

AKHLAQ SYLLABUS - CLASS 9

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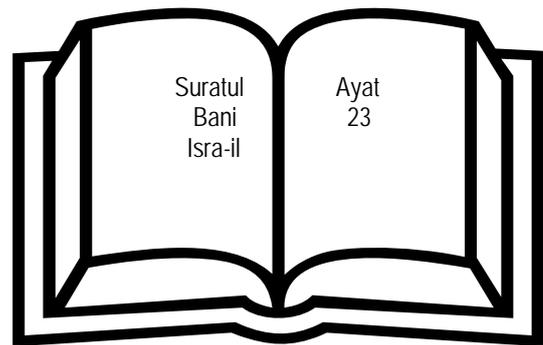
LESSON 1:

RESPECT TO PARENTS

Respect to parents is a topic taught to many classes in the Madressa. By now you must have studied it many times, but in this note, an attempt is going to be to make you understand just how vital and important their role is in bringing up you the individual, and the society as a whole. Allah has mentioned kindness to parents at 7 places in the Qur'an.

Allah tells us in Qur'an (Surah 17, Ayat 23)

"Your lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one of them or both of them become old in your life, do not say a word of contempt (uf) to them or repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: "My Lord! Bestow upon them your mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.""



The word "uf" is a very mild word, but Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (A) said that if a milder word were to exist in the language, Allah would have used it instead. One should never call parents by their names, but refer to them as mother and father.

A man once went to the Prophet (S) and asked him if there was any act worthy of Allah's mercy. The Prophet (S) asked him whether his parents were still alive, to which he replied yes. The Prophet (S) replied that the best deed worthy of Allah's grace was to be kind to parents since this was preferred over all acts.

It is said in Tafseer that one should pray to Allah that He may grant heaven to their parents, and if ones parents are committing any act with which would displease Allah, then we should pray that Allah helps them to reform and guides them.

Indeed, the first thing that Allah caused to be written on "Lauhe Mahfuz" was that *"I am Allah, and there is no god except Me. I am pleased with the man with whom his parents are pleased, and displeased with him whose parents are not pleased."*

The Prophet (S) once said to Imam Ali (A) that *"sitting in the company of parents for an hour is preferable to going for Jihad."* He further added, *"O Ali! If only a word is uttered with a view to pleasing the parents, Allah can be pleased."*

The word parents does not just refer to your natural parents, but also refers to those who have taken trouble to teach you, especially to those who have improved you as a person.

There are at least three sets of parents:

- The natural parents who caused your existence;
- The teachers who taught you; &
- The parents of the person you marry.

All these people have rights over you, so fulfil your duties to them as explained above. Now that we have seen how to respect our parents, we can discuss why we should respect them.

Parents have brought us up, but have taken part in our creation. Look at your house, would you say that the four walls, the roof and the floor are the only items, which make up your house? No you would not since the furniture, the colour scheme, also makes the house and most importantly, by those who live within it. In the same way, your parents did not create your body, but it was they who created your character and developed your thinking. They have lived for you. They gave you love and attention, they taught you the difference between right and wrong, they gave you food.

If there were ever a time when there was only enough food for one person, they would give it to the child. Your mother gave birth to you and nursed you in your infancy. Can you imagine the trouble and anguish parents go through, and if you ask them why, they will say that they wanted to give you a better start in life than they had. Then how can we not respect them, and how can we not love them? This is one of the reasons why Islam has said that,

"Heaven lies under the feet of your mother"

This means that if we displease our mother, we will never enter heaven, i.e. the way to heaven is through the pleasure of your parents.

This again is repeated when Allah says to one of the Prophets:

"I swear by My Honour that anyone who does not obey his parents, even if he comes with the deeds of the Prophets in front of Me, I will never accept him."

Duties to Parents

There are many ways to respect your parents, some of them are:

1. Never raise your voice at them.
2. Do not sit when they are standing.
3. Do not walk in front of them unless told to do so.
4. Do not speak when they are speaking.
5. Never correct them in front of others.
6. Do not displease them or make them angry.
7. Never insult, argue or shout at them.

When you wake up in the morning the first thing you should do is say "Salamun Alaykum" to your parents. These are all simple things, but how many of us actually do them. How many of us will actually stand and say "Salamun Alaykum" when our mother or father enters the room?

If your parents ask you to do something, like go shopping, you should not even show them that you are tired. You should not even cast a weary glance at your parents. That is why it is said:

*"Looking at the face of your parents with respect is like looking at the **Ka'ba**, the reward is the same."*

The displeasure of Allah is so great on those who displease their parents that the person who is disowned by his parents, he will never smell the fragrance of heaven. Also, if the parents are displeased with a child, and remain so overnight, and the day dawns with their displeasure, it will be as if two gates of hell have been opened for the son.

LESSON 2: DUTIES TOWARDS CHILDREN

We have spoken about respect to parents before and realise how important this topic is. But what about the children? Surely there must be duties towards which have to be fulfilled towards them.

Allah tells us in Qur'an,

“Oh you who are faithful, save your soul from burning in the fire of hell the fuel of which will be stones and men, by refraining yourselves as well as stopping your children and other members of your families from committing sins.”

This shows that one of the first duties towards children is to teach them what is right and what is wrong. This must be done by setting an example.

One of the duties of the parents to the children is to give education. This is first Islamic education, and then material education. This does not mean that all the children should be sent to Haws for years and years, but means that every child should have at least the basic principles of Islam taught to it, so that when it does learn its formal education it will know how to use its knowledge to serve Islam and the community.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said that we should treat our children fairly, love and be kind to them, and fulfil our promises to them, since we are their Sustainer, and they look to us for help.

The Prophet (S) was once walking and saw some children, he immediately shook his head and said that he was sorry for the parents of the children of the last age.

The people asked him, "Why, would they be non-believers?"

The Prophet (S) said, "No, it would not be that, but the parents would be such that they would not give training to the children in religious education, but would be pleased to teach them worldly education. He said that such people were not from him, and that he would not love them."

The Prophet (S) once said to Imam Ali (A)

"Oh Ali, there are as many rights of children wajib upon parents as there are rights of parents wajib upon children."

One of the first rights is to give the child a good name. This is so the child will try and emulate those who they are named after, or try and follow the meaning behind their name. The child has three stages of life before he is ready to walk fully into the world of "grown ups". Each stage is for seven years.

For the first 7 years of its life, the child is the **MASTER** and should be allowed to enjoy and play, without responsibility. This does not mean that you let it do whatever it wants, but should give it freedom with the boundaries of Shari'a. It should not be burdened with formal education, but should be taught by doing principal.

For the next 7 years, the child is the **SLAVE**. This means that now it should be taught responsibility should be taught rules of Islam and worldly knowledge. This does not mean that the child should be oppressed, but the things that it was allowed to get away with in the first seven years should now be restricted.

The final seven years are called the years of **MINISTRY**. This means that the child, or young adult should now start to work and help in the home. He should start to put back into the family all that he took out when he was growing.

The virtuous child is a flower from the flowers of paradise.

Islam lay so much stress on being kind to children that the Prophet (S) said, that,
"A good act is written in the record of the virtuous deeds for one who gives a kiss to his child."

Once a man came to the Prophet (S) and said: "I have never kissed a child." When he turned and left, the Prophet (S) said that "This stone-hearted person is one of the people of the fire."

This is part of a du'a written by our fourth Imam, Ali Zainul Abideen (A) can be found in Sahifa e Kamila.

One of his du'as for his children

O Lord, oblige me by sparing my children from death, by educating them for me and by blessing me with them.

