

Muslims, praising, names and Honorific Titles

Collected by Soumy Ana

It was narrated that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

“Actions are but by intention and each man will have but that which he intended.”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari in *Bad’ al-Khalq* and Muslim in *al-Imaarah*, no. 1907).

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1) SHOWING OFF:

According to a *saheeh hadeeth* narrated by ‘Ayaad (may Allaah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ***“Allaah has revealed to me that you should be so humble that no one oppresses another or boasts to another.”*** (Reported by Muslim, 2865).

This is a sign that one should be careful not to give himself honorific titles or make himself difficult to reach. Calling oneself Hajjah X. or calling someone this way is part of the show off that is disliked by Allaah. Calling someone Doctor or Professor or calling oneself this way with the intention of showing off so that people will be more respectful and admire this person for his title is also disliked by Islam and part of the show off.

Our Prophet (saws) and our caliphs (may Allaah be pleased with them all) never made themselves difficult to reach. Anybody could knock at their door and criticize them before other people and openly. They did not fear for their reputation; they recognized their

mistakes in the case of the caliphs and made changes when they saw that there was a better way.

At <http://www.islam-qa.com>, we can read:

“Praise be to Allaah

If a person feels self admiration after doing something good or fears that he may show off, he should ward that off and resist it by seeking refuge with Allaah from it, and saying “*Allaahumma inni a’oodhu bika an ushrika bika wa ana a’lam, wa’staghfiruka lima laa a’lam* (O Allaah, I seek refuge with you from knowingly associating anything with You, and I seek Your forgiveness for that of which I am unaware)” – as was reported from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

These kind of feelings happen to everyone, but you have to try to be sincere towards Allaah, seek His forgiveness, and remember that there is no strength and no power except with Allaah; if it were not for the help of Allaah, you would not have been able to do this good deed, so to Allaah be praise in the beginning and at the end.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to Mu’aadh ibn Jabal: “***O Mu’aadh, by Allaah indeed I love you, and I advise you, O Mu’aadh, do not forget at the end of every prayer to say: Allaahumma a’inni ‘ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni ‘ibaaditika (O Allaah, help me to remember You, give thanks to You and worship You in the best way).***” (Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Nasaa’i, and others; it is saheeh).

Do not forego doing good deeds for fear of showing off, because this is one of the tricks that the Shaytaan uses to weaken people’s resolve and stop them from doing things that Allaah loves and is pleased with.

As for merely feeling happy that one has done a good deed, this does not contradict sincerity and faith, for Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):“**Say: “In the Bounty of Allâh, and in His Mercy (i.e. Islâm and the Qur’ân); —therein let them rejoice.” That is better than what (the wealth) they amass”** [Yoonus 10:58] – meaning, if he attains guidance, faith and righteous deeds, and the mercy resulting from that overwhelms him and he feels joy and success as a result. Hence Allaah commanded us to rejoice over such things.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “If your good deeds make you happy and your bad deeds make you sad, then you are a believer.” (Narrated by Ahmad, Ibn Majaah and others from the hadeeth of Abu Umaamah; it is a saheeh hadeeth).

By the same token, if people praise you for your good deed, then this is a portion of the glad tidings of the Hereafter, which Allaah gives a person in this world. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was asked, “What do you think if a man does a good deed and the people praise him for it?” He said: “That is the portion of the glad tidings for the believer which he is given in this world.” (Narrated by Muslim from the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him).

So this praise is a sign that Allaah is pleased with him and loves him, so He makes him dear to other people.

We ask Allaah to make our intentions and deeds right.”

2) CLAPPING HANDS TO SHOW ADMIRATION:

Sheikh `Atiyyah Saqr, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, states the following:

“Almighty Allah says: “And their worship at the (holy) House is naught but whistling and hand clapping.” (Al-Anfal: 35)

The Arabic word *Muka’* means whistling, and the word *Tasdiyah* means clapping hands. This is the explanation of Ibn `Umar, As-Suddy, Mujahid. Commenting on this verse, Ibn `Abbas said

that the Quraysh used to go naked around the Ka`bah, whistling and clapping their hands. They thought that to be an act of worship.

Hence, it is clear that one cannot draw near to Allah through whistling and clapping hands, viewing that as an act of worship. In his commentary on the Qur'an, Imam Al-Qurtubi resisted the conduct of some ignorant *Sufis* who think that dancing and clapping hands are acts of worship. In this regard, he said: *"It is a detestable act from which rational people should refrain. Whoever does this is imitating the polytheists who used to circumambulate around the Ka`bah, whistling and clapping their hands."*

However, the in-hand question is not about that. It is rather concerned with clapping hands to express one's admiration for a respectable person. That is to say, clapping hands is a custom or social norm of showing respect and admiration, and in this sense there is nothing wrong in it from the *Shari`ah*'s viewpoint.

Nevertheless, it is not commendable for Muslims to clap their hands in ceremonies that are held in mosques, not to be like the pre-Islamic polytheists who used to do so in the Sacred Precinct. At mosques one can, however, express admiration by celebrating Allah's Greatness, saying *Allahu Akbar* or any other words that opt for the sacredness of the mosque.

It was reported with a weak chain of transmission that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, showed his admiration for some lines of verse An-Nabighah recited by saying: *"How well you have spoken! O, Abu Layla."* The same did the Prophet when his uncle Al-`Abbas praised him in a poem. [Source: Al-`Iraqi's commentary on *Al-Ihya'*- the chapter on 'manners of listening']

And **Allah Almighty knows best.**

3) TO GIVE HONORIFIC TITLES TO PEOPLE:

A) Honorific titles to personalities:

It is halal to grant to other Muslims the status they deserve, and to acknowledge their prestige. However, giving a person a title that makes him superior to all other beings is prohibited, such as saying: "His highness, King so and so."

