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Etiquette of Dining in the Works of Central Asian Scholars

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A B S T R A C T
This article provides information about eating etiquette in the works of scholars Abu Zayd al-Dabusi, Abu Hamid Ghazali, Ali Safi, Jalaliddin Davvani. The information in these historical sources dictates the routine that is necessary in a person's daily life. At the same time, scientific conclusions and recommendations are given.

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INTRODUCTION

As we know from history, in every developed country, the position and influence of scholars and thinkers have been unparalleled. The country has always taken pride in its beloved and accomplished children, who have reached great heights. Since ancient times, our ancestors have contributed to world civilization through their intelligence, deep thinking, exceptional capabilities, and rich scientific heritage.

Unfortunately, during the period of the former regime, the scientific heritage of our famous scholars was studied in a one-sided manner. Their true value was not acknowledged in its rightful place. The works of these scholars contain valuable guidance, centered on human education and the idea of the perfect human, which have been a source of inspiration. Specifically, their reflections on human nutrition and eating habits have contributed to improving the daily lives of future generations, elevating food culture, expanding their worldview, and shaping their spirituality.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

One of our great scholars, Abu Zayd al-Dabusi (died 1039), wrote that one must thank Allah for all the blessings bestowed upon humans. "Gratitude is in the heart. Every blessing that comes from Allah Almighty is recognized through the heart"[2:53]. Therefore, a Muslim should, first and foremost, ensure to feed themselves, their parents, spouses, and children with lawful sustenance. The second principle of etiquette in eating is to wash one's hands before the meal. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (died 1111) wrote in his book *"O my son"* that "It is a sunnah to wash both hands before eating. One should not neglect this"[3:42]. Another scholar, Nasir al-Din Tusi (died 1274), wrote that before eating, "A person must wash their hands, face, and mouth and then approach the table"[4:238].

The third piece of etiquette is sitting comfortably around the table and eating without lying down or reclining, which could cause discomfort. Such behavior is not only improper but is also harmful to health, as modern medical professionals frequently emphasize. For example, Japanese scholars have concluded that if a person eats or drinks liquids while standing, they are more likely to develop certain diseases. This is because, while standing, the stomach opens upwards, and in a seated position, the stomach aligns properly, preventing any harm. According to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, "When eating at a table on the

ground, sit with the right knee raised and the left foot tucked under"[3:42].

The fourth principle of eating is not to overeat until the food reaches the throat. In fact, this is considered a bad habit. For this reason, Jalal ad-Din Davvani, in his book *"Akhlaq-i Jalali"*, writes: "Do not reach for the food first. Eat with three fingers, take small bites, do not swallow too quickly, and do not chew excessively. If there is delicious food on the table, do not overindulge"[2:180].

In many ancient Eastern cultures, it has been a long-standing tradition for the entire family to eat together. This is considered the fifth etiquette of dining. In general, if there is no obligation, it is better to eat with someone, and if the whole family eats together, it brings blessings to the family, as the ancients would say. Especially when hosting a guest, there is a special etiquette. The famous scholar Ali Safiy, who lived during the Timurid era, wrote the following in his book *"Odob ul-as'hob"*: In the "Etiquette of Banquets and Dining", there are ten rules of hospitality. These are as follows: the first rule is to host the poor, and not to prepare special feasts for the rich. The second rule is to show respect and honor to the guest. The duration of honoring a guest lasts up to three days. On the fourth day, one may not give too much attention. The third rule is to avoid overly decorating the house specifically for the guest. It is appropriate to place floral carpets under the guest. The fourth rule is to serve food to the guest quickly, and not waste bread or other foods. The fifth rule is to give permission for the guest to eat after the food is served.

The host should begin taking food first, and it is preferred that they do so. The last person to stop eating should be the guest. If the guest is an acquaintance of the host, they should not be the first to take food. The sixth rule is not to overly insist on the guest eating. This should only happen up to three times. The seventh rule is to make sure the guest is comfortable while eating, even if they intend to fast voluntarily. The eighth rule is to serve delicious and flavorful food to the guest. If the food is scarce and the host notices the guest's hunger, they should eat less themselves. After the meal, if the guest wants to leave, the host should give permission and accompany them to the door. The ninth rule is to offer whatever food is available in the house to the guest. The tenth rule is not to behave overly formally while eating; it should be done with good intentions.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS.

"When eating from the table, it is proper to take small bites before speaking. If there is food in the mouth, it is better not to talk. One should avoid actions that may disturb others, such as making noise, chewing loudly, or speaking while chewing, as these are considered inappropriate and disrespectful" (3:63). This is part of maintaining etiquette and showing respect to others. When there is food in the mouth, speaking not only looks inappropriate but also goes against etiquette. In such cases, it can disturb those around you, so it is recommended to remain silent while eating. Moreover, it is also important not to make others uncomfortable by criticizing or commenting on their food. Respecting the personal rights and dining customs of others means maintaining proper etiquette in society. Among our people, the following dining etiquettes are common:

- Never criticize food while eating;
- Picking up crumbs or spilled bread from the table and eating them;
- Avoiding food and drink that is either too hot or too cold;
- Not overfilling the mouth with food;
- Not rushing while eating;
- Not speaking with food in the mouth;
- Not behaving rudely while eating;
- Not speaking in a loud voice while eating;
- Being aware of others who are also eating;
- Not eating while lying down or leaning on the elbow;
- Cleaning the mouth and teeth after eating.

CONCLUSION

Dining etiquette serves to maintain order among people, strengthen relationships, prevent unpleasant situations, and protect health by avoiding excessive eating. Practicing dining etiquette teaches people not only to respect themselves but also to respect others. Teaching young people dining etiquette helps them develop their ability to communicate politely and maintain good manners. Furthermore, young people who embody proper etiquette are more valued in society and build good relationships with others. Through proper dining behavior, they learn to act appropriately and attentively toward others, contributing to the preservation of family and social values. Teaching young people dining etiquette plays an important role in their personal development and the enhancement of their social skills. Additionally, it is essential in promoting a healthy lifestyle. By teaching them to eat slowly and properly, we help protect their health, which will ultimately encourage them to improve their well-being in the future. Dining etiquette forms not only good individuals but also respectful and responsible members of society. Indeed, every good quality in a person draws others closer, while negative behaviors can push others away. Each of our habits serves as an example and reflection for others.

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