irascible, and appetitive faculties that lightens the inward of the person with the light of the divine knowledge effusions and engages his limbs with performing prayers and duties. This internal mode is known through signs such as the good treatment of people as well as other qualities such as affability, kindness, righteousness, etc. In this meaning, good manners follows the persistence of all outward and inward limbs and organs of the human, and his inward beauty stems from this ethical balance (Māzandarānī, 1962, vol. 8: 287). Similar to the outer beauty that is achieved through the beauty and balance of all organs, ḥusnul khulq (which is the inner beauty) will be attained through the beautification of all inward attributes and moralities (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, 2005, vol. 1: 51).

In the book *Forty ḥadīths*, Imām Khumaynī (may God have mercy on him) defines khulq and discusses the effect of good manners on the easy performance of the good deeds. He says, "Know that khulq is a mode in the human soul that invites the human to act, and appears without any procedure and thought; [in fact] the type of temperament that is praised in the Islamic Law is ḥusn khulq" (Khumaynī, 200: 510).

With regard to the implication range of the verse "Speak fair to the people" (Qur'ān 2:83), we might say that the literal meaning of this verse is speaking with people appropriately. However, the exegetic and narrative sources take it as an allusion to good treatment of people. Although the good treatment of people is an expansive concept and involves many behaviors, some of those behaviors have received more attention due to their higher status and importance. Talking is present in a big part of the human behaviors, and is more effective in treating with people in general compared to other actions. Therefore, in order to recommend people to good treatment of others, the main instance of it is emphasized in this qur'ānic verse. Before presenting the specific exegetic understanding of this qur'ānic phrase, it is better to present the verse itself,

And remember We took a covenant from the Children of Israel (to this effect):
Worship none but Allāh; treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity. Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now) (Qur'ān 2:83).

The occasion of revelation

With regard to the occasion of revelation of the verse "... speak fair to the people ...," it is believed that this verse was revealed about Banī Qurayṣa and Banī Naḍīr Jewish tribes, because God had prohibited them in Torah from blood shedding, and had ordered them to prevent killing the prisoners of war and abstain from trying to conquer and expel others. However, they behaved contrary to the order of the Torah (Qumī, 1989, vol. 1: 51).

Moreover, it is said that the verse "speak fair to the people" is about the dhimmīs (the protected non-Muslim people), but was abrogated by the verse "Fight those who believe not in Allāh nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allāh and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued" (Qur'ān 9:29). After that time, the payment of jizya (legal capitation) was obligatory for even the adult, poor (who did not have assets) People of the Book, and there was no reason to exonerate the poor from paying legal capitation (Quṭb Rāwandī, 1985, vol. 1: 257; Sharīf Lāhījī, 1995, vol. 1: 76).

The criteria for the inference of the judicial decree on the obligation of the good treatment of others

In general, the extraction of the criteria is possible through two means.

- A) Textual methods: the related textual methods include the refinement of the basis of the ruling, the collection and examination of possible causes, the proportionality of the decree and the case, the annulment of ineffective attributes, induction, the discovery of the true cause through the collection and examination of possible causes, exploring the text itself to refine the basis of the ruling, separating the various aspects of the text and attaining the criteria (i.e., extrapolation of the generalizable ruling). In this article, we use the refinement of the basis of the ruling and the annulment of the ineffective attributes to induce the judicial obligation of good treatment of others.
- B) Non-textual methods: the non-post-Islamic decrees should be examined through scientific and historical induction of the respective law before Islam, and the rational good and evil should be taken as the basis of the criteria extraction¹. This extraction is totally rational and conventional, and the free investigation is done based on the common legislation procedures (Ayāzī, 2011: 405). The extraction criteria include what follows.

Refinement of the basis of the ruling

The refinement and determination of the cause of a decree through the separation of the cause of decree from the attributes that have no role in the decree is called the refinement of the basis of the ruling. If in a given case, some causes are deemed as probably effective on the decree, the Muslim jurist removes the ones that have no role in differentiating the principle and the derivation, and refines the case. In other words, the legislator has made a decree due to a cause, but the cause of the decree is accompanied by attributes that seem to have no role in the regulation of the decree (ibid: 538).