In **Kitaab At-Tawheed, Chapter 63**, Shaikh Imam Muhammad Abdul-Wahhab explains:

Source: http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Discover/Book/Kitaab_At_Tawheed/Chapter_63.htm

"It is reported on the authority of `Abdullah Ibn Ash-Shikhkheer (swt) that he said: "I went with a delegation of Banu `Amir to the Messenger of Allah (saas) and we said (to him): "You are our Sayyid [master]." He (saas) replied: "As-Sayyid is Allah (swt), Most Glorified, Most High." We said: "And you are the most excellent and superior of us." He (saas) answered: "Say what you have to say, or part of what you have to say and do not let Satan make you get carried away." (Narrated by Abu Dawood with a good Ssanad)

The narrator informs us in this Hadith that some of the Companions wished to show their love and respect for the Messenger of Allah (saws) by praising him while in his presence; and though they spoke the truth about him, the Prophet (saws) wished to cleanse their hearts and souls and protect their beliefs from *Shirk* and so he forbade them from praising him excessively, especially in his presence in order to protect them from all paths by which the devil might lead them to the darkness of *Shirk* after they had escaped from it. Then he (saws) permitted them to praise him in a manner allowed by their Religion, befitting his position as Allah's Slave and Messenger.

Benefits Derived From This Hadith

1. The Prophet's great influence over the hearts and minds of the Companions.
2. The permissibility of referring to Allah as *As-Sayyid* (the Master).
3. That excess is an invitation to Satan.

Relevance of This Hadith to the Subject of the Chapter and to the Subject of *Tawheed*

That the Hadith forbids excessive praise of the Prophet (saas) or anyone else because this is a path that leads to *Shirk*.

Important Note

There is no contradiction between this Hadith and the Hadith which says: "*I am the Sayyid of the sons of Adam,*" for this indicates the permissibility of referring to other than Allah (swt) as *Sayyid*, while the former Hadith tells us that it is preferred not to do so.

On the authority of Anas (ra) it is reported that some people said: "*Oh, Messenger of Allah (saas)! Oh, the best of us and the son of the best of us! Our Master and the son of our Master!*" He (saas) replied: "*Oh, you people! Say what you have to say and do not allow yourselves to be seduced by Satan. I am Muhammad, the slave of Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saas). I do not like you to raise me above the status assigned to me by Allah (swt), Almighty All-powerful.*" (Narrated by An-Nasaa`i with a good Ssanad)

Anas (swt) informs us in this Hadith that a number of people addressed the Prophet (saws) in terms of excessive praise and eulogy and that the Prophet (saws) rejected this, informing them that such was the temptation of the devil, that he might lead them by this means into *Shirk*. Then he informed them of the correct manner of addressing him which is to say: Muhammad, the slave and Messenger of Allah (saws); and he indicated to them his dislike of being elevated above the position which Allah (swt) has designated for him.

Benefits Derived From This Hadith

1. The high esteem in which the Companions held the Prophet (saws).
2. The forbiddance of excessively praising someone and evidence that it is one of the works of Satan.
3. Evidence of the status of the Prophet (saws) that he is a slave of Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saws).
4. The prohibition of raising the Prophet (saws) above his designated status.

Relevance of This Hadith to the Subject of the Chapter and to the Subject of *Tawheed*

That the Hadith proves the forbiddance of elevating the Prophet above his assigned status because this constitutes excess and it leads to *Shirk*."

B) The use of the word "Holy prophet":

Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, former President of the Islamic Society of North America, states:

"The word "holy" means sacred, consecrated, coming from Allah or belonging to Allah, or set apart from others and distinct. The Arabic equivalent of this word is "*muqaddas*" or "*aqdas*". In the Qur'an, one of the names of Allah is "*al-Quddus*" (The Supreme Divine) (al-Hashr 59: 23; al-Jumu'ah 62: 1). The angel Jibril, peace be upon him, is also called "*Ruh al-Qudus*" (the Spirit of Holiness, see al-Baqarah 2:30, 87, 253, al-Ma'idah 5:110, al-Nahl 16:102) The valley where Prophet Musa (Moses), peace be upon him, received divine revelation is called "*al-Wadi al-Muqaddas*" (the Sacred Valley, TaHa 20:12, an-Nazi`at 79: 16) and the land of Palestine is given the title "*al-Ard al-Muqaddasah*" (the Sacred land, al- Ma'idah 5:21).

Thus I do not see anything wrong in using this word for the Prophets of Allah. In Urdu we do use the term "*nufus qudsiyah*" for the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. In Arabic it is common to

use the word "*al-Kutub al-Muqaddasah*" for the Sacred Scriptures. Generally, English-speaking Muslims use the term "Holy Prophet" for Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. However, this term is not exclusively for him. It can be used for other Prophets and Messengers of Allah.

Whether Allah made the world because of Prophet Muhammad, this statement is used by Muslim poets and some Sufi writers. To my knowledge, it is not based on any statement of the Qur'an or authentic *Hadith*. There is a *Hadith Qudsi* often quoted by some Muslim writers, which says, "*Laulaka lama khalaqtu al-aflaka.*" (Allah said to Prophet Muhammad, "***Had it not been for you, I would not have created the planets.***"). According to the scholars of *Hadith* this is not an authentic *Hadith*. If it were an authentic *Hadith*, we should have no problem in accepting it, but we ourselves should not make such statements."

And Allah Almighty knows best.

C) Calling someone Sayyid, i.e., 'master':

"If a person is known by this title, there is nothing wrong with calling him this way, because the word "Sayyid" may be used for the leader of a people, or for a scholar. The Arabs used to call tribal leaders and elders "Sayyid" (e.g. Sayyid Bani Foolaan – the leader of such-and-such tribe, etc). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used this word, when he asked some of the Arabs, "Who is your leader (sayyid), O Banu So-and-so? Who is your leader (sayyid), O Banu So-and-so?", i.e., who is your chief? And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said concerning al-Hasan, "This son of mine is a sayyid and perhaps Allaah will reconcile two great groups of Muslims through him."