My God, prolong their lives for me. Increase their terms of existence for me. Bring up those tender years for me. Strengthen the weak one for me. Heal their bodies, faith and morals. Let them be safe in soul and body and in everything I am anxious about concerning them. Let their sustenance flow into my hand.

Let them be virtuous, pious, able to see and hear, obedient to You, and lovers and well-wishers of Your friends and hostile to all Your enemies. Amen !

O Lord, strengthen my arm with them and straighten with them my crookedness.

Enlarge my number because of them. Adorn my society with them. Keep my memory alive by means of them. Make them care for my affairs in my absence. Help me with them to satisfy my need.

Let them love me, be kind to me. favourable, faithful, obedient, not disobedient, not wicked, nor adverse nor guilty.

Help me in training them, educating them and in doing good to them.

Grant me from You, male descendant from among them. Let this be a benefit to me.

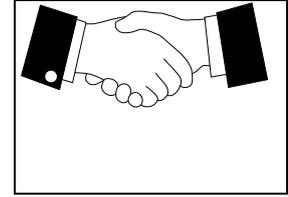
Let them be my helpers in whatever I ask of You. Protect me and my offspring from Shaitan, the stoned one. For verily You did create us and command us.....

LESSON 3: RECONCILING PEOPLE

Reconciling people means to bring two people, or groups back together after some incident has cause them to split or quarrel.

It is the duty of every Muslim to try and make peace between two parties which are known to him.

Allah says in Qur'an (Surah 49, Ayat 10)



The believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers: And fear God, that you may receive Mercy.



If a person can make peace between two parties at not cost to himself, but does not, then he is held answerable for not taking action.

If someone harms you, then you are entitled to harm them back to an equal degree, **BUT** it is better on your part to show your Akhlaq, to set an example, and forgive. This is also explained to us, where Allah says,

42:40: *The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): **BUT** if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, His reward is due from God: for (God) loves not those who do wrong.*

Imam Ali (A) also explains that to bring together to parties is also regarded as charity.

"Reconciliation between two parties is the best kind of charity".

There is a limit to reconciliation. Although Islam is a peaceful religion, it is not idle.

If there is someone who breaks the Shari'a of Islam, and breaks the rights of others, then this is the crime of Haqq-un-naas, and for this, action should be taken.

49:9: *If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel make you peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for God loves those who are fair (and just).*

What is the point of reconciliation?

The reason why we are told to bring people together is for unity. Islam is a universal religion, which brings together people regardless of physical differences. Only together can we survive, and prosper. If we let ourselves become divided, and quarrel against ourselves, then others will take advantage of this, and widen the divisions even more. Remember, the Prophet (S) explained to us, **"One who does not take interest in the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim".**

LESSON 4: SERVICE TO HUMANITY

By now, you have been taught, and explained that Islam is a religion for a community, to interact and bring the whole society together under one faith and to guard their rights.

Human beings have many qualities, which distinguish them from other animals. They have supreme intelligence, they can tell between right and wrong. One feature which humanity shares with many other animals is their ability to form and live together in large communities.

The spirit of consideration is the central force that binds the people together in a society. Human life without consideration is transformed into animal life, since every one is for himself, and it becomes survival of the fittest.

If a person cannot use his abilities to help others, and to guide them, then that person is leading a useless life. This service to others has been emphasised again and again in Islam. The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"One who does not take interest in the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim. And that person too is not a Muslim who hears a Muslim calling for help and does not respond to his call".

The reward offered for this service to humanity is so great, that few other deeds carry similar rewards.

"One who fulfils the needs of a brother Muslim is like one who has been worshipping Allah throughout his life".

Sometimes, you are asked for help, and you are not in a position to give it. Even in this circumstance, if your niyyat was pure then you are rewarded.

Our 5th Imam (A) has said,

"At times it so happens that a Muslim seeks help from another Muslim and the latter, though inclined to help him, is not in a position to do so; Allah will send him to Paradise for this very resolution".

Perhaps the best advice on service to humanity comes from Imam Husain (A) who explained to us,

"The requests which people make to you are blessings of Allah, so do not feel weary or uneasy".

There are many places where we have a chance to perform services for others. There are ample opportunities in our day-to-day lives, and also on occasions such as Haj. When we are in Haj, we need to show that unparalleled service to others, which is all part of the experience. Even if people take you for granted, or they insult you, remember that your niyyat is **for the sake of Allah (lillah)**.

LESSON 5: QARDH E HASANAH

This means to give a loan to those who require aid.

In Islam, there is a duty and a unity which should bind all Muslims, this duty should be so strong that material goods should be put aside to fulfil it.

If there is a person who has had the ability to be successful and has made a good and profitable business, then he should thank Allah for the opportunities which made him successful.

This thanks should not be just in prayers or in words, but in action. The best thanks to Allah, is by performing something which helps other human beings, because Allah is above any needs.

Allah has explained this concept of lending money to those who require it as a loan to Allah Himself. In Suratul Baqarah, Ayat 245, Allah declares:

"Who is he that will lend to God a fair loan so that He will multiply it to him manifold;....."

We should know that any loan which is lent to Allah will be paid back manifold (many times).

Allah also says in Qur'an, Surah 64, Ayat 17:

"If you lend to God a beautiful loan, He will double it to your credit, and He will grant you forgiveness: for God is most ready to appreciate service."

Since Allah has given you opportunities to be successful, you should go out of your way to provide opportunities for others.

If someone comes to you and asks you for financial or other aid, it becomes your duty to help him. You should lend him the required amount if you have the means, and give him further assistance.

However, this duty is mutual. The facility of Qardh e Hasanah is been provided by Islam so that the community as a whole can develop and prosper, while at the same time become more united.

Thus, the one who borrows the money should have the intention to pay it back as quickly as he possibly can, and should not delay. If he misuses the facility, then he is taking advantage of the system, and will cause difficulties for others.

What is the concept behind this giving, why is it so important ?

There is a saying that a man will manage to find sleep at night even though a relative may have died the previous day, but the day he has lost his money, he will never sleep.

This highlights particular vices which exist in a man's heart, greed and selfishness. If a man is able to lend a substantial amount of money, without any profit in return for himself, then he has conquered both these vices.

He has conquered the **SELFISHNESS** by letting the money out of his hands, to give others the chance of becoming successful.

He has also conquered the **GREED** because he knows he will earn no profit on the money, because to charge interest is Haraam.

We must always help our community and people at large, if we stop to ponder for a moment, tomorrow we will not be on this earth any more, but our book of deeds will remain open. If we leave behind us people who will remember us for helping them, we will still gain blessings. If on the other hand, the only memory that people have of us is our meanness, then on the day of Judgement, what will be the use of all our wealth and riches?

LESSON 6: DESTRUCTIVE EMULATION OF WESTERN CULTURE

Emulation means to copy someone or something, to try and become like that thing.

A culture is a way of living. Culture embraces the ways people live together, the food they eat, the general way they behave. Islam has a culture of its own, but leaves space to accommodate practises from other cultures, as long as they are within Shari'a (Islamic Law). This is why Islam is called a universal religion, because it has its own central core of behaviour, but allows the cultures of any nation in the world to mingle in.

We are living in a western world, and are surrounded by the western culture. All cultures have some good in them, and the western culture is no exception.

We, the children of the west, have to find how we can be proper Muslims in the western environment, without sacrificing any of our principles, but still adapting to the world we live in. We can do this by picking up the good points in the west. But, we must be careful because there are lots of elements which are against Islamic culture, and we should avoid those.

What we should **NOT DO** is follow that which our friends do blindly, and try and become totally western, this will lead to us losing our Islamic identity all together. We must always remember, we are **MUSLIMS FIRST**, and then anything else.

