

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### SUNNAH OF EATING

*O Allah (The Exalted) send to the soul of our master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) my greetings and my salutations.*

Food is a great gift from Allah (The Exalted). Within, it has many different tastes and nourishments to fulfil our need. By eating according to the Sunnah there will be many blessings. The manners of eating are very important to learn and perfect since they are repeated many times a day. One must learn how to eat properly whether eating alone, with family or with friends. To avoid pretences, you with your family should practice proper eating manners until it becomes a natural part of your behaviour.

#### **Enquire About Your Food**

'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) had a slave who would give 'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) a portion of his daily income as the master's share. Once he bought him some food, and 'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) took a morsel out of it. Then the slave remarked: *"You always enquire about the source of what I bring to you, but today you have not done so."*

He replied: *"I was feeling so hungry that I failed to do that. Tell me now, how did you come by this food?"* The slave said: *"Before I embraced Islam, I practised fortune-telling. During those days I came across some people who I would practice some charms for. They promised to pay me later on, I met them and they were in a marriage ceremony, and they gave me this food."*

'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said, *"Achh! You would have killed me!"* he tried to vomit the food, but could not as his stomach was empty. Someone suggested drinking water to the full and trying to vomit it. Somebody remarked *'May Allah (The Exalted) have mercy on you! You put yourself to such trouble for one single morsel.'* He replied that *"I would have thrust it out even if I had to lose my life. I have heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) say that the flesh nourished by haraam (strictly forbidden) food is destined for the fire of Hell. I therefore made haste to vomit this morsel, lest any portion of my body should receive nourishment from it."*

*Allahu Akbar!* We should make sure that our food is from lawful sources. Making sure the work we do is lawful, the food is lawful etc. if not then our supplications will not be accepted, nor our Salaah. Imam Ghazali (may Allah's mercy be upon him) writes in *Ihya ul uloom* from a pious person that, When a Muslim eats the first morsel of lawful food, his previous sins are forgiven. *Subhanallah!*

#### **'Abu Hurayrah And Hunger**

Once, 'Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) after wiping his nose with a piece of fine linen remarked to himself *"Look at 'Abu Hurayrah! He cleans his nose with fine linen, today. I remember the time when he would lie down between the pulpit and the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) house. People took him to be suffering from epilepsy and put their feet on his neck. But there was no other illness with him, other than spasms of hunger."*

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that, 'I asked the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) pray to Allah (The Exalted) that he make me *mustajab ad-da'waat* (someone whose prayers are always accepted). The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, *"O Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) make sure your earnings are lawful, Allah (The Exalted) will accept your prayers. A person eats a morsel of unlawful and his prayers are not accepted for forty days."*<sup>i</sup>

Respected brother/sister of Islam! Look at the life of the companions and look at our lives. After reading the Sunnah and the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) we should understand that every thing that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has shown us is only for our benefit, the companions acted upon all the saying of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). As Muslims, we should also start to follow the blessed Sunnah. Following the Sunnah is also counted as worship as in reality you are following the Qur'an.

## **Washing The Hands**

'Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying *"Before and after eating perform ablution as it banishes poverty and is the practises of the Prophets (upon them all be peace)."*<sup>ii</sup>

This means to wash the hands and rinse the mouth and not to perform ablution as one would do for Salaah.

## **Eating Whilst Seated On The Floor Is Sunnah**

Qataada (may Allah be pleased with him) states that, *"The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would eat his food from a mat (laid out on the floor)."*<sup>iii</sup>

## **How To Sit**

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to often squat down on his knees and sit on his heels for the meal. At other times he would raise this right leg and sit on his left. He used to say, *"I do not eat when reclining"<sup>iv</sup> ... for I am but a slave, I eat as a slave eats and sit as a slave sits.*<sup>v</sup>

The first principle of the law of Islam is that nothing can compare with any habit or act of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Anyone who does not believe this should beware; for Allah (The Exalted) has stated that He does not favour those who disbelieve. Everything else can be open to criticism but not the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Wherever we are in the world when the time comes to eat, the food should be arranged on the floor on a mat and we should sit and partake of it from there. In many of our homes today this beautiful Sunnah has been neglected. Muslims are sitting on chairs and tables moving away from the Sunnah. Islam is simple but we have made it complicated. To sit on a table is an innovation as it is contrary to the Sunnah.