It is disliked (makrooh) to address a person as Ya sayyidi (O my master) or Yaa sayyidanaa (O our master), because when it was said to the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), "You are our master," he said, "The Master is Allaah, may He be blessed and exalted"; and because this may make him conceited and proud. So we should not do that. Instead we should say, "O So and so" or "So Abu (father of) So and so," using the names, kunyas (Abu So and so, etc.) and nicknames which are known.

Saying "Sayyid" to a munaafiq or kaafir is not permissible, because of the hadeeth, "Do not say 'Sayyidanaa' to a munaafiq, because if he is really your master then you have angered your Lord." (Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and al-Nasaa'i; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, no. 7405, p. 1234)

And Allaah knows best.

Kitaab Majmoo' Fataawa wa Maqaalaat Mutanawwi'ah li Samaahat al-Shaykh al-'Allamah 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn 'Abd-Allaah ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him), vol. 9, p. 290 (www.islam-qa.com)"

D) Titles of Scholars in Islam:

AL-SAKHAWI ON THE TITLES OF SCHOLARS: SHAYKH AL-ISLAM, MUHADDITH, and HAFIZ

Translated by **Recep Senturk**, Columbia University.

Find a longer version of this article, at: http://www.abc.se/~m9783/o/scht_e.html

Definition of Shaikh al-Islam, Muhaddith and Hafiz

"Shaikh al-Islam," as inferred from its use as a term among the authorities, is a title attributed to the follower of the Book of God and the example of His Messenger, peace be upon him, who

possesses the knowledge of the principles of the Science (of Religion), has plunged deep into the different views of the scholars, has become able to extract the legal evidences from the texts, and has understood the rational and the transmitted proofs at a satisfactory level.

At times, this title is given to those who have reached to the level of sainthood, and from whom people derive blessings both when they are alive and when they are dead. Similarly, whoever has tread the true path of the People of Islam and has come out unscathed from the folly and ignorance of youth; and whoever has become a living apparatus for others (in solving problems or winning a struggle) and a refuge in every difficulty: these are the meanings of the word as used by the general public.

At times, this title is also given to one who grows old in the fold of Islam and becomes outstanding among his peers for his long life and enters into the meaning of the hadith "There will be a light for those who grow old in the fold of Islam" [al-Hakim, ch. on Kuna, ending with the words: "... and has not changed his word"].

This title was not common among the earlier generations after the two Shaikhs, al-Siddiq and al-Faruq, may God be well pleased with them, and we know that `Ali, may God be well pleased with him, applied it to them. Al-Muhibb al-Tabari [615/1218-694, Shafi`i hafiz and faqih] related in his book "al-riyad al-nadirah" [The Resplendant Groves], without providing a chain of authorities, that Anas, may God be well pleased with him, said: "A man came to `Ali ibn Abi Talib, may God be well pleased with him, and said: O Commander of the Faithful, I heard you saying on the pulpit: "O God, help me as you helped the rightly-guided and enlightened caliphs. Who are they?" Anas said: Tears welled in `Ali's eyes and began to pour down, then he replied: Abu Bakr and `Umar, may God be well pleased with them, the two leaders of rightful guidance and the two shaykhs of Islam, the two men of Quraysh, the two who are followed after the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Whoever follows these two gains respect; whoever lives up to the legacy of these two is guided to a straight path; whoever sticks with these two is from God's party, and God's party--they are the saved."

Al-Dhahabi reported in "al-Kashif" on the authority of Ibn al-Mubarak (118/736-181) -- mark him, O Reader, as one who was a Shaykh al-Islam: "The only one to carry the title Shaykh of Islam is Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may God be well pleased with him, who preserved the zakat (poor-tax) and fought against the apostates. Know him very well." The report ends here.

Ismail al-Harawi (396-481 al-Ansari al-Harawi, a Sufi of the Hanbali school) came to be known with this title. His full name was `Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ansari, a Hanbali scholar and the author of "Manazil al-Sairin" and "Dhamm al-Kalam." Abu `Ali Hassan ibn Said al-Mani`i al-Shafi`i and Abu al-Hassan al-`Ukkari were also known with this title. Ibn al-Sam`ani said about the latter that he was called Shaykh al-Islam. He also was a Shafi`i.

Among the scholars of the Hanafi school the following carried this title:

- Abu Sa`id al-Khalil b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Khalil al-Sajzi, who died after 370; - Abu al-Qasim Yunus b. Tahir b. Muhammad b. Yunus al-Basri -- Ibn Mandah mentions him -- who died in 411;

- The judge Abu al-Hasan Ali b. al-Husayn b. Muhammad al-Sundi who died in 461--he may also have been called Rukn al-Islam (Pillar of Islam);

- Abu Nasr Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Saa'id al-Saa'idi -- Dhahabi said about him: He is one of those who are called Shaykh al-Islam -- who died in 482;

- Ali b. Muhammad b. Ismail b. Ali al-Isbijai, who died in 535;

- His student, the author of al-Hidaya, Burhan al-Din Ali b. Abu Bakr `Abd al-Jalil al-Farghani, who died in 593;

- Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Hulmi;

- al-`Imad Mas'ud b. Shaybah b. al-Husayn al-Sindi;

- Abu Sa'd al-Mutahhar b. Sulayman al-Zanjani;

- Sadid b. Muhammad al-Hannati.