At school, we see a lot of ways that other people behave, and because we do not want to be the odd one out, we want to mix in and act in the same way. This idea is wrong. When we see the guys at school wear earrings, and start dressing up so that the girls can see them.

When we see this we should realise that this is not what Islam has taught us, and avoid such behaviour. In Islamic culture, you dress up well if you want to, not for others to see you.

Also we see that the guys at school have girlfriends, and go out to discos and parties. This is not the way we should behave. In the west, a girlfriend is only taken because of her looks. Every other week, a guy has a different girlfriend. Islam says that is wrong. When the time comes for a boy to get married, he will be introduced to girls who also want to get married, with similar ideas, not just a girlfriend for one or two weeks, but a companion for life. This is one reason why there are so many divorces in the western culture and so few in an Islamic culture.

There are certain habits which are quite common in the west which we should avoid. An example is when we go and play sports. We see that people change openly in the changing rooms displaying their private parts with no hint of shame, they take showers with nothing on.

Although there are only men in the changing rooms, in Islam, it is Haraam to expose your private parts to anybody, or to look at the private parts of others. This means that when you change, you should use a towel or something to cover yourself, if you take a shower, you should wear some type of swimming costume, so that you do not remain naked at any moment. You should also be careful not to look at others who are changing.

Do not let the west fool you. Most of the people in the west do not really believe in heaven or hell, they think that they will live on this world, and that will be it. That is why they try and have fun, and the only fun they have is physical, because they do not understand the soul at all. They satisfy their desires by going out with girls to parties, drinking alcohol and satisfying their lust.

A Muslim however realises that this world is only a moment, a twinkle in the eye compared to the life in the next world.

There is more to life than just physical pleasure. Islam does not say that you cannot have any pleasures, it just explains you that desires should only be satisfied within a marriage, and not like animals.

It is important that you understand this point.

We should not feel that "Why can they have fun, and we can't" because it stops being fun after a while. If you eat ice cream every day, then after a while you will be fed up of ice cream. You will not want any more. Similarly, Islam teaches us that our desires should be controlled. We should limit ourselves. If we let ourselves out of control like the western world, then we might have fun for a while, but soon we will ask ourselves "There must be more to life than just parties and girlfriends and pubs ?"

There is much more to life. Islam opens our eyes, and makes us look from a different point of view. If you imagine this life to be a maze. The western world tries to solve the maze by just walking through, taking things as they come. Islam takes you up, so that you can see the maze from above, so that you know which way to turn, and what to avoid. That is the only way to get through the maze.

Another habit we should avoid is smoking. Smoking is both dangerous and addictive. Islam has made smoking Makruh (one should avoid). We see boys and girls in our school smoking at lunchtime, or on the way home. Sometimes they come up to us and ask us if we want a *drag*. Do not be afraid to say NO! It does not matter what they think, whether you are a chicken or not, don't let yourself be pushed into trying things bad for your health, especially at such a young age.

Please remember, Islam really is a religion which will make man happy and content. Do not try and follow those things in the west which Islam does not allow, it might look and feel good for a while, but in the end you will realise the hard way.

LESSON 7: HUSNDHAN AND SU'UDHAN

These two words, which are antonyms, refer to opinion you have about others. People are of two types, those who always think bad of others, and those who try and think the best about others.

Husndhan means to have a good opinion about other people. Not to assume the worst about them, not to suspect their actions. If you see a Muslim talking with a girl who is Na-Mahram, and you then assume that he is having a date, or is of loose morals, then you have already dented his reputation in your eyes. If you tell others your opinion, you have committed Fitnah and Fasaad. You should give the benefit of the doubt. Even if such suspicions turn out to be true, who are you to spread other peoples' faults, when Allah has covered yours.

If a person assumes the worst of people's actions, then this is Su'udhan, and is a very bad habit. It leads to Fitnah and Fasaad, and other terrible deeds.

If for example, a person stands up and gives a few thousand pounds to a charity, I can think in two ways. Either I can think that this person has pride is just showing off all his money, or I can think that this person is sincere, and is setting an example for others to follow.

Qur'an (49:12) explains to us that we should avoid suspicion of others, since in some cases it can be a sin. This is true if start going and spreading rumours.

Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin

People who are narrow minded, don't want to do good themselves, and they don't want others to do it. They try and spoil peoples names at every opportunity. This is what Su'udhan leads to.

Allah will show His Anger at those who accuse others falsely. In the time of Prophet Salih (A), he was accused falsely, and he asked Allah for help. The verses below explains what happened.

23:39: *(The prophet) said: "O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood."*

23:40: *(God) said: "In but a little while, they are sure to be sorry!"*

23:41: *Then the Blast overtook them with justice, and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves (floating on the stream of Time)! So away with the people who do wrong!*

In conclusion, always give someone else the benefit of the doubt. Even if you know for sure that they have done something wrong, do not tell others. If Allah can keep our secrets, we should also try and keep the secrets of others. If you really want to do something, try and approach the person and persuade them that they are doing wrong. If you think that will fail, then talk to someone whom you think will be able to help. This is the concept of *Amr bil Ma'aruf* and *Nahy anil Munkar* (direct towards good, and persuade against evil).

LESSON 8: KADHMUL GAIZ

Kadhmul Gaiz means to swallow anger, to forgive others.

It is similar to forbearance but refers specifically to when you have been wronged, and is one of the most commendable acts in Islam.

There is a saying in English to "bury the hatchet", this means that instead of trying to get revenge (i.e. with the hatchet), just bury it and put it out of your mind. There is also another saying to "forgive and forget" which has a similar meaning.

This does not mean that you let people crook you left right and centre and then forgive them! It applies to those whom you have power over, or those who repent or have done the deed without intention.

Anger is a bitter pill to swallow, and is only managed with a strong will power. This can be seen by the following sayings of the Prophet (S),

"The strongest of you is he who overpowers himself when enraged and the most forbearing of you is the one who forgives when having overpowered his enemy."

"Do you consider the intense strength as being in the lifting of (a heavy) stone whereas in fact it is in overpowering oneself when filled with anger".

The way to swallow your anger is to "cool off".

"Verily anger is from Shaitan and the Shaitan is created from fire. And the fire is but extinguished with water. Therefore whenever one is overtaken with anger, he should make wudhu."

Wudhu has a calming effect on the body, and cools it down. It also makes us remember Allah, so we gain control over our self again.

Imam Ali (A) has said that:

"Should any of you be faced with anger, he should sit down if standing, should lie down if sitting."

All of us have done sins at some time in our lives, something that might have been worthy of punishment. But if Allah can forgive us with his infinite mercy, then what right have we be angry at others when they are sorry.

"Almighty Allah had said, Oh the son of Adam! Remember Me when in anger so that I remember you when you deserve my wrath and do not destroy you."

Also we are told in Qur'an,

3:133: *Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous. Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; **WHO RESTRAIN ANGER, AND PARDON (ALL) MEN;** for God loves those who do good.*

Imam Musa al Kadhim (A) was given the title AL-KADHIM for this reason. He is the ideal example of one who swallowed his anger. He was treated despicably and imprisoned by the oppressors right up to his martyrdom in prison, but he restrained his anger and bore it with patience.

Surah 42 Ayat 36 onwards explains

*"Whatever you are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this Life: but that which is with God is better and more lasting: (it is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, **WHEN THEY ARE ANGRY EVEN THEN FORGIVE;***

Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;

And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, His reward is due from God: for (God) does not love those who do wrong.

But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such there is no cause of blame."

LESSON 9: IKHLAAS

This means to be sincere and honest in all respects.

To be sincere means to really mean something when you say it, to really feel for something with your heart.