It is said in a narration that once a Bedouin copulated in Ramadan month, and the Prophet (s) said, "He should pay expiation." Examining the attributes effective on the decree, we can ascertain that being a Bedouin has no role in the decree (Ghazālī, 1996: 306). This is called

1. With understanding the good and evil, we mean understanding things whose goodness or badness is achieved through the judgment of intellect, and the judgment of intellect is used to prove the ensuing judicial decree.

the refinement of the basis of the ruling. In the foregoing example, if we put anyone instead of the Bedouin, the same decree will be applicable to him.

With regard to the topic of this article, good treatment of people, good manners, and affability is considered obligatory, and are taken to be at the same level as other obligatory deeds such as the prohibition of worshipping non-God, treating parents benevolently, saying prayers, and paying Alms tax. From this viewpoint, we can treat the foregoing verse through the refinement of the basis of the ruling and say that although the decree is addressed to the Israelites, it in fact addresses all humans.

Annulment of ineffective attributes

The annulment of ineffective attributes means invalidating and omitting some qualities, and postulating some others (Ayāzī, 2011: 543). Imām Khumaynī has paid attention to this solution in his legal and jurisprudential discussions. He says, “The annulment of the ineffective attributes is true in cases where common sense does not consider the attributes as effective.” It should be noted that he takes the common sense as the common sense of the wise (Khumaynī, 2002, vol. 3: 149).

Now, with regard to the judicial decree of the good treatment of people, we can act based on the annulment of ineffective attributes, and generalize this decree – which is addressed to the Israelites – to all humans.

Qiyās (Analogy)

Qiyās literally means measurement, and is terminologically taken as free investigation at times, and as principle at other times (Ṭurayhī, 1997, vol. 4: 98). The most common application of it is equalizing the principle with the derivation when determining the cause of the judicial decree. In other words, analogy means generalizing the decree taken from the principle to the derivation based on a unique cause that exists in the principle and the derivation.

With regard to the inference of the judicial decree of the obligation of the good treatment of people through analogy, we might say that since God narrates the five orders issued to the Israelites (i.e., the prohibition of worshipping non-God, treating parents benevolently, treating people kindly, saying prayers, and paying Alms tax), and that there is no doubt in the obligation of the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th cases, we might compare the 3rd case with them through analogy and extract its judicial decree as an obligatory act.

“Speak fair to the people” in the Shī‘a and Sunnī commentaries and narrations

The author of the book *Manhaj al-Ṣādiqīn* regards the term “fair” in the verse “Speak fair to the people” as an instance of hyperbole and its intention as guidance to ethical virtues. He interprets the verse as “Speak fair to people in general, treat them fairly, and guide them to the right, guidance path” (Kāshānī, 1955, vol. 1: 225).

To interpret the noble verse “Speak fair to the people,” the *Nūr al-Thaqalayn* commentary presents only two narrations from two books.

A) It is narrated in the noble book *Kāfi* from Abī ‘Umar and Al-Zubayrī from Abī ‘Abdillāh,

The Sublime God has made faith an obligation to the human body organs, and has explained the duties of each organ separately. For instance, He has given the duty of speaking to his tongue and expression to his heart and his beliefs. It is in this regard that God says, “Speak fair to the people” (‘Arūsī Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 1: 94).

B) It is narrated from Imām Ṣādiq (a) in the book *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharī'a*, “Do not call and invite people with any tone and any mode you are in [i.e., not in negative tone and mode]. The sublime God says, ‘Speak fair to the people’” (Qumī Mashhadī, 1990, vol. 2: 68).

It is mentioned in *Al-Mīzān*,

The word “ḥusnā” is a gerund with an adjectival function, and is used in this verse for exaggeration purposes. The meaning of this verse is “say good words to people,” and it alludes to the good treatment of people, not matter if they are believer or disbeliever. This order does not contradict with the fighting decree, and no one can think that this verse is abrogated by the fighting obligation verse, because the cases related to these two decrees are different. There is no problem to both order to good treatment and to fighting, as there is no problem with ordering one to treat others well and ordering him to treat them strictly in order to correct their behavior (Kāshānī, 1990, vol. 1: 52; Qurṭabī, 1986, vol. 2: 16; Ṭabarī *kiyā* Harāsī, 1985, vol. 1: 12; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1: 218).