The master Abu `Uthman Isma`il b. `Abd al-Rahman b. Ahmad al- Sabuni al-Shafii was also known by this title. Ibn al-Sam`ani gave it to him in al-Dhayl. Also known by this title was Taj al- Din al-Firkah, who was a Shafi`i. Ibn Daqiq al-`Id (d. 702; said to be the Renewer of the seventh century) gave this title to his master (al-`Izz) Ibn `Abd al-Salam. He said: He is Shaykh al- Islam. Also known by this title were Abu al-Faraj b. Umar the Hanbali, the first who undertook the jurisdiction for the Hanbalis (in Mecca), Ibn Daqiq al-'Id himself, Ibn Taymiyya -- Abu al- Hajjal-Mizzi (654/1256-742/1341 Shafi`i hafiz of Damascus) did not give this title to anyone else among his contemporaries besides Ibn Taymiyya -- Ibn Abi `Umar, Taqi al-Din al-Subki, in whose time and in whose son's time the use of this title increased, especially in Damascus. Later, Siraj al-Din al-Bulqini (Ibn Hajar's shaykh) was given this title. I read in Ibn `Ammar's own hand that it was used exclusively for him...

Since the beginning of the eighth century innumerable people have been given this title, to the extent that even the chief judges came to be called with it even if they lacked the knowledge and the age. Indeed, ignorant writers and other than they took to attributing individuals all manners of qualities which nowadays exist only distributed among different persons. Those who confirm them in this abuse are the strangest of all. Verily we belong to God and to Him do we return. Ibn Hajar, may God have mercy on him, entirely merits being called with this title because he had most of the qualities that are mentioned above, and when that title was used by the authorities in his time he was meant and no-one else. Even if he was not an authority in everything, in the field of the hadith of the Prophet he was, beyond question, Shaykh al-Islam. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, whose piety is beyond question, called Abu al-Walid al-Tayalisi and Ahmad b. Yunus "Shaykh al-Islam" although they had only the knowledge of hadith, whereas Ibn Hajar's authority was not limited to one field only. May God have mercy on them and us.

Peace and Blessings upon the Prophet, his Family, and his Companions

4) PRAISING SOMEONE:

A) Exclaiming before beauty:

Claiming that a bad thing will happen to a beautiful thing when we praise it is really a superstition that has no backing. The person who sees something with a catching beauty should exercise Islamic manners in this regard by saying, "Ma shaa' Allah" ("Whatever Allah willed"), which constitutes a protection from the ill feelings and evil eye.

There is a reference to that in the Qur'an in the story of a person who was advised by his good friend: **"If only, when thou enteredst thy garden, thou hadst said: 'That which Allah willeth (will come to pass)! There is no strength save in Allah! Though thou seest me as less than thee in wealth and children.'"** (Al-Kahf 39) This is the Islamic way of praise."

Moreover, **Dr. Muhammad M. Abu Laylah**, Professor of the Islamic Studies & Comparative Religions at Al-Azhar University, concludes:

"Saying "Ma shaa' Allah" constitutes a protection that takes away the poison that comes out of the evil eyes. *Hasad* or envy can badly affect the person or the object deeply looked at with great psychological admiration and desire."

B) Praising people.

Author unknown:

"While it is not prohibited to express appreciation for someone or his works, to do so excessively, or flatteringly is disallowed.

Seven (7) evils are attached to praising people.

Four (4) are attached to the person who praises another and three (3) are attached to the one who is being praised.

(4) As for the person who is praising:

(a) One could be excessive in praising, and as such, say untrue things, thus becoming involved in lying.

(b) One could be praising a person to win his favor, thus doing it for show. Although in so doing, he outwardly manifests his love for the person, inwardly he does not believe everything he says. His showing off, therefore, amounts to nothing less than hypocrisy.

(c) He says things that he is not certain about and about, which he is in no position to truly assess.

(d) Through praises, he could make the praised one feel encouraged, although he might be an oppressor. This is Haraam in Islam. The oppression of the oppressor must be stopped, instead of being fostered. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: *"Help your bother, if he is oppressor or the oppressed."* It was said: *"How would you help him if he is the oppressor?"* He (peace be upon him) said: *"Restrain him from oppression and that would be helping him."* [Ahmad, Bukhari & Tirmidhi]

(3) As for the person who is being praised:

(a) Praise can cause pride within him. This quality is destructive, if it affects a person.

(b) The praised person could, thereafter, do things in order to acquire praises, instead of doing them to please Allah Alone.

(c) If he is praised, he might become satisfied with his efforts, and thereafter, reduce his desire to do good work.

If the praise is free from these evils, in both cases mentioned, then there is no harm, in praising if it is truthfully acknowledging someone's good efforts. This is commendable, particularly if it encourages someone to continue doing good. And Allah knows best. It is necessary that the one who is being praised be very careful not to allow pride, self-admiration and complacency to overcome him. He must also remember that he knows himself more than the person who is praising him, and if his secrets and hidden faults are exposed to the one who is praising him, that person would desist from praising him. When people used to praise `Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, he used to say: *"O Allah! Forgive me for what they do not know, and do not take me to account for what they say, and make me better than they think of me."* The following Hadeeth warns us about the danger of excessive praise. Abu Bakrah said: 'A man was mentioned before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and another man praised him greatly. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *"May Allah 's Mercy be upon you! You have cut the neck of your friend."* The Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated this many times and said: *"If it is necessary for any of you to praise someone, then he should say: 'I think! that he is so and-so', if he really thinks that he is such. Allah is the One Who will take his account (as He knows his reality), and none can sanctify anyone before Allah."* [Bukhari Vol. 8 #87]

C) Excessive glorification of people:

Source: <http://islamicity.com/dialogue/Q105.HTM>

"A105 : Islam abhors excessive glorification of people, no matter how "great" they may be, whether they are living or dead.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *"Do not glorify me in the same manner as the Christians glorify Jesus, son of Mary, but say, He is a slave of Allah and His Messenger."*

When his companions wanted to stand up to greet him out of respect, he forbade them, saying: **"Do not stand up as the Persians do, some people honoring the others."** (Reported by Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah).