We should be sincere in all our actions, although this sounds very easy, it is one of the most difficult task ever set before us. Ask yourself, "*How sincere am I when I offer my prayers?*"

Why is it difficult to be sincere?

When Allah created man;

2:30: *Behold, your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They asked, "Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? While we do celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy (name)?" He said: "I know what you know not."*

This means that the angels were unaware of Allah's plan for his best creature.

The angels have intellect, but no desire, therefore they have no test upon them, they do what they are told, they have no will of their own. They can think, but there is nothing telling them to disobey Allah's command.

Allah created man and gave him a balance. In a universe where everything has an opposite, light and dark, good and bad,... Allah gave man *FURQAN*, the ability to judge between the opposites.

Allah then created that facet of our nafs which is receptive to the voice of Shaitan. It is in our innermost hearts and whispers evil thoughts into our mind. In Qur'an , Surah 104, Ayat 2,3, we ask Allah for protection from this whisperer, from the thoughts which it tries to implant into our minds. This is what we have to fight against.

Shaitan asked Allah to give him freedom until the day of Judgement. Allah agreed and Shaitan said that he will guide human beings away from Allah.

Surah 15 Ayat 36 onwards,

(Iblis) said: "O my Lord! give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised."

(God) said: "Respite is granted to you--

"Till the Day of the Time Appointed."

(Iblis) said: "O my Lord! because You have put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth, and I will put them all in the wrong--

"Except Your servants among them, SINCERE and purified (by Your grace)."

(God) said: "This (Way of My SINCERE servants) is indeed a Way that leads straight to Me.

"For over My servants no authority shall you have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow you."

And verily, Hell is the promised abode for them all!

So Shaitan is there waiting for us, his voice starts its whispering, praising us, and telling us how great we are. If we are not aware, our niyyat will change, and we will have lost all our sincerity.

When we pray our Salaat, we should be sincere. We should not try to hurry our prayers in the morning so that we can climb back into our beds. We should think for a while, that we are thanking the One who gave us life. Put your hand on your chest, feel your heart beat and remember the force which caused it into motion. That is the force we are worshipping.

Then this voice starts whispering, telling you how warm your bed is, how tired you are.

When we are in public, our niyyat is under attack by this same voice. Instead of telling you to pray fast, it will now tell you to pray slowly, so that others can see what a pious person you are.

Allah says in Hadith e Qudsi *"I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to be discovered, therefore I created."*

A treasure is something we benefit from, whether it is knowledge, wealth etc..

Allah is a hidden treasure, but He has left plenty of clues (signs) to how He can be discovered. Qur'an is full of advice about the signs of Allah, of how we can reach him. The secret of finding the path is to keep your niyyat sincere, to make your every action honest and for the pleasure of Allah.

This will work both ways, because Allah has told us that when we remember Him, He will also remember us. Surah 2 Ayat 152

Then you do remember Me; I will remember you.

By being sincere in our actions we will receive an inner strength from Allah, a way of looking at things which is superior to the gaze blinded by worldly goods. We will find more of a purpose in our life, and a contentment and harmony where we will find ourselves at peace with everything around us.

Once we overcome that whisper, then our ears will only receive true guidance. It takes a little bit of effort, but the reward is beyond imagination.

LESSON 10: LEADING A MORAL LIFE

Let us first define morals, as *"concerned with the distinction between right and wrong."*

Islam is a religion which is sent as a gift from Allah to mankind, to bring them together in peace and harmony. This can only be done if the morals of the community are pure.

Therefore in order to have a peaceful life, Islam has given man a set social values (morals) so that each individual and thus the whole community can build up a moral character.

How are we to live a moral life ?

Each of us has a responsibility to the other, to maintain justice, to respect the rights of the other.

In the Holy Qur'an (Surah 49, ayats 11,12) Allah explains to us certain ways of behaving:

"O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other by (offensive) nicknames..."

*Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs (gheebat).
Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother ?"*

There are countless ways to behave in a community, the essence of all moral behaviour is in **CONSIDERATION**. If one considers the needs of others, then he will not do anything to cause further hardship.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"Prefer for people that which you prefer for yourself."

In a very short Surah (Suratul Asr) Allah explains the way the whole of mankind should behave.

Ayat 2:

"Verily Man is in a loss."

This is thought to refer to the day of Judgement when Allah will raise man from his grave to answer about his life, some men will say that they had lived an **IMMORAL** life, and these men will be in a loss. Some men will reply that they had been very good themselves and established regular prayers, **THESE MEN TOO WILL BE IN A LOSS.**

Ayat 3:

"Except for such as have Faith, AND do righteous deeds, AND join together in the mutual teaching of Truth, AND of patience."

This shows that being good by yourself is not enough, you must lead such a life so as to serve and teach the community by guiding them towards the truth and enjoining them towards good. This is known as Amr bil Ma'aruf (direct towards good) and Nahy anil Munkar (persuade against evil).

The set of morals given to mankind by Allah is reflected in the behaviour (Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet and Imams (may Allah bestow peace upon them.)

Once Imam Ali (A) was asked what a person's morals should consist of, he answered:

*"When powerful, he forgives easily.
He is generous in appropriate ways.
His behaviour is gentle.
His actions and walk reflect modesty.
People enjoy his affection and calmness.
He is ready to bear pain in order to comfort others.
In friendship he is sincere.
He honours his promises.
He helps the oppressed and is concerned about the deprived.
He does not abandon those in distress; he tries to relieve their burdens.
He respects the rights of those who are absent.
He accepts the apologies of those at fault.
He assists those who have assisted him.
He does not divulge (tell) peoples' secrets.
He does not inquire into secret affairs which do not concern him.
He sets a good example for those who succeed him.
His good deeds are not performed for the sake of being boastful.
He does not fall into the same difficulty twice."*

Also, in the du'a for excellence in morals, Imam Ali Zainul Abedeen (A) has written:

"Oh Allah, advance my faith to the greatest perfection. Let my belief be the most excellent of beliefs. Let me be honoured, but do not let me fall prey to pride. Issue from my hands good to mankind, but do not let it be undone with reproaches. Give me excellent morals and save me from boasting. Give me grace to behave with sincere good-will to him who was insincere to me."

Let us try to change these words into actions.

LESSON 11: FORBEARANCE

To forbear means to have patience and tolerance. The Arabic word for this is *HILM*.

In life, there are always times when problems arise, difficulties mount up. When such problems occur, a person can do ONE OF TWO THINGS.

1. He can try his best to tackle the problem and put it behind him, or
2. He can sit and complain, and wait for the problem to disappear itself, (if it ever does).

If the person tries to solve the problem, then that is called positive action, and he will have at least a chance of success. However if his attitude is negative, the problem will remain, and the person will just keep feeling sorry for himself.

Allah only helps those who help themselves, so if a person complains to Allah, and says "Why does it have to be me ?" then he has very little faith. This is because, when a misfortune falls upon us, Allah is testing us. In Qur'an Allah tells us that do we think it is enough to say that we are believers, and not be tested ?

It is like in a competition. If a person says that they can break the world record, do you think people will say " O.K., here is the gold medal. Thank you very much." **Of course not!!** They will test him to see if he can really do what he says.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"Let your wailing not cancel your reward. Were you to witness the reward of your misfortune, you would have come to know that it is smaller than the greatness of the reward of which Allah has promised for the people who submit (to His will) and bear (misfortunes) with patience."

Thus to forbear, after trying your best to help yourself, is an act of faith, because Allah has PROMISED us that we will be tested, and that is a difficulty we must overcome.

If we forbear and have patience in difficulty, we pass the test, and we are promised comfort because Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, Surah 94, ayat 6:

"Verily, with every difficulty there is relief."

Therefore, if we forbear, then the problem will sort itself out with the grace of Allah.