In their commentaries, Ṭabarī, Suyūṭī, and Qurṭabī narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās that the word “ḥusn” (fair) means two things: Order people to say “There is no god other than Allāh” and speak to people mildly and kindly, because God is satisfied and likes this type of speaking (Qurṭabī, 1986, vol. 2: 16; Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 1: 85; Ṭabarī, 1992, vol. 1: 311).

Ibn Abī Ḥātam express the meaning of the term “fair” in the verse “Speak fair to the people” with a narration from Asad b. Wadā'a, “One day he left his house and said hello to any Jew or Christian who he saw. He was asked, ‘Why do you say hello to Jews and Christians?’ He answered, ‘God says ‘Speak fair to the people’ and He means saying hello’” (Ibn Abī Ḥātam, 1998, vol. 1: 162).

Tha'labī Nayshābūrī quotes Muḥammad b. Ḥanafīyya and Sufyān Thūrī who say, “The word ‘fair’ means promotion of good and prevention of evil, and this order involves all righteous and evildoer people” (Baghawī, 1999, vol. 1: 139; Qurṭabī, 1986, vol. 2: 16; Tha'ālibī, 1997, vol. 1: 271; Tha'labī Nayshābūrī, 2001, vol. 1: 228).

Ibn Kathīr and Zuḥaylī take Abūdhar's interpretation of the word “fair” in this verse as affability, as the Prophet (s) said, “Do not underestimate any bit of good act, even if it is the affable treatment of your religious brother” (Ibn Kathīr Damishqī, 1998, vol. 1: 209; Zuḥaylī, 1997, vol. 1: 208).

Baghdādī says,

The statement “Speak fair to the people” has two meanings. First, it addresses the Jews living at the time of the Prophet (s), and so, the third person pronoun has turned into the second person. This intends to say that they should say about Muḥammad (s) whatever is right and correct, and if they are asked about him, they should say the truth and should not conceal his traits. Second, the addressees of this verse were those who lived at the time of Prophet Moses (a) with whom God made the Covenant. The pronoun has changed from the third person to second person due to apostrophe (Baghdādī, 1994, vol. 1: 58; Qurṭabī, 1986, vol. 2: 16).

In his book *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Jaṣṣāṣ interprets the verse “Speak fair to the people” with another verse and says,

The meaning of this is based on the meaning of the words of Gods ‘Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious,’ and the word *aḥsan* (the best and most gracious) in this verse is a prayer for and a piece of advice to any person (Jaṣṣāṣ, 1985, vol. 1: 48).

Interpreting the statement “Speak fair to the people,” ‘Ayāshī says, “Affable treatment of people means visiting their sick members, attending the funeral of their dead relatives, and saying prayer with them in their mosques up until your last breath and death” (‘Ayāshī, 1960, vol. 1: 48).

The late Kulaynī gives in a narration in the book *Kāfi*,

Sadīr Šīrafī says, “I told Imām Šādiq (a) if I could help someone who asks for help while I don’t know him and I don’t know if he is a Muslim or not. Imām Šādiq (a) said, “Yes. Help those whom you don’t know if they are friend or foe [if you know they are not the enemy of the right, you can help them and there is no need to extra probe], as God had said, ‘Speak fair to the people.’ However, you should not help someone who you know objects to the right or invites people to the wrong” (Burūjirdī, 1988, vol. 1: 204; Shahīd Thānī, 1992, vol. 5: 413; Shubbar, 1987, vol. 1: 116).

In this narration, Imām Šādiq (a) relies on this Qur’ānic statement to express the reason for the vast scope of the order to help the needy and the inclusion of all of them (no matter if Muslim or not). This reliance means when the Qur’ān uses the word “people” – that includes humans in general – and asks us to speak with and treat them well, then helping the needy as a collection of good manners directed to the people has the same expansive range, and obligates the audience to speak and treat well all humans with any religious background.

Now let us see the exceptions of this assistance and the logic behind it. Imām says that people who oppose the right and invite people to the wrong are out of the scope of people who can receive this help, and we might not help suchlike people.