## **Covering The Head**

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would always cover his head when eating and he would wash both hands up to the wrist. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) sat on the floor at the side of a mat and ate with three fingers of his right hand. The three fingers include the thumb, index, and the middle finger and he would start with '*Bismillah*' and in between three morsels our master (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would say '*Bismillah*' and say '*Alhamdulillah*.'

## **Recite Bismillah For Blessing**

Wahshi bin Harmat (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that, *"Eat together and recite 'Bismillah', there will be blessings for you in this."*<sup>vi</sup>

## **Food Becomes Lawful For Devil**

Hudhayfa (may Allah be pleased with him) said that, *"He who does not recite 'Bismillah' before eating, that food becomes lawful for the devil."*<sup>vii</sup>

## **Eat together for blessing**

The people said, *"O Prophet of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) we eat but are not satisfied," The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "You may be eating separately," they said, "Yes," the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "Eat together and recite 'Bismillah' there will be blessing."*<sup>viii</sup>

People have become very busy in their lifestyle and need to understand that it is the Sunnah to sit together and eat. Love and blessings will increase in the family, *Insha-Allah!* Not reciting '*Bismillah*' is a means of loosing out on the blessings.

## **Shaytan Partakes**

Ummayya bin Makhshi (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, *'A person was eating without reciting 'Bismillah' and just before he had finished and had one morsel left he recited 'Bismillahi Awwalahu Wa Aakhirahu', the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) smiled and said, "The Shaytan was eating with him, when he recited the name of Allah (The Exalted) whatever was in his stomach he vomited it out."*<sup>ix</sup>

If ever we forget to recite '*Bismillah*' then recite the supplication which has been mentioned above and *Insha-Allah* the Shaytan will not take part in the food and will be full of blessings.

### **Use The Right Hand**

'Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) states, *"Eat with the right hand and drink with the right hand and take with the right hand and give with the right hand. This is because the devil eats with the left hand and drinks with the left hand and gives with the left hand and takes with the left hand."*<sup>x</sup>

Salmah bin Aku' (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, "A person was eating with his left hand in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, "Eat with the right hand." He said, 'I can't eat with my right hand.' The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "May your right hand not be used."<sup>xi</sup>

Because of arrogance the person did not use his right hand and since that day he could not lift his right hand to his mouth.

### **Eat With Three Fingers**

'Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *"To eat with three fingers is the practice of the Prophets (Peace be upon them)."*<sup>xii</sup>

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said that, *"Eat with three fingers as it is Sunnah and do not eat with five fingers as this is the way of the bedouins."*<sup>xiii</sup>

Try to eat with three fingers, however, at times some foods do not allow you to do so, then eat with five as a last resort.

Ka'ab bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, *"The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) ate with three fingers and before wiping his hands he licked them."*<sup>xiv</sup>

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that, *"To eat with one finger is the way of Shaytan, to eat with two is the way of the arrogant and with three is the way of the Prophets (upon them all be peace)."*<sup>xv</sup>

Once Mamunur Rasheed (Khalifa Abbasi) was presented with some cutlery. The Qazi of the time, Imam 'Abu Yusuf said, *"Your grandfather 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) writes in his Tafsir under this verse, 'And without doubt We have given respect to the children of Adam.'" It states, "We made for them fingers with which they eat."* Mamunur Rasheed did not except the cutlery and ate with his fingers.<sup>xvi</sup>

Food which can not be eaten with the fingers such as soup etc. can be eaten with a spoon, however, we should try and eat with our fingers and follow the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) in foods that can be eaten with fingers.

### **No Accounting**

Hasan Basri (may Allah be pleased with him) states that, *"Whatever a person eats and drinks and feeds his mother and father, will be accounted for, except for food eaten with friends."*

*Subhanallah!* We learn that to have food with friends is a greatly rewarded act and love will increase between the Muslim communities.