Forbearance is not just when calamity befalls you, but also when you have been wronged. There are very few feelings which give as much sweet satisfaction as revenge over someone who has harmed you.

It is not easy to forgive such a person, especially when you are in a position to give back.

To forbear in these circumstances requires a strong will power, this is shown by the following saying of the Holy Prophet (S),

"The strongest of you is he who overpowers himself when enraged and the most forbearing of you is the one who forgives when having overpowered his enemy."

In an Islamic society, it is the lady who has to put up with the most inconvenience; this **IS NOT** because of any status level. Allah has enjoined jihad upon both man and woman.

"The Jihad for man is in the sacrifice of his wealth as well as his own life till he is killed in the way of Allah."

We know the reward of jihad is so great, this reward also goes to the lady for her jihad, which she faces everyday.

"And the Jihad for woman is in bearing with patience with what discomfort she is faced with from her husband and his companionship."

FITNA AND FASAAD

This means to spread rumours, and tell lies about people, with the niyyat (intention) of damaging their reputation.

It is like backbiting, except that the rumours are totally unjustified and untrue.

Another word for fitna and fasaad is **slander** (spoil someone's name)

Imam Hassan (A) has said:

*"If a person comes to you and speaks ill of someone else, you should know that he is actually speaking ill of you. It is worth while to regard such a person as your enemy, and not to trust him, for lying, backbiting, trickery, deceit, jealousy, hypocrisy, duplicity and creating dissension go **hand in hand** with slander"*

Imam Ali (A) has said:

"The worst of you are those who slander and create discord among friends. They will find fault with the innocent."

Slandering is such a bad deed, that the Holy Prophet (S) said that:

"A slanderer will not enter paradise."

Slandering is Haraam because it damages someone's reputation, it is unfair on the one who is being slandered because people will think he has done things which he has not.

Slandering breaks the community, and cause enmity and hatred. It is one of the worst sins, and goes hand in hand with gheebat and other social crimes.

The only people who slander are cowards, if they see someone with whom people are good, they become jealous and want to tarnish his reputation. They do not have the courage insult face to face, and so go around like snakes slithering and whispering rumours in the dark.

TREACHERY

This means to betray somebody. If you make a promise to help somebody, then just when they need you, you let them down, then this is an example of treachery.

During the time of Imam Hassan (A), Muawiya came to Ju'da, the wife of Imam (A), and offered her One Hundred Thousand Dirhams as well as the hand of his son Yazid, in marriage, if she would poison Imam.

Ju'da pretended to be loyal to Imam, after all she was his wife. She offered Imam (A) a drink in which she had already put poison. Imam (A) accepted and drank.

After forty days Imam Hassan (A) died from the poison, and Ju'da went to Muawiya to collect her payment. She received the money but Muawiya did not let her marry Yazid, since if she could **BETRAY** one husband, she could also **BETRAY** another.

This is an example of TREACHERY.

One reason why treachery is haraam is because when someone depends on you, or believes in you, you are responsible for his well being. Now, to turn around and do him harm when he doesn't expect it is to take advantage of him, and this is what is so bad.

There is a saying in English that treachery is like "stabbing someone in the back."

LESSON 12: CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Allah created us all, and made us the inheritors of the earth. He gave us the world and all the creatures within so that we may live and prosper by using them, not abusing them. He mentions in Qur'an

6:165 » It is He who has made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth:

This shows that we must look after our planet, and find ways of cleaning up the mess and damage we cause to it.

When you are given something, it is important that you use it properly, only then will it last. If you abuse something, then it will work for a while, but in the end it will get bad and it will have to be thrown away.

Our world is getting used, and abused. We can not throw that away. We only have one world, our world, and only by keeping it clean can we make sure it lasts. The same way we inherited the earth from our ancestors, we have to look after it so that we can hand it down in good condition to the next generation.

Consider your house, you live in it, you sleep in it. What would happen if you did not bother to clean up the mess you make, the dishes, the clothes, the dust, the dirt. If this was not dealt with, then the house would soon become uninhabitable. There is no point just sweeping everything under the carpet since that is a short term solution, you must clear the rubbish and remove it totally.

This planet has about 4 billion people, if we do not clear our rubbish, then where can we go when it becomes too polluted to live in?

How can we do things to keep our world clean ?

We can start thinking, start realising that we should not waste things. The more we waste, the more we throw away. This all adds up. We should try not to use chemicals which damage the ocean and the sky, we should throw things in their proper places, and not on the streets, or out of the windows. Just imagine, if everyone threw their rubbish on the street. It would all add up and there would be an awful mess. We are not the only creatures on the planet. We have to share this world with the rest of Allah's creatures.

Everything in this universe is created by Allah, and serves His purpose. We must respect these, and use them sparingly without waste.

We should even respect the plants since Allah explains us

55:6 » And the herbs and the trees-both (alike) bow in adoration.

Let us not make so much mess that the rest of the creatures become poisoned and hurt because of our selfishness.

What examples of Environmental Pollution can you think of ?

Is it just commercial industry that causes pollution, or is it the individual consumer?

What solutions, both long term and short term can you think of to prevent pollution?

LESSON 13: TAKKABUR, RIYAA AND UJB

These are some of the major faults in a person's character.

Takkabur means to think of oneself as BETTER than someone else, to have **PRIDE**.

Riyaa means to **SHOW OFF** to others

Ujb means to have **SELF CONCEIT**, to like oneself too much.

These three topics are all related and deal with one aspect, a person's **ego**.

A person's ego is the way he thinks about himself.

As soon as we achieve something good, or as soon as we are praised, a feeling of joy reaches us, if we are not careful, this feeling can soon turn to pride.

Our Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"Pride enters the heart like a black ant crawling over a black rock at night."

This shows how easily pride can overtake us.

Pride is known as one of the diseases of the soul. It is caused by a lack of belief in God. You see, if you become proud, you feel that you have accomplished all your deeds by yourself, you forget that Allah was the one who guided you.

If we ever achieve anything good, we should be pleased, but there is an important point to note, we should be pleased by the RESULTS of what we have achieved, not by the fact that WE have achieved it.

However, our nafs starts whispering to our hearts that we have done something great and it tells us how wonderful we are and carries on praising us etc ..etc. This causes us to start showing our greatness to others (Riyaa), to show them what brilliant individuals we are.

All of you must have had the occasion of seeing someone in your life, and who after looking at him for a few seconds, said, "That guy is nothing but a show-off".

If we want to continue being successful in the future, the FIRST thing we should do is remember Allah. In the du'a after Asr prayers we say to Allah

"My Lord , whatever talents I have got, it is but from You."

If we want to remain humble, we should always remember this sentence and say it to ourselves **EVERY** time we do something good, or come first or win something. That way we will stop our nafs from praising us, and make it praise Allah. We also realise that we have nothing to show off about, since we have only been able to accomplish what we have with the help of Allah.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH PRIDE ?

Apart from isolating yourself from others because you think yourself superior, pride is also bad for you on an **intellectual level**.

If you become proud of what you know, or have done, you will think yourself as being one of the greatest, therefore you will not try to improve. However, if you think that you have plenty of room for improvement, then you will try harder and harder until you achieve better results.

In the time of Prophet Musa (A), there was an instance that he thought to himself, Oh Musa, indeed you have reached the pinnacle of mankind, there is no one alive on the earth today who knows as much as you do.

He did not utter these words, they only flicked through his mind.

Allah immediately told Angel Jibraeel, Go and save Musa from himself.

This was when Prophet Musa (A) was told to go and seek Khizr, someone who was alive and knew more than Musa. He was told to go and learn from him. By doing this, Musa understood that there was someone else who knew more than him, and so was saved from becoming proud.