The following steps are taken by Imām in his interpretation.

1. He generalizes an important instance of affability mentioned in the verse (i.e., speaking) to affability in general. In fact, he uses the refinement of the basis of the ruling and one of its methods – i.e., the annulment of ineffective attributes – to infer the act and its religious obligation.
2. He takes the word “people” to mean all humans, either Muslim or non-Muslim. The word “people” is used here along with groups such as parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, while it was possible to interpret the word people as the Israelites rather than all human beings other than oneself. Therefore, Imām takes the meaning of “people” here from the literal meaning of this word that annuls the ineffective attribute (i.e., being an Israelite).
3. He applies the decree on treating all people well to all cases that are deemed by the wise and the Islamic law as part of general affability, for example, helping a needy person who asks for help (which he extracts through analogy).
4. The exceptions of this decree are based on the rational understanding, because helping one who is an enemy of the right or invites others to the wrong is believed as false by all soundly conscientious people. All wise people with any intellectual stance understand that these two cases are exceptions, with the only difference among them being their disagreement over the instance of the right and the wrong, where each considers something as wrong that is not deemed so by others.

The exegetic messages of this narration

- A) We can consider every human being as eligible to receive that good action, such as the sick people, those damaged by the natural disasters, etc. Moreover, exceptions include those who show hostility toward the right or ask people to the wrong.
- B) This principle should be observed in the domains of personal and governmental behaviors. That is, the faithful person should treat all people (who do not show hostility

toward the right and have no role in directing others toward the wrong) well, and rush to help them if they ask for it. This is an obligatory duty on him. Moreover, it is obligatory for the righteous government and groups to treat well all nations and governments who do not show hostility toward the right and do not promote the wrong.

- C) The next point that is obtained from the “the expression of the exceptions of this decree” in this interpretive narration is the necessity of refraining from assisting those who invite people to the wrong and have a misleading role in the personal or social spheres. The reason is that helping them is assisting and empowering the wrong, which is in some way oppression against those who come to be victim to their propaganda. It is evident that empowering the wrong is against trying to strengthen the right.

The right government should also precisely take into account the outstanding people, movements, and groups in various cultural, political, and social domains, and should be cautious not to support the enemies of the right and the inviters to the wrong. Based on the jurisprudential thoughts of Imām Khumaynī (may God have mercy on him), the great consequences of treating others affably (due to the importance of the governmental agents’ responsibility) makes this ruling an important ethical decree that should be taken into account (Khumaynī, 2000: 112).

- D) However, the point that is known from the verse itself is the widespread non-observation of this divine recommendation by the Israelites. The lack of the spirit to treat people well in the majority of the Israelites could be due to their racist spirit and their perceived superiority to other people.

Good manners from the viewpoint of qur’ānic verses

In the Qur’ān 31:18-19, the ethical training is defined as following,

Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk, nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allāh loveth not each braggart boaster. Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of the donkey.

These verses narrate a piece of advice from the Wise Luqmān to his son in which four things are emphasized. The first is “Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk,” which is followed by the second point, “Nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allāh loveth not each braggart boaster.” The third and fourth sentences assert, “Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of the donkey.”

This order, which is mostly about the manners of treating others, reflects an important part of good manners (as a combination of affability, modesty, and lenience in speaking and behavior). God has deemed the words of this wise man so valuable that He has expressed them in between His own words.

- A) “Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allāh is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing” (Qur’ān 2:263).

Various interpretations are presented for the entry “kind words” in *Majma‘ al-Bayān* commentary.

- A. In one interpretation, it is equaled to “good and beautiful speech,” while in another interpretation, it is taken to mean “good and appropriate prayer” (Ṭabrisī, 1960, vol. 2: 375).
- B. In another interpretation narrated from Ḍaḥḥāk, it is taken as “Iṣl’āḥ dhāt al-bayn” (reconciliation of people). It is narrated under this noble verse from the Prophet (s), “When a needy person starts to ask you for something, do not stop him up until he finishes expressing his request. Then answer him modestly and kindly, as that good response is a small thing for him. Sometimes, a person comes to you who is not a

human, nor a jinni. The sublime God sends an angel in form of a beggar to test you to see how you treat him [while He has bestowed upon you His grace]” (ibid).