### **Wasting Food**

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) states that, *"I came to the Messenger of Allah's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) house, I saw a piece of bread, he picked it up wiped it and ate it and said, "Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) appreciate good things, once this (bread) has left (taken away) it has not returned."*<sup>xvii</sup>

Respected brother/sister of Islam! Today we see in weddings and in other functions that we take more food than required and leave food in our plates, which will inevitably be thrown away. This is a sinful act and we will have to answer for it on the Day of Resurrection. We should take only small amounts of food and if we require more, we can always take more later. Always keep in your mind to clean the plates, save yourselves from sin, and fulfil the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

### **Leaving Food For Shaytan**

Ma'qal bin Yasaar (may Allah be pleased with him) was eating when a morsel fell from his hand. He picked it up, cleaned it and ate it. The bedouins indicated with their eyes (what a low graded act), someone remarked *'May Allah (The Exalted) favour our leader as some people are indicating that you have all this food present and you pick the food that has dropped.'*

Ma'qal bin Yasaar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, *"Because of the Bedouins I will not leave that which I have heard from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). As we were ordered to pick up the morsel that has dropped and not to leave it for the Shaytan."* <sup>xviii</sup>

No matter who is present do not feel ashamed in following the Sunnah, your love for the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) will increase and Allah (The Exalted) will reward you for not wasting too.

Once 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) saw a piece of bread on the floor and said to his slave, *"Clean it and save it."* At the time of opening the fast he asked for it and the slave said, *"I have eaten it."* *Go you are free as I have heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying, "Whoever picks up and eats a piece of bread from the floor, before it reaches the stomach Allah (The Exalted) forgives the person. Now that the person is forgiven, how can I keep him as a slave"* said ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) <sup>xix</sup>

### **The Plate Makes Supplication**

It is mentioned in the hadith that the plate and other vessels which are wiped and licked using fingers, pray for the person doing this and say; *'May Allah (The Exalted) free you from the Hell fire the way you have freed me from the devil.'* Another version of the hadith says, the plates ask for your forgiveness. <sup>xx</sup> *Subhanallah!*

### **Supplication Before Eating:**

*'Bismillahi Wa-'Ala Baraka Tillah'*

*'Allah's (The Exalted) name I begin with, and with the blessings of Allah (The Exalted)'* <sup>xxi</sup>

### **Nothing Will Affect You**

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) states that *"When you pray this supplication, you will have no illness (nor be affected by anything):"*

*'Bis-mil-lahi Wa Bil -la-hil La-dhi Laa Ya-durru Ma 'As-mihi Shai-un Fil-ardi Wa-la-fis Samaa-i Ya Hayyu Ya Qayyoom'*

*Allah, the name I begin with, and Allah is He whose name nothing on earth nor in the heavens can cause harm. O the everlasting, O the self existent.."* <sup>xxii</sup>

### **If You Forget To Recite**

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that *"Whoever eats food, remember Allah (The Exalted) meaning recite 'Bismillah' and if in the beginning you forget to pray 'Bismillah' then pray the following:*

*'Bimillahi Fi Awwalihi Wa-aakhirihi'*

*'Allah's name I begin with at the beginning and end of it.'* <sup>xxiii</sup>

One can also pray *'Awwalahu'* and *'Wa-aakhiraha'* <sup>xxiv</sup>

Not reciting *'Bismillah,'* the devil has an opportunity to partake in the food. <sup>xxv</sup>