Pride was the reason that Iblis (Shaytan) was removed from Allah's mercy, and is a lesson to all of us who become proud.

When Allah created Adam, he commanded the whole of creation to bow to him, all of them except Iblis did this. Iblis replied to Allah, I am made from fire, and Adam is made from clay, there fore *I am **BETTER** than him*. Allah immediately removed Iblis from His mercy and told him to begone.

In Islam we are told that one man is no better than another.

In Islam, there is nothing wrong with being successful, or a leader of others, the only point to remember is that greatness is a test to see how we can cope, as long as we are aware that it was with Allah's help that we became great, and realise that we are not superior to our fellows then we will pass the test.

Our 4th Imam (A) says in Sahifa e Kamila:

"O Lord, do not honour me even one degree among the people unless You lower me to an equal amount in my own soul.

Create for me no outward respect unless You have created for me an equal amount of HUMILIATION in my spirit."

The opposite of arrogance/pride is humility. How can we be humble, does it mean sitting on a prayer mat, reciting all the time ?

No, it does not. Imam Ali (A) has said :

"From the signs of humility is to be content with any place in an assembly, to salute when you meet, to abandon quarrels and discord even if you were on the right; and not to except (love) praise for your fear of Allah."

WHY SHOULD WE ABANDON PRIDE AND TRY TO BE HUMBLE ?

By being humble, we are showing to the world that Allah has created all men equal, whether they are black, brown, white or yellow.

We are showing that the only person who is greater in the eyes of Allah is the person who has taqwa (ashamed of displeasing Allah).

The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"Indeed, humility exalts a man's position with Allah. Thus be humble and Allah will shower you with mercy."

The final stage of pride is Ujb. When you actually start thinking and believing that you are superior to the rest. When you have too high an opinion of your own ability, beauty etc.. This is called self conceit. It is at this stage that you start spending too much time in admiring yourself in front of the mirror.

When a person reaches the stage that he thinks that there is no one like him, then he is lost. He has built a wall around himself and is totally cut off from the outside world. He is living in his own dream world.

LESSON 14: ABUSIVE LANGUAGE, INSULTS, SARCASM AND IMPERTINENCE

To use abusive language means to swear or insult someone. This is so obviously wrong, but surprisingly it is a common habit especially amongst the youth.

Let us consider the use of such language, and what purpose, if any, it serves.

Most people swear when something bad happens to them, or when someone does something that they don't like. These people say that the actual swearing helps them to control their anger, and stops them from doing other things which might be even worse.

This argument is logical, but Islam rejects it because a person who cannot restrain his anger, without using foul language must have a very weak will power. The most noble person according to Islamic etiquette (akhlaq) is that person who can control his anger, and even manage to look happy.

To use swearing as a means of insulting someone is unjustified under any circumstances. Islam teaches us NEVER TO INSULT. If someone has wronged us, we should either take action, or tell them that we do not like what they say; but to insult them is to stoop to a very low stage, and Islam does not accept that a person should become so undignified.

To be sarcastic to others, and tease them also shows that part of a person's character is faulty. It may only feel like a joke, but think for a moment. Pretend that you were them. Would **YOU** like someone calling you names all the time, making life miserable for you. Would **YOU** like some laughing when you fell down, or someone telling tales at you. Would **YOU** like people making fun of your family, or the colour of your skin, or at the way you are.

Below are a few sayings of Imam Ali (A) about the danger of the tongue. Look over them, and think about their meaning.

"Nothing else need to be restrained and kept under control but the tongue".

"Whosoever desires to remain safe should guard against what comes out of his tongue".

"Take care of your tongue".

"Woe be upon you! Will people be with their noses prostrated in hell fire except for reasons of what they had reaped out of (misuse) of their tongues".

"The one from whose tongue people are afraid of is from the inmates of hell fire".

"Salvation of the believer lies in guarding his tongue.

The above sayings give you an example of the dangers of verbal abuse.

One other point that needs mentioning is impertinence. This means to give *cheek*, or disrespectful answers back to people who are talking to you.

If someone is talking to you, whether he is telling you off or not, you should never be rude in your replies. If you are innocent then explain yourself, but to answer back to a parent or a teacher in such a manner is an inexcusable example of bad akhlaq.

The respect which parents and teachers command over you is very great, and you are not supposed to even show them displeasure, let alone answer back to their face.

Impertinence just proves that you have a poor character. It may make you feel big in class for a while, but at the end of the day, you will have lost all your respect in front of your elders.

LESSON 15: BETRAYING SECRETS

Secrets are something which every human being possesses. They are affairs that they would rather not disclose to others, due to embarrassment, shame, guilt or such reasons.

When someone tells you a secret, they are trusting you with something very important, and we do not realise this.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said that:

"He who keeps no pledge has no religion".

In the Holy Qur'an Surah 8 ayat 27 Allah says:

"O ye that believe! betray not the trust of God and the apostle, nor exploit knowingly things entrusted to you"

If someone was to hand over some money to you, and say "Please look after this, don't give it to anybody."

Now, if you agreed, and then were to go and give that money to someone else, you would be breaking your word, even if you were to get the money back.

It is the same with a secret, it is something entrusted to you, (AMANAT), and you do not have any right to disclose it to anyone else.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said that:

"Four things when allowed to enter a house become the cause of spoiling and depriving it of prosperity,"

of those four things, one of them is *the breach of trust*.

He also said:

"A hypocrite is recognised by three signs:

- 1. He lies when he talks,*
- 2. He breaks promises,*
- 3. He betrays when trusted."*

If someone reveals a secret to you, and you feel that by telling someone else, you may be able to help him, what to do you do ?

In this case, it is not a sin to tell the other person's secret, as long as you do not give his identity, and that you SINCERELY feel that it is for his good.

One thing we should always remember, Imam Ali (A) has told us, if we can not keep our secrets to ourselves, and tell others, how can we expect them to guard our secrets, when we ourselves cannot !!

ADULTERATION IN MERCHANDISING

Adulteration means to make something IMPURE, to CONTAMINATE IT.

Merchandising refers to TRADING in goods, commodities.

Thus, adulteration in merchandising means to make something which you sell, impure or reduce its value in some way.

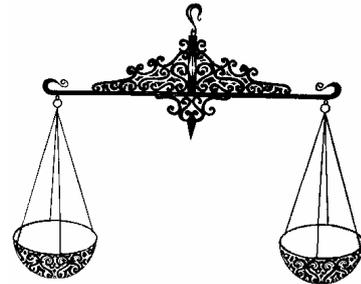
It is a form of cheating.

It is haraam because:

- (i) the one who is doing the cheating is gaining something at someone else's expense.
- (ii) the one who is doing the cheating is gaining without working for it.

In a market, if someone comes to buy rice, and it is weighed out for them on a scale. If the weights of the scale have been "*fiddled*" so that the person gets less rice, then that person is paying you MORE for LESS rice. As a result you are gaining extra money, and he is losing it.

One thing about cheating is that no matter how many people you cheat, or how well you can cheat, you can never cheat yourself or Allah. If you are cheating someone, your conscience (the second stage of nafs) will realise immediately.



In Qur'an Allah tells us of Prophet Shuaib's words to his people (Surah 7, ayat 85)

"Oh my people !.... Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due:.."

On the day of Judgement, you will have to answer to Allah, and you will also be judged according to a scale, according to the weight of your good and bad deeds, and **cheating is one of the heaviest of bad deeds.**

LESSON 16: ANGER

The arabic word for anger is pronounced as *Ghazb*.

Anger is a disease of the soul. It causes many problems which we will discuss below.

Anger is defined as "**extreme displeasure**", which means to be annoyed at someone's words or actions.