- C. With regard to treating a person who wants to create grudge between the Prophet (s) and his enemies, the noble Qur’ān says, “Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!” (Qur’ān 41:34).

The author of *Nūr al-Thaḳalayn* commentary deems the meaning of the clause “Repel (Evil) with what is better” as “Repel the bad effect of an evil deed another person has done to you with doing a good deed” (‘Arūsī Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 4: 549).

In fact, God addresses the noble Prophet (s) and tells him, “Repel others’ wrong with your right, their ignorance with your patience, and their rudeness and badness with your forgiveness” (Ṭabrisī, 1960, vol. 9: 12).

Then the purified Allāh praises repelling a bad action with a better one using the best and the most eloquent language, and says “And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune” (Qur’ān 41:35).

- D. “When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allāh takes careful account of all things” (Qur’ān 4:86).

In the book *‘Awālī al-li’ālī*, ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm narrates points from Imām Ṣādiq (a) in which he takes the word “taḥīyyat” in this verse to mean several things, including greetings and goodness (‘Arūsī Ḥuwayzī, 1994, vol. 1: 525).

Interpreting the Qur’ān 4:86, Ṭabrisī says in the book *Majma‘ al-Bayān*,

A person came to the noble Prophet (s) and said, “Peace be upon you.” The Prophet (s) said, “May God’s peace and grace be upon you.” Another person said, “May God’s peace and grace be upon you.” The Prophet (s) said, “May God’s peace, grace, and blessings be upon you.” Another one came to the Prophet (s) and said, “May God’s peace, grace, and blessings be upon you.” The Prophet (s) said, “Peace be upon you and May God’s grace and blessings be upon you.” When the noble Prophet was asked, “Why did you answer the first and the second greetings with extra greetings, but you did not add anything to the third greeting?” He said, “He did not leave any [extra] greeting for me [to offer him]. Therefore, I returned the same to him” (Ṭabrisī, 1960, vol. 3: 85).

- A) “Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best: for Satan doth sow dissensions among them” (Qur’ān 17:53).

Ṭabrisī narrates in this regard,

Say words and follow methods that are the best and manifest the following issues, speeches, and words.

1. Some have said that “those things that are best” here means the Two Testimonies and whatever invocation made obligatory by God.
2. The verse intends to say that God has commanded us to put into practice whatever He has decreed and has asked us to refrain from doing anything He has prohibited us.
3. It is said that the verse intends to say that people should speak to each other in the best possible manner and use words and combinations such as “May God have mercy on you” (Ṭabrisī, 1960, vol. 6: 421).

Good manners in the Islamic narrations

The Prophet of Allāh (s) said, “There are three things that if one is equipped with when meeting God, he can enter the Paradise through any gate he likes: A person who has good manners, a person who fears God overtly and covertly, and a person who stops arguing even

if he is right” (Narāqī, n.d.: 281-282). The Prophet (s) also said, “Mild speaking and giving food to others put you in Paradise” (ibid), and “There are rooms in Paradise [that are so bright] the interior of which is seen from outside and the exterior of which is seen from inside; God has prepared them for those who feed others and speak mildly” (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1986, vol. 5: 939). Moreover, he said, “Good speech is a charitable act” (ibid: 940).

Imām Bāqir (a) said, “Talk to people in the best way you want to be talked to” (Balāghī Najafī, 1999, vol. 1: 140; Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1994, vol. 1: 152; Ibn Jawzī, 2001, vol. 1: 84; Kāshānī, 2002, vol. 1: 180). Moreover, the noble Prophet (s) said, “There are three things that if one does not have, he will not succeed in his affairs: Piety that stops him from committing sins, good manners to deal with people tolerantly, and patience by which he might remove the stupidity of a fool” (Qumī Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1992, vol. 1: 300).

These traditions indicate that God is kind and amiable, likes anyone with this quality, and gives him rewards for that amity and mildness.

Imām Kaẓīm (a) said, “Half of the human life and pleasure is in amity and mildness” (ibid: 371).

A famous tradition from the Prophet (s) reads, “You cannot satisfy all people with your assets, but your affability and good manners engages and satisfies everyone” (Hillī, 2004, vol. 1: 246).