## Manners Of Eating

1. Wash both hands up to the wrists before and after eating<sup>xxvi</sup> but not to wipe them before you eat, as it is not the Sunnah and bacteria from the towel will come on the hands and will go down the stomach with the food increasing illness.
2. To wash both hands and gargle before and after eating. <sup>xxvii</sup> The habit of gargling the mouth together with washing of the hands after meals is a source of great blessing. <sup>xxviii</sup>
3. Place food on a *Sufra* (a ground cover made from leather). <sup>xxix</sup>
4. Do not just wash the fingers, as this is not the Sunnah. <sup>xxx</sup>
5. Start and finish with salt or something that contains salt, as it banishes seventy illnesses. <sup>xxxi</sup>
6. After completing the meal wash your hands so that no smell remaining. <sup>xxxii</sup>
7. Say '*Bismillah*' loudly so that those who have forgotten are reminded. <sup>xxxiii</sup>
8. It is an emphasized Sunnah (Sunnat-e-Moakedah) to recite the praise of Allah (The Exalted) before and after meals. <sup>xxxiv</sup>
9. To eat together and not individually, as this will bring more blessing. <sup>xxxv</sup>
10. Do not wipe your hands with bread. <sup>xxxvi</sup>
11. To lean on something or to leave your head uncovered is disrespectful and against the Sunnah. <sup>xxxvii</sup> To lean on the left-hand side is Makrooh (disliked).
12. To keep each mouthful small and chew it well. <sup>xxxviii</sup>
13. Do not find fault in anything you eat. If you like it eat it otherwise do not pass any comment. <sup>xxxix</sup>
14. Eat with your right hand, similarly when taking food from a bowl and when giving to someone the right hand should be used. <sup>xl</sup>
15. If some food has been dropped then pick it up, clean it and pray '*Bismillah*', eat it, and do not leave it for the devil. <sup>xli</sup>
16. If a visitor comes, he should also be urged to join you. <sup>xlii</sup>
17. When taking the food out, take it out from the side and not the middle. Eat from the food, which is closest to you. <sup>xliii</sup>
- 18. Sit the Sunnah way i.e.**
  - Squat with the buttocks away from the ground. (Both knees touching the stomach and the soles of feet on the floor)
  - Sit on the left leg having the right knee raised touching the stomach
  - Sit on both the legs as in the *Tashahud* posture (shins touching the ground). <sup>xliv</sup>
19. To use a red mat (*dastarkhan*) as it is the Sunnah of Musa, Isa (upon them be peace) and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace.). <sup>xlv</sup>
20. If a variety of dishes are served then it is permissible to partake in any that you wish and leave any that you are not inclined towards without passing any remarks. <sup>xlvi</sup>
21. Small pieces of meat should not be cut with a knife, but rather shred with the teeth, this assists in digestion. <sup>xlvii</sup>
22. Do not smell the food. <sup>xlviii</sup>
23. To have vinegar and honey in the house is Sunnah. <sup>xlix</sup>



24. Do not eat hot food or hot drink, as there is no blessing in excessively hot food let it cool down. <sup>i</sup>
25. Do not blow on the food to cool it. <sup>ii</sup>
26. When eating together, the most pious or eldest should be asked to begin. <sup>iii</sup>
27. Talk about good things as to stay quiet is the act of the fire worshippers. <sup>iiii</sup>
28. Take from one side of the dish and not from the middle. <sup>liv</sup>
29. After eating one should clean the plate (via their finger) as it is possible that Allah (The Exalted) may have kept blessings on that morsel left behind on the plate or the fingers. <sup>lv</sup>
30. Lick your fingers at the end in the following manner, middle finger, index finger, the thumb, little finger, and then ring finger. <sup>lvi</sup> NOTE: do not place the entire finger inside the mouth, as the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would lick the inner side of the finger first and then the outer.
31. To remove shoes before eating as this is more comfortable. <sup>lvii</sup>
32. Hold the bread in the left hand and break it with the right hand. <sup>lviii</sup>
33. When eating together then as far as possible we should eat till the end so that we can accompany the slow eater and if this is not possible then we should rather excuse ourselves when we finish eating. <sup>lix</sup>
34. To eat from a plate / bowl made from clay / earth is a Sunnah. <sup>lx</sup>
35. Allama Safuwri relates the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying that (after eating) wash the plate and drink it. One who does this is as if freeing forty slaves from the people of Prophet Ismail (upon whom be peace). <sup>lxi</sup>
36. In another place Imam 'Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (may Allah's Mercy be upon him) states, '*Whoso cleans the dish they have eaten in and drinks the water will get the reward of releasing a slave.*' <sup>lxii</sup>
37. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "*Whoever cleans his plate and his fingers, Allah (The Exalted) keeps the person satisfied both in this world and the next.*" <sup>lxiii</sup>
38. To use a toothpick after eating is a Sunnah. <sup>lxiv</sup>
39. One is rewarded with freeing two slaves if you perform Miswak after eating. <sup>lxv</sup>