When a person becomes angry, he is on the verge of losing control over his mind, he can become violent and break things, he can say things which he will be sorry for later on.

This is why it is very important to be able to control yourself when angry, since you can destroy, beyond repair, with a few words something which may have taken years to form.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"Do you consider the intense strength as being in the lifting of (a heavy) stone whereas in fact it is in overpowering oneself when filled with anger".

This shows how difficult it is to control yourself during anger.

Anger is also very dangerous. Many people lose their mind when angry, and start fighting, and shouting. They become violent, beyond reason. Later on, after cooling down, they realise that the things that they have said have spoilt their own name, and have made people think badly of them. This is why Imam Ali (A) has said:

"Anger is a fire kindled: he who restrains it, puts it out; but he who lets it loose, is the first that is consumed by it."

That shows that the person who cannot control his anger will be the first to be damaged by what he says, or does.

It also illustrates that there is no benefit in becoming angry. The person who grows angry, wastes his energy, at the same time he is the loser at the end of it all.

What should we do when we become angry, how can we control ourselves ?

The first thing to do is to calm down.

The way to do this is explained by the Holy Prophet (S) in his words:

"Verily anger is from Shaytan and the Shaytan is created from fire. And the fire is but extinguished with water. Therefore whenever one is overtaken with anger, he should make wudhu."

Wudhu has a calming effect on the body, and cools it down. It also makes us remember Allah, so we gain control over our self again.

Imam Ali (A) has said that:

"Should any of you be faced with anger, he should sit down if standing, should lie down if sitting."

What is anger caused by ?

Anger is caused by many circumstances, examples of which are pride, and stubbornness.

If you are wrong, and someone tells you, you can either accept it or become proud and insist that you are correct. This can lead to anger because you refuse to admit that you are wrong.

This anger is so bad, that it spoils the rest of your deeds, Imam Ali (A) has said that:

"Ill-temper spoils good actions just as vinegar spoils honey."

If you put one drop of vinegar in honey, you spoil the honey; so as soon as you get angry, you spoil your deeds by the way you act.

"The strongest of you is he who overpowers himself when enraged and the most forbearing of you is the one who forgives when having overpowered his enemy."

This shows us that even if we have a right to be angry, we should forgive the person who deserves our anger. And Allah reminds us of this because we have all committed deeds which He is not pleased with:

"Almighty Allah had said, Oh the son of Adam! Remember Me when in anger so that I remember you when you deserve my wrath and do not destroy you."

If we remember Allah when we are angry, and forgive our enemies, He will also remember us on the day of Qiyamat, and Inshallah, forgive us.

LESSON 17: THE STAGE OF BECOMING BALIGH

When Allah created the human being, he created it in a way so that it grows up in stages.

It is totally dependant when it is born, then as it grows it gains knowledge, it learns the ways of the world. Then it reaches a stage where it has been taught how to live, and what to respect. It has been taught what is right and what is wrong. It is now ready to take on the responsibility of being an adult. It is no more a child, nor has it reached adulthood. This stage, when a child is changing into an adult is known as becoming baligh or adolescence.

In English, people translate baligh as the state of puberty, however this is not adequate. Baligh means responsibility, it is a combination of becoming an adult **BOTH** physically and mentally.

What are the signs of becoming baligh ?

There are three signs (for males), **ANY ONE** of which can confirm whether the person is baligh or not.

1. If the boy has reached the age of 15 (lunar years) or 14½ years in the solar calendar, then he should be considered as baligh, whether or not he has seen the next two signs.
2. Growing of **HARD** hairs around the private parts. **SOFT** hairs are **NOT** considered as signs of becoming baligh.
3. If there is a "wet dream." This means that during the boys sleep, he has a dream of some sort, and there has been some discharge of thick liquid which is not urine. This liquid is called semen, and it is recognised by its milky colour, and it has a strong smell like yeast.

*It is important to realise, that a person **MUST** perform Ghusl of Janaabat when semen is released at any time, whether or not it is a voluntary discharge. Without this Ghusl, the person will be in a state of impurity (janaabat), and will not be able to offer any prayers or fasts.*

If the person is not sure whether he is baligh or not, then he has to wait until he is sure, or one of the other signs take place.

What does becoming baligh mean ?

The first point to realise, is that becoming baligh is natural. You are not the only one. All boys go through this stage somewhere between the ages of 13 - 15.

When we are baligh, it becomes **WAJIB** to perform all the actions that are laid down by Islam, and **HARAAM** to do the things that Islam forbids. This means that Salaat, Saum (fasting), Hajj, Khums are all now wajib.

The next thing to realise is that when you become baligh, you will feel certain emotions that you have not felt before.

The body goes through physical changes, you are changing at a tremendous rate. All your glands are working like mad, creating chemicals which flow through your blood, your liver is like a chemical factory, and your cells are all working overtime. These chemicals are sending messages to your body, your cells, telling them that the time has come to grow. Your body will start to change. Your muscles will become stronger, and bigger and you will start to get hair growing around your face, all over your body, at the abdomen, around the private parts, and under the arms. Your body will become more masculine.

Another important point about becoming baligh is that your nafs will start trying to misguide you through your desire. When you are baligh, any pictures, or anything which is about sex may cause you to become aroused. This is why we should keep away from rude magazines or television programmes, even rude jokes, because they cause our desire to grow.

To have sexual relations is a natural part of any human society, but only within the boundaries of marriage. Desire **MUST BE** controlled, if it is let free, it becomes LUST, which is a powerful force and can easily control a person's actions.

If we let ourselves be controlled by our desire, then we will ruin our soul. Our mind will become a slave to lust, and our life will be ruined.

Why do we become Baligh?

We become baligh at an age when we should be responsible. Responsible for what?

When we are baligh, our body creates sperm cells which are stored in a liquid called semen. When girls become baligh, they produce another type of cell called the egg cell (or ovum). When a sperm cell and an egg cell meet, then this is called fertilisation, and is the beginning of a new human being. Those two cells will now fuse, to become one cell, and grow to become a child, who will have the characteristics of both the mother and father through both cells. So, we become baligh so that we are able to marry and have children. This makes sure that human beings carry on surviving.

We must however be RESPONSIBLE because certain things can cause us to lose control of our desire. Watching television programmes with rude scenes, reading books which cause arousal, magazines, attending discos or "wild" parties. All these things can lead us towards the path of lust, and so should be avoided.

LESSON 18: GOING TO THE CINEMA AND WATCHING FILMS

In our society, there has always been misunderstandings about the cinema and the theatre.

The cinema is a place where films are shown to the public. People often say that the cinema is Haraam, Haraam, Haraam.

The reason some people say this is because when your parents were your age, the cinema was predominantly used for films which contained songs and dance. For this reason, the cinema was looked at as Haraam and those who went there were told that they should not.

Today, we have television inside our houses, and can see anything we want to. Thus the question of watching or not watching does not apply any more, it is rather a question of what we watch.

Think of it as a restaurant. To go to a restaurant to eat becomes Haraam only if the food they serve is Haraam. However if the restaurant serves halal food, then there is no problem to go and eat there. Therefore it doesn't matter whether we go to a restaurant or a not, it is what we have to eat that is important.

In the same way it doesn't matter whether we go to the cinema or not, but it is **IMPORTANT** what we watch there.

If we go to see a film which shows offensive scenes such as people acting shamelessly, wearing hardly any clothes, then of course it becomes Haraam.

If we go to watch films which are of educational interest or for fun, where we actually gain in some way without seeing anything Haraam, then we are allowed to see those films.

We should not go so often that we just pass our time, and waste it.