Affability and good treatment of people even includes the enemies, especially when we invite them to the right path. Accordingly, when Moses (a) was given the mission to deliver the divine message to the disobedient Pharaoh (who had enslaved the Israelites), he was addressed by God using these words, “Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds. But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allāh)” (Qur’ān 20:43-44).

This shows that if the promotion of good and prevention of evil as well as the invitation to the right path are done mildly and kindly, they might influence even the harshest people.

What point lies in the clause “perchance he may take warning or fear (Allāh)”? We can say that the verse intends to say if you face him with mild words and at the same time express the necessary content precisely and confidently, it is possible that he might accept the logical reasons, have faith profoundly, and even if he does not have the faith, he might stop opposing and obstructing others’ faithfulness due his fear of the divine punishment (Baḥrānī, 1995, vol. 1: 262).

Moreover, the clause “perchance he may take warning or fear (Allāh)” reveals that the nature of mild and amiable preaching leads to the attainment of such a result, although this nature might not be so influential on some people, i.e., affability in preaching is a preferable quality rather than a perfect cause.

The spiritual effects of good manners

A tradition from the noble Prophet (s) asserts, “Islam is the same as affability” (Laḥajī, n.d., vol. 3: 70). This shows that the essence of Islamic teachings is good manners.

A tradition from Imām ‘Alī (a) gives in a comprehensive and interesting interpretation, “The top row in the faithful human’s performance report is his good manners” (*Ṣaḥīfa* attributed to Imām Riḍā (a), 1986: 67).

We know that what is put on the top row of the performance report is the best and most important case. In other words, it is a factor that represents all good deeds and draws attention before any other thing.

Another tradition from the Prophet of Allāh (s) reads, “The most effective things that cause my people to enter Paradise are piety and good manners” (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 2: 100).

Another tradition from the Commander of the Faithful (a) suggests, “One whose faith is more complete than everyone else is the one whose manners are the best” (Majlisī, 1990, vol. 68: 378).

The Prophet of Allāh (s) says, “Good manners melt the sins [and washes away their effects]” (ibid: 321).

Another tradition from the Prophet (s) asserts, “Affability has a reward similar to day-time fasting and night-time prayer” (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 2: 100).

In another narration, Imām Ṣādiq (a) says, “The sublime God rewards His Servant for his good manners the same amount He rewards the warrior for His path (Māzandarānī, 1962, vol. 8: 291).

This way, those who possess good manners attain high levels that are achieved by those who go on fast during the day time, stay up vigilantly and pray at night, and fight for the cause of God, and their sins are washed away due to their good manners.

The worldly effects of good manners

We read in a tradition from the noble Prophet (s), “Good manners strengthen kindness and friendship [and tie the separated hearts]” (Nūrī, 1988, vol. 16: 401).

Another tradition by the Commander of the Faithful suggests, “No life is sweeter than one mixed with good manners” (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2004, vol. 1: 851).

Imām Ṣādiq (a) says, “Righteousness and good manners build up houses and increase lifespans” (Ḥurr ‘Āmilī, 1989, vol. 12: 149).

Another tradition from the Commander of the Faithful (a) says, “Good manners add to sustenance and increase friends’ kindness” (ibid: 152).

Conclusion

1. The noble Qur’ān equals good manners to important issues such as worshipping God, treating parents benevolently, saying prayers, and paying alms tax in order to point out the obligation of treating others affably and amiably.
2. One of the social and worldly effects of good manners is drawing kindness.
3. Due to the close relationship between jurisprudence and ethics, the ethical issues have jurisprudential burden. Good manners are no exception in this regard, and God has emphasized them in various Qur’ānic verses using various methods. Moreover, the Infallibles’ narrations confirm the possible obligation of affable treatment of others.
4. The judicial decree on the obligation of affable treatment of others can be extracted using judicial criteria such as the refinement of the basis of the ruling, the annulment of ineffective attributes, and analogy. Based on the jurisprudential thoughts of Imām Khumaynī (may God have mercy on him), the annulment of ineffective attributes is considered a way to infer decrees based on the common sense of the wise.

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