#### **Few Rules Of Eating:**

1. Do not eat to the fill of your stomach, as you will feel lazy.
2. Do not eat standing or walking, as it is Makrooh. <sup>lxvi</sup>
3. When someone has asked you to join them to eat, do not say '*Bismillah*', as this has no meaning at this time, but say may Allah (The Exalted) give you more blessings or say '*Barakallah*'. <sup>lxvii</sup>
4. If perspiration or tears fall in the food than it does not become unlawful. <sup>lxviii</sup>
5. If the meat has burnt then to eat it is forbidden. <sup>lxix</sup>
6. You are not allowed to eat food from someone else's land until you have permission. <sup>lxx</sup>
7. Do not wipe your hand or a knife on the chapatti. <sup>lxxi</sup>
8. In all conditions we should be satisfied and content with the food we get no matter what the quantity or type is. We should always be happy and regard it as a bounty from Allah (The Exalted). <sup>lxxii</sup>

#### **Supplication After Eating**

After eating pray this supplication:

'Alhamdu Lillahil Ladhi At'Amana Wasa Qanaa Waja 'Alana Minal Muslimeen'  
'All praise is due to Allah (The Exalted) who gave us food and drink and made us Muslims.' <sup>lxxiii</sup>

You will not have to account for food eaten on the day of resurrection, if the meals are completed with this supplication.

### When Eating At Someone's House

When eating at some one else's home the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would read the following;

'Allahumma At'Im Man-at'Amani Wasqi Man-saqani'

'O Allah (The Exalted), feed he who has fed me and quench his thirst who has quenched my thirst.' <sup>lxiv</sup>

- <sup>i</sup> Al-Kabair
- <sup>ii</sup> Tabarani
- <sup>iii</sup> Bukhari
- <sup>iv</sup> ibid
- <sup>v</sup> Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- <sup>vi</sup> Imam Ahmed & 'Abu Dawood
- <sup>vii</sup> Muslim
- <sup>viii</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>ix</sup> Abu Dawud
- <sup>x</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>xi</sup> Muslim
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibn Annajjar
- <sup>xiii</sup> Hakim
- <sup>xiv</sup> Muslim
- <sup>xv</sup> Mawahibul Ladunya
- <sup>xvi</sup> ibid
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>xviii</sup> ibid
- <sup>xix</sup> Tanbihul Ghafileen
- <sup>xx</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>xxi</sup> 'Abu Dawood & Hakim
- <sup>xxii</sup> Tirmidhi & Deylmi
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Shamail-e-Tirmidhi
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Abu Dawud in Food
- <sup>xxv</sup> Mishkat
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>xxvii</sup> ibid
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>xxix</sup> Ihya ul uloom, Chapter 1, p. 4
- <sup>xxx</sup> Alamgiri
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Bazazaiya and Raddul Mohtar. Shu'ab ul Iman
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Akhlaaq aur Adaab, p. 29
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Faizane Sunnat, p. 796
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Nur-ul-Irfan: Verse:7
- <sup>xxxv</sup> 'Abu Dawud & Mishkat
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Ihya ulum adeen
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Bukhari & 'Abu Dawud
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Ihya ulum adeen
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Bukhari
- <sup>xl</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>xli</sup> ibid
- <sup>xlii</sup> Muslim
- <sup>xliiii</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>xliv</sup> Umdatul Qari
- <sup>xlv</sup> Faizane Sunnat
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>xlvii</sup> ibid
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 31
- <sup>xlix</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>l</sup> Ahmad
- <sup>li</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>lii</sup> Muslim
- <sup>liii</sup> Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 31
- <sup>liv</sup> ibid p. 30
- <sup>lv</sup> ibid p. 31
- <sup>lvi</sup> Muslim & Tabarani
- <sup>lvii</sup> Mishkat & Darimi
- <sup>lviii</sup> Faizane Sunnat
- <sup>lix</sup> Ibn Majah
- <sup>lx</sup> Madani Inamaat
- <sup>lxi</sup> Nuzhatul Majalis
- <sup>lxii</sup> Faizane Shariat
- <sup>lxiii</sup> Nuzhatul Majalis
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Faizane Sunnat
- <sup>lxv</sup> Tadhkirat ul Wa'idheen
- <sup>lxvi</sup> Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 31

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lxvii *ibid* p. 31-2

lxviii *ibid* p. 32

lxix Alamgiri

lxx Akhlaaq aur Aadaab, p. 32

lxxi Ihya ulum adeen

lxxii Malik

lxxiii Tirmidhi, 'Abu Dawud in food, Ibn Majah & Tabarani

lxxiv Muslim