The Prophet warned his followers against praising him excessively after his death, saying: "Do not make of my grave a site for festivals," (Related by Abu Dawood) and he prayed to his Lord **"O my Lord, do not let my grave be made into an idol to be worshipped."**

The believers aspire only to that true immortality which can be bestowed by Allah alone, Who knows the secret and the hidden, Who neither misleads nor forgets. In His register of immortality, there is the name of many a person whose greatness has remained unrecognized by the people. Indeed, the Most High loves those God-fearing and religious souls who remember Him in the secrecy of their hearts and minds by speaking about their good deeds, ideas and achievements. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), the caliphs, the leaders, and imams of Islam were never immortalized in figure or statues. I quote here part of a lecture entitled "Toward a New Understanding of Islam," by Professor Muhammad al-Mubarak, Dean of the College of Shari'ah, University of Damascus, delivered at al-Azhar University. The section quoted here contains an incisive analysis of the whole question of how to perpetuate the memory of the great. Quote : "We are faced with the situation that many new modes, systems and habits which are inconsistent with our correct beliefs and established moral principles have found their way into our social life. Among these is the manner in which Europeans and Americans commemorate their heroes by erecting statues for them. If we examine this matter with an open mind, free of subservience to whatever comes from the West, and reflect our ways of commemorating the lofty achievements of the great, we find the Arabs, in particular, memorialized nothing of their great personages except their noble deeds and good qualities such as fidelity, generosity, and courage. Their manner of perpetuating their memories was to recount tales of their heroes, passing them down from one generation to another, and to compose and recite eulogies in the form of poetry. In this manner, the generosity of Hatim and the bravery of Antarah became proverbial in the days before Islam. When Islam came, it emphasized the meaning underlying this method. It declared that the best of Allah's creation and the last of His Messengers (peace be upon him) was but a mortal man: **"Say: Indeed, I am a mortal like you; my Lord inspires me."** (18:111) It emphasized that the worth of human beings lies in their deeds and not in their physical forms; it made the Messenger (peace be upon him) an example for all mankind to follow; and it forbade such sanctions and exaggerated respect for men which resembles adoration and which, by implication, signifies the denigration of the rest of mankind. When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) passed away to meet his Lord, the first caliph drew people's attention to this fact, saying, "If anyone worshipped Muhammad, then (know that) Muhammad is dead, but if anyone worshipped Allah, then Allah is living and does not die." He then recited the words of Allah Ta'ala:

"Muhammad is but a messenger; messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heel?" (3:144) Islam immortalizes the memories of people because of their good and beneficent deeds; the remembrance of them remains in the hearts of Muslims. Thus, the literate and the illiterate, the young and the old, know about the justice of Umar, the firmness and wisdom of Abu Bakr, and the piety and courage of Ali. No statue made of stone was needed to commemorate any of them because their deeds and qualities are inscribed in peoples' hearts. Commemoration by means of erecting statues is in reality a regression to the remote past, a descent from a higher plane; it was the method of the Greeks and Romans which was adopted by Europeans... With respect to their concept of the nature of man and his true worth, they are far inferior to the Muslims, even to the pre-Islamic Arabs, since because of their inability to grasp the true stature of man and his potentialities, they are able only to conceive of great men as gods, and their gods as men incarnate. What we are pointing out is that it does not befit us to imitate this alien practice which is inferior to our own, and we must not deviate from the ruling from the Shari'ah that making statues is haram and is harmful to human psychology and morals." In Islam, when the greatness

of some noble soul is recognized by people, its perpetuation for coming generations is not achieved by erecting statues for them. The correct Islamic method of commemoration is to keep their memory alive in the hearts and minds by speaking about their good deeds, ideas and achievements.”

5) CRITICIZING AND NOT ACCEPTING SCHOLARS’ OPINIONS:

Sheikh M. S. Al-Munajjid, a prominent Saudi Muslim lecturer and author, states:

“When speaking about people, what we say must be based on knowledge and fairness. In the case of a man who has achieved a great deal in the way of religion, we must acknowledge his achievements, but that does not prevent us from pointing out his mistakes. [...]

However, it is not right to make one Muslim scholar, let alone anyone else, the sole source of what is true and correct, in the sense that one takes all what he says as true. Rather, the truth is that which is in accordance with the Qur’an and Sunnah, no matter who says it, and what goes against the Qur’an and Sunnah should be ignored and avoided, even if it is said by Sheikh `Abdul-Qadir Al-Jilani, Imam Malik, Imam Ash-Shafi`i, Imam Ahmad, or anyone else.

There is a point worth stressing here. Praising Sheikh `Abdul-Qadir does not mean praising everyone who claims to follow him. Not everyone who claims to follow a Sheikh or a school to be believed. How often has it happened that a person who is thought to be a true follower turned out to be the farthest removed from what was thought to be the case! How many misleading people don the cloak of asceticism and piety when they have nothing to do with either of them!

Hence, the Sufi sect which is known nowadays as the Qadiriyyah is not following the straight path followed by Sheikh `Abdul-Qadir (may Allah have mercy on him), rather it is a deviant Sufi sect which has drawn away from the guidance of the Qur’an and Sunnah; it exaggerates a great deal about Sheikh `Abdul-Qadir and even attributes to him things that can only rightfully be attributed to Allah. Some of them exaggerate concerning his grave, seeking help from it, and some of them exaggerate about his attributes and miracles (*Karamah*).”

He also declared:

“Praise be to Allaah. Allaah has enjoined justice and good treatment of others, and He has forbidden wrongdoing, hatred and enmity. Allaah sent His Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) with the same message as He sent all the Messengers, namely the call to Tawheed and to worship of Allaah alone. He commanded him to establish justice and forbade him to do the opposite, i.e., to worship anything other than Allaah, to cause division and to transgress against the rights of others.

In these days it has become very common that people who claim to have knowledge and to be calling people to good slander many of their brothers among the well-known daa’iyahs, and they talk about the seekers of knowledge, daa’iyahs and lecturers. They do that in secret in their own gatherings, but it may be recorded on tapes that are distributed among the people, and they may do it openly in public lectures in the mosques. This behaviour goes against the commands of Allaah and His Messenger in several ways.

