

*Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, September 12, 2003*

*Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah*

*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim*

Today, in our so-called “*modern*” societies, we sometimes consider our *guests* to be *pests*. We may be pleasant to them only if we could derive some advantage one way or the other. Actually, hospitality aims at cementing ties between humans. By the Grace of God, the Quran in its all encompassing teachings provides complete guidance about visitor management.

Unfortunately, Hindu philosophy has an adage “guests are considered as god”. I would rather say - guests are among the innumerable blessings of God. Of course, there are rules that govern their treatment on one hand and the conduct of the guests themselves on the other.

The Quran provides guidance both about the treatment of guests and their duties in return. Let’s see an example of the hospitality of Prophet Abraham. [51:24] Have you noted the history of Abraham's honorable guests? [51:25] They visited him, saying, "Peace." He said, "Peace to you, strangers!" [51:26] He asked his family to prepare a fat calf. [51:27] When he offered it to them, he remarked, "Do you not eat?"

[58:11] O you who believe, if you are told, "Please make room," you shall make room for each other to sit. GOD will then make room for you. If you are asked to get up and move, get up and move. GOD raises those among you who believe, and those who acquire knowledge to higher ranks. GOD is fully Cognizant of everything you do.

[33:53] O you who believe, do not enter the prophet's homes unless you are given permission to eat, nor shall you force such an invitation in any manner. If you are invited, you may enter. When you finish eating, you shall leave; do not engage him in lengthy conversations. This used to hurt the prophet, and he was too shy to tell you. But GOD does not shy away from the truth. If you have to ask his wives for something, ask them from behind a barrier. This is purer for your hearts and their hearts. You are not to hurt the messenger of GOD. You shall not marry his wives after him, for this would be a gross offense in the sight of GOD.

From these verses and others, I understand that no one should enter the house of the host or hostess without permission. If invited to dine the invitation should be accepted and this should be done from rich and poor alike. We should make ourselves available at the appointed place and time except of course, if there are unavoidable

circumstances that prevent them. This intimation should be given to the hosts well in advance so that he or she would not land up with too much food or take unnecessary trouble. We don't have to go so early that we have to await the preparation of the food and come in the way of the hostess. Needless to say, rules of good manners and etiquette which exemplify our culture and upbringing should be observed. When the meal is over, guests should disperse without wasting the time of the host or hostess or causing any inconvenience to them on this account. There is no need to overstay your welcome – the hostess may be tired and there is a lot of cleaning up and washing to do. When we return to our homes we should not backbite or criticize our hosts even if we were not fully satisfied.

Extending invitations are a means of promoting friendly approach and close affiliation. Family and strangers, the affluent and the underprivileged should be taken as guests without discriminations. We have to be reasonable in our spending and avoid both the limits of lavishness and strictness. Also, invitations should not be given for any unlawful purpose.

Obviously, any frivolous act both on part of the host and guest which defeats the real purpose of an invitation should be avoided. Time should not be wasted in TP talk and gossip. This has a religious as well as social bearing because the Quran lays a lot of emphasis on respect, kindness, avoiding back-biting, slander, bad behaviour etc.

Tubu Ill Allah