Unfortunately, the majority of films today are aimed at the desires of the youth. These films show scenes which encourage youngsters to think and practise those thoughts which should be kept under control by the youngster's own will power. These films are Haraam because they influence the actions of the one who watches them. They make the desires of the nafs so strong that it becomes very difficult to control, and eventually, the mind will give in and become the slave of our desires rather than our intellect.

One point which people often bring in, is that today, all films and programmes contain music. If the film contains music such that the music is one of the important parts of the film, then those programmes should be avoided.

However if the music is in the background, and is not the central theme of the programme, then it is permissible to watch them. This is because according to the fatwa (verdict) of both Ayatollah Al Khomeini (may Allah rest his soul) and Ayatollah al Khui (may Allah keep him well), background music is allowed. This also applies to watching television in our own homes.

At the end of the day, if we want to go to see a film, we must ask ourselves why. If the film will be fun, but will still contain sections which would go against our principles, then we should avoid them. In the cinema, you are exposed to whatever is on the screen, you can not switch it off like a television, nor can you forward it like on a video. It is very rare to find a film that contains no sections which should be avoided.

You can't trick yourself by saying, I don't know what its about. There are films which are obviously funny, but make jokes which are filthy and crude. Those are not the films you should watch, since they provide a negative influence over you.

Then there are films which are decent, and respectable, where you will gain an insight into human behaviour, develop your imagination, or learn and at the same time have fun. Those films are allowed since they have a positive effect.

In this way Allah has given you a test, can you control your nafs from tempting you to watch X rated films, or will it control you?

There is no 18 certificate or Adult rating in Islam, if a film is obscene, shameless or pornographic than it is Haraam for all to see, whether they are 5 years old or 50.

You will notice, at first it will be very difficult to refrain, but as soon as you make your mind up and be firm, you will feel as if your character has improved a hundred times, and you will not even be tempted any more. You will ask yourself, how can I have let that nafs of mine have so much control over something which I can now see to be so childish and so material?

LESSON 19: MUSIC AND ITS EFFECTS

Islam does not recommend or encourage music amongst a community. This may sound a drastic step to take, but we shall discuss some of the reasons in the text below.

Why do people listen to music? It is obvious they enjoy it, and the reasons for this may include passing time, as a form of relaxation, it is a fashionable habit to have.

There may not seem anything wrong in that, but as we go into further detail the reasons should become clear.

First of all, we must try to understand the concept of Halaal and Haraam.

Human beings are highly versatile and can adapt to different situations easily, so it is very rare that everyone will react to an influence in exactly the same way. Thus all human beings may not be affected by a **tiny bit of alcohol**, or a **little music** to the same degree.

However, Islam is a religion for all the people **AS WELL** as the individual. Therefore, if there is something that affects a large percentage of the people in an undesirable manner, such as alcohol causing drunkenness and disorder, then Islam will make it Haraam at the very beginning on the basis that **"PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE."** This means that it is better to stop something bad happening in the first place rather than doing something about it after it happens. This approach is common sense.

Allah also says in the Holy Qur'an, that some things in small quantities do have good effects for us, but the bad effects outweigh the good, therefore overall it is harmful and so forbidden.

They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." Thus doth God make clear to you His Signs: in order that you may consider. Surah 2:219

Now back to music. What is undesirable about music ?

Music has an affect on the mind and the body. The effect depends on the type of music.

With some types of music, soft and soothing, one relaxes and opens up the mind, closes the eyes, and lets the music "flow" through the body. This causes the heart beat and other electric signals of the body to start adapting to the beat of the music, and this can cause disorder.

With other types of music, the mind is almost possessed. Very often, with loud music, played at discos, and parties, the people begin to dance and move in rhythm to the music. This causes them to lose control of their nafs, so that they dance with partners, coming very close and losing all sense of shame, thinking and committing acts which are the result of their desires.

It is also this type of music which tends to groups such as head bangers and heavy metal who lose all control over their actions and morals under the influence of such music.

Music then becomes like a drug, a person requires more and more of it and finds it very difficult to stop, and to obtain the same effect, they play the music louder and louder, this is bad for the ears as well as causing even more effect on the nervous system.

One of the more important reasons, is the effect music has on society. Many youngsters growing up in the western world identify themselves with a certain band and club. You will see posters in their bedroom, their clothes, and personality changes to emulate this idol. When you then see the screaming, dancing atmosphere in the concerts, you can imagine what a powerful effect music then has on the mind and the body.

It is unfortunate that the society we live in, defines enjoyment as anything which makes you forget the world. Music, alcohol, drugs. They all have two common factors,

- (i) they are an escape from reality, and
- (ii) they are addictive. What does this tell you about the level of contentment in a normal life?

Many of the singers, and groups can be seen to use music to arouse the desires which should be controlled. Many of the groups today while performing, make gestures which are indecent, they have ladies and men with scant and revealing clothing on stage or video to attract the gaze. This is all a result of the effects of music.

Music itself may have many consequences, since there are so many different themes and instruments with which it can be made. Music affects us in the same way as alcohol, it causes us to be unaware of our actions. We can become very angry if the music around us is loud and dominating. Music might not effect everyone to the same degree, but it definitely affects a large enough percentage of people to be made Haraam. It is also Haraam to go to a place which is solely for the listening of music, i.e. a disco.

People often say that they listen to music very little, and don't open themselves up to it. Well, like all drugs, it is **ADDICTIVE**. If you start off with small quantities, you will soon increase until you become helpless.

The next question, is what about the background music which we hear day to day on the television, etc.

The term "background music" refers to those sounds that you are unaware of, which are used to describe certain scenes such as in a television program. Examples are the sounds leading up to a point of suspense, fear or some other occurrence.

It **DOES NOT** mean listening to music in the background, i.e. leaving it on while you do your homework, or lowering the volume so that you can have a conversation in the background, whether in a car, a restaurant or at home. This type of music is Haraam, and should be avoided.

There is a big difference between **LISTENING** to and **HEARING** a sound. When you hear something, it is just a sound which enters your ears, you do not pay attention to it, and in the majority of cases, you do not even notice it, i.e. the sound of air blowing past you, the sound of cars and conversation etc... While when you listen to something, it is an actual positive action, which you do consciously.

Thus any form of music which you put on purposely to LISTEN to, even if it is in the background, does not become "background music" in the above context, whether the volume is low or not. This type of music becomes Haraam.

Not only should we avoid music, but we should not go to places which are designed to play music, or places where people dance to music. Such places, like discos and parties, cause people to lower their guard, and act in a loose and permissive manner. When you dance to music, you are letting that music control your actions and your thoughts. This can lead you to perform other immoral actions.

One final point to be aware is that Allah makes things Haraam for our benefit. We should try and understand why things are Haraam and justify them as above, but at the end of the day, if we are convinced and have faith, we should accept the rules of Islam.

It is vital to ask questions and thus understand our faith, but we should never become so stubborn and say "Just because I don't understand something, that it can not be understood, and therefore it is wrong."

Allah is our creator and He is closer to us than our own skin. We must realise that His laws are there to help us perfect our own character and fulfil our function as being His deputies on this earth.

Verse 3 of Suratul Mu'minoon : "Al ladheena hum 'anil lagwhi mu'ridhuun."
and those who, from what is vain, keep themselves aloof.

Lahv i.e. Vain, the first Holy Imam Ali ibne Abi Taleb (A) says that all that is void of remembrance of God is meant by this term, with the Ahlul Bait this term included all useless entertainment's, wasteful of time, including musical enjoyments, and vain games played just to while away the time, are also covered by this term.

From my understanding:

- Music which is or can be played at vain gatherings, or places where Haraam actions are performed is Haraam.
- Singing of the human voice, by itself is not Haraam unless