1 – It is a transgression against the rights of the Muslims, and against the elite of the people, namely the seekers of knowledge and daa’iyahs who are striving to make the people aware and to teach them and correct their beliefs and practices, and to organize lessons and lectures, and to write beneficial books.

2 – It splits the Muslims and causes division in their ranks. They are the most in need of unity and they need to keep away from division, discord and too much gossip amongst themselves,

especially when the daa'iyahs who are being slandered are from among the Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah who are well known for their opposition to bid'ah (innovation) and myth, and for standing up against those who promote such things, and for exposing their plots and tricks. We see no benefit to be gained by such actions, except for the enemies who lie in wait for opportunities to harm the Muslims, such as the kaafirs, hypocrites and followers of bid'ah and misguidance.

3 – This action offers support and help for the self-serving among the secularists, westernizers and other heretics who are well known for stirring up trouble among the daa'iyahs and telling lies against them, and inciting people against them in their writings and recordings. It is contrary to Islamic brotherhood for those who are too hasty to help their enemies against their brothers among the seekers of knowledge, daa'iyahs and others.

4 – This spreads corrupts ideas in the hearts and minds of the common folk and elite; it spreads and propagates lies and false rumours, and causes a great deal of backbiting and slander. It leaves the door wide open to evil people who persist in spreading doubts and stirring up fitnah, and who are keen to cause harm to the believers by accusing them of things that they did not do.

5 – Much of what is being said has no basis in reality; rather these are illusions which the Shaytaan has made attractive to them, through which he has tempted them. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another...” [al-Hujuraat 49:12]

The believer should interpret what his Muslim brother says in the best possible way. One of the salaf said: Never think of something that is said by your brother as being bad when you still find room for a good interpretation.

6 – Whatever ijtihaad is produced by some scholars or seekers of knowledge, in areas where ijtihaad is permitted, the author of said ijtihaad cannot be blamed or rebuked for it, so long as he is qualified to engage in ijtihaad. If someone else has a different opinion, it is better for him to debate with him in a proper manner, striving to reach the truth via the shortest route and leaving no room for the insinuating whispers of the Shaytaan or for him to cause trouble among the believers. If that is not possible, and someone thinks that he has no choice but to explain what is wrong with his ijtihaad, then he should choose the best wording and the most subtle way of explaining, and not resort to attacking, slandering or going to extremes in criticizing him, which may cause others to reject the truth or to turn away from it. He should also avoid criticizing specific people, casting aspersions upon their intentions or saying unnecessary or irrelevant things about them. In such cases the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would say, “What is the matter with some people who say such and such...?”

The advice I offer to these brothers who have fallen into the sin of slandering the daa'iyahs is to repent to Allaah for the things that they have written or said that may have corrupted the hearts of some youth and filled them with hatred and grudges, and kept them from seeking beneficial knowledge or from calling people to Allaah by making them preoccupied with gossip and talking about this one and that one, and seeking out faults for which they could criticize people, and going to extremes in doing that.

I also advise them to offer expiation for the things that they have done by writing and other means that they think they should not have done, and to remove from people's minds the wrong ideas they may have given them. They should focus on fruitful actions which will bring them closer to Allaah and will be beneficial to people, and they should beware of being too hasty to accuse people of kufr, fisq and bid'ah without any clear evidence or proof. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever says to his brother ‘O kaafir!’ one of them will be deserving of that description.” (Saheeh, agreed upon).

It is prescribed for those who call others to the truth and for seekers of knowledge, if they are uncertain about something said by a scholar or anyone else, to refer to the prominent scholars and to ask them, so that they can explain the facts of the matter to them and remove the confusion and doubt from their minds, in accordance with the words of Allaah in Soorat al-Nisaa' (interpretation of the meaning):

“When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people); if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly). Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allaah upon you, you would have followed Shaytaan (Satan), save a few of you”[al-Nisaa' 4:83]

And Allaah is the One Whom we ask to reform all the Muslims and to unite their hearts in taqwa and to bring the scholars of the Muslims and those who call to the truth together in doing that which pleases Him and will benefit His slaves. May He unite them in following guidance and protect them against all the causes of division and dissent; may He support the truth through them and humiliate falsehood through them, for He is the One Who is able to do that. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions, and those who follow his guidance until the Day of Resurrection.

Majmoo' Fataawa wa Maqaalaat Mutanawwi'ah li Samaahat al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn 'Abd-Allaah ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him), vol. 7, p. 311. (www.islam-qa.com)”

6) THE HIGH STATUS OF THE PROPHET (saas) AND THE SAHABAS:

One should never insult another Muslim by giving him a nickname he dislikes such as nicknames that show his weaknesses or his sins, or his deformities, etc., whether it is done in secret or openly. And one should never expose another Muslim's weaknesses and faults unless one is obliged to in order to warn others against a danger or to solve an injustice in court or the like. It is haraam to violate the honor and reputation of Muslims by saying things about them in such a manner as to undermine their position, even if what is said is true.

One especially is not allowed to criticize the Sahabas or say something bad about them. This is close to unbelief and the one who shows his dislike for the Sahabas is considered a hypocrite by the scholars.

Allah says:

“And the foremost to embrace Islam of the Muhaajiroon and the Ansaar and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allaah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success” [al-Tawbah 9:100]

As for the point of exalting the status of Prophet Muhammad, the Seal of all Prophets, over that of the other Prophets, **Sheikh M. S. Al-Munajjid**, a prominent Saudi Islamic lecturer and author, said:

“All people were created by Allah to be His servants; His is the power and command from eternity to eternity. Out of His Divine Wisdom, He selected some of His angels and preferred them over others, such as Jibril, Mika'il, Israfil, etc. And His wisdom and justice decreed that He should select some of the children of Adam and prefer some of them over others. Allah says: **“Allah chooses Messengers from angels and from men. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Seer”** (Al-Hajj:75) He also says: **“Those Messengers! We preferred some of them to others; to some of them Allah spoke (directly); others He raised to degrees (of honor).”** (Al-Baqarah: 253)

Allah tells us that He chose and selected these Messengers from among mankind. After

mentioning some of the Prophets and Messengers, He says: **“And also some of their fathers and their progeny and their brethren, We chose them, and We guided them to the Straight Path.”** (Al-An`am: 87)

And, Allah says: **“And Allah has preferred some of you above others in wealth and properties.”** (An-Nahl: 71)

Out of His wisdom He made Adam, peace be upon him, the father of mankind, and His wisdom, mercy and justice decreed that from among Adam’s progeny He should select an elite of Messengers and Prophets, peace and blessings be upon them and upon our Prophet. Among those chosen and preferred over others were the Messengers of strong will (*Ulu-l-`Azim*, see Al-Ahqaf: 35), namely, Muhammad, Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa and `Isa ibn Maryam, peace and blessings be upon them all. And He chose and favored above them all their leader, the final Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. He is indeed the eminent of all the sons of Adam, with no boast. He will carry the banner and will be granted the power of intercession on the Day of Resurrection.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is the one who will attain *Al-Maqam Al-Mahmud* (the Praised Position in the Hereafter) in Paradise, which will be given to one person only, and that person will be our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Hence, Allah took the covenant and pledge from all the Prophets that if Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was sent during the lifetime of any one of them, they would be obliged to follow him, to leave behind what they had brought and follow what our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, brought. As Allah says: **“And (remember) when Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying: ‘Take whatever I gave you from the Book and Hikmah (understanding of the Laws of Allah), and afterwards there will come to you a Messenger (Muhammad) confirming what is with you; you must, then, believe in him and help him.’ Allah said: ‘Do you agree (to it) and will you take up My Covenant (which I conclude with you)?’ They said: ‘We agree.’ He said: ‘Then bear witness; and I am with you among the witnesses (for this).’ Then whoever turns away after this, they are the Fasiqun (rebellious: those who turn away from Allah’s obedience).”** (Al `Imran: 81-82)

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said to `Umar ibn Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him: **“By Allah, if my brother Musa were alive, he would have no choice but to follow me.”** When `Isa ibn Maryam, peace and blessings be upon him, comes down at the end of time, he will come to rule in accordance with the Shari`ah of Islam, and follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

All of the above refers to their status before Allah. With regard to their religion, it is one religion, for they all called people to believe in One God, Allah (*Tawhid*) and to devote worship sincerely to Him Alone. With regard to laws, each of them had his own law, which was for his people alone. Allah says: **“To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way.”** (Al-Ma`idah:48)

But the Shari`ah of our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is the most perfect, the best, the most complete and the most beloved to Allah; it abrogates all laws that came before it. Undoubtedly, the Prophets differ in status, and they are at varying levels. The best of them, as stated above, are the five Messengers of strong will (*Ulu-l-`Azim*), and the best of them all is the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

With regard to the sound *Hadiths*, **“Do not prefer me over Yunus ibn Matta”** and **“By the One Who chose Musa over all of creation”**, these all indicate the immense humility of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, when speaking of his brothers, the Messengers. But he is undoubtedly the best of them all, for he led them in prayer in Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) on the night of the Isra`. He will be the leader of the sons of Adam on the Day of Resurrection, and he is

the only one among all the Messengers who will be granted the power of intercession on that Day. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is the one who said: ***“From among the sons of Adam, Allah chose Quraysh; from among Quraysh He chose Kinanah; from among Kinanah He chose Bani Hashim; and from among Bani Hashim He chose me.”*** So, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is the Chosen One (*Al-Mustafa*) from among all of mankind. “

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from www.islam-qa.com

However, Rasulallah (saas) warned people against praising him excessively:

Rasulallah (saas) said: ***“Whoever humbles himself to Allah, Allah will raise him (in respect) and He will not enter Paradise who has in his heart an atom's weight of arrogance.”***

What Muslims do rather is showing respect and honor to a great person whom Almighty Allah Himself accorded honor and prestige, as He said in the Qur’an: ***“Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation.”*** (Al-Ahzab: 56)

But a Muslim does not commit Shirk by putting our prophets (PBUTA) above or at the same level as Allaah SWT.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to tell his Companions: ***“Don't exaggerate in praising me, as Christians exceeded the limits in praising the Messiah son of Mary, for I am the slave and Messenger of Allah.”***

7) FORBIDDEN AND ALLOWED NAMES:

There is nothing wrong with giving names that do not have bad meanings and which have good meanings but do not imply excessive praise of the one who is so called. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did change some names because they were ugly or because they had bad meanings.

A name does not have any effect on a person's character, apart from reflecting optimism for him. On this basis, one should give one's children good names and not give bad names. So we should use names like ‘Abd-Allaah (“slave of Allaah”), ‘Abd al-Rahmaan (“slave of the Most Merciful”), Muhammad, Ahmad, etc., and we should not use names which have bad meanings, such as Sa’b (difficult), etc.

A) Names forbidden to Muslims:

Source: www.islam-qa.com:

“It is forbidden to use any name which belongs only to Allaah, such as al-Khaaliq (the Creator) and al-Quddoos (the Most Holy), or names which do not befit any except Allaah, such as Malik al-Mulook (King of Kings). This is the consensus of the fuqaha’.

Ibn al-Qayyim said that names which belong only to Allaah include: al-Ahad (the One), al-Samad (the Eternal), al-Khaaliq (the Creator), al-Razzaaq (the Provider), al-Jabbaar (the Compeller), al-Mutakabbir (the Majestic), al-Awwal (the First), al-Aakhir (the Last), al-Baatin (the Hidden) and ‘Allaam al-Ghuyoob (the Knower of the Unseen). (*Tuhfat al-Mawdood*, p. 98).

[...]

As regards using names that may be used of Allaah or of others, it is permissible to use these names, such as ‘Ali (High), Rasheed (Guide) and Badee’ (Innovator or Originator).

[...]

It is forbidden to use names which befit no one except the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), such as Sayyid Walad Adam (master of the sons of Adam), Sayyid al-Naas (master of mankind), Sayyid al-Kull (master of all), because these names, as the Hanbalis said, befit no one except him, (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

[...]

It says in *Kashshaaf al-Qinaa'*: "They (the scholars) agreed that every name which implies enslavement to anything other than Allaah is forbidden, such as 'Abd al-'Uzza, 'Abd 'Amr, 'Abd 'Ali, 'Abd al-Ka'bah, and any other similar names, such as 'Abd al-Nabi (slave of the Prophet), 'Abd al-Husayn, 'Abd al-Maseeh (slave of the Messiah)." (*Haashiyat Ibn 'Aabideen*, 5/268; *Mughni al-Muhtaj*, 4/295; *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj*, 10/373; *Kashshaaf al-Qinaa'*, 3/27; *Tuhfat al-Mawdood*, p. 90).

Using the names of idols that are worshipped instead of Allaah.

Using foreign names, such as Turkish, Persian, Berber, etc. names, that have no origin in the Arabic language.

It is forbidden to use the names of devils (shayaateen), such as Khanzab, al-Walhaan, al-A'war and al-Ajda'. It was reported that the Sunnah is to change names such as these.

[...]

It is makrooh to use names that have bad or distasteful meanings, or which sound odd, which would cause others to mock a person or would cause him embarrassment, in addition to being contrary to the guidance of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who taught us to choose good names.

It is makrooh to use names whose meanings are too soft and provocative or sexy, which is a widespread problem in the naming of girls.

It is makrooh to deliberately name someone after promiscuous actors and singers who star in worthless entertainment shows.

One of the signs of empty-headedness and lack of pride in one's faith is the fact that after a show starring immoral women, people will compete with one another in naming their newborns after these women. Anyone who checks the names registered at the time of one of these shows will see that this is a fact. And our complaining is to Allaah.

It is makrooh to use names that convey any sense of sin and disobedience to Allaah.

It is makrooh to use foreign names that belong only to the kuffaar.

[...]

It is makrooh to use the names of Pharaohs or other tyrants.

It is makrooh to use names that have any undesirable meaning.

It is makrooh to name people after animals that are known for their bad qualities. When the Arabs called their children by such names, it was because of good qualities that they noticed in them, and this was the desired meaning. So when they used the name Kalb (dog), it was because of the dog's alertness and ability to work hard; when they used the name Himaar (donkey), it was because of the donkey's patience and forbearance, and so on... This refutes the false arguments of the Shu'oobiyyah against the Arabs, as was explained by Ibn Durayd, Ibn Faaris, and others.

It is makrooh to use any name which is composed of any word added to such words as al-Deen (the Religion) or Islam, such as Noor al-Deen/Nuruddin (Light of the Religion), Diya' al-Deen/Ziauddin (Brightness of the Religion), Sayf al-Islam (Sword of Islam), Noor al-Islam (Light of Islam), etc. This is because of the great status attached to these words, al-Deen and Islam. Adding words to them to form names is an exaggeration which borders on lying, which is why some scholars said that this is haraam, and the majority say that it is makrooh, because it gives an incorrect impression which should not be given. The way this practice started was that these were titles which were added to people's names, then people started to use them as names.

[...]

It is makrooh to use names that are composed of two parts, and this includes names which include the name of Allaah, with the exception of the name 'Abd-Allaah (slave of Allaah), which is one of the most beloved names to Allaah. Names which include the word al-Rasool (the Messenger) are also makrooh.

Some of the scholars regarded using the names of angels (peace be upon them) as makrooh. Giving angels' names to women is clearly haraam, because it implies imitation of the mushrikeen, who thought that the angels were the daughters of Allaah. Exalted be He above what they say!

Some of the scholars thought that it was makrooh to give people the names of Soorahs of the Qur'aan, such as Ta-Ha, Yaa-Seen, Ha-Meem. (The popular notion that Ya-Seen and Ta-Ha are names of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is not correct).

Source: Islam Q& A: **Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid** (www.islam-qa.com)"

B) Saying the name of one's spouse in front of people:

Some of the Sahaabiyaat (female Sahaabah) mentioned their husband by their kunyahs ("father of So and so").

In some societies, it is preferable to mention people by their kunyah rather than their names, or in front of some people because many problems may arise from taking the matter of mentioning people's names lightly.

With regard to saying one's husband's or wife's name in front of other people, it is ok if it is the custom of the place one lives in.

In a hadeeth, Bilaal (may Allaah be pleased with him) mentioned the wife of Ibn Mas'ood by name (Zaynab). If a woman is well known by her name and it is OK for people other than her husband to mention her by name. And vice versa for the name of a man.

D) Changing one's name:

One can change his name to an Islamic name if the meaning is bad, however, it is not permissible for him to call himself after anyone except her legitimate father, no matter the reason:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: *"Whoever calls himself by other than his father's name (or attributes himself to someone other than his father), will be cursed by Allaah, the angels and all the people."* (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2599; see also Saheeh al-Jaami', 6104).

For the same reason, "adopting" a child is haram in the sense that the child is given the name of the adoptive parents. However, "sponsoring" a child is halal, that is taking care of the child without changing his name or the way it is generally called.

If a man is sponsoring a child less than two years old, he should let the child breastfeed from his wife (or the appropriate mothers or sisters), so that the child can become part of the family, and have a mahram for a girl. If the child does not breastfeed, everyone will have to observe the laws of modesty among the family where he or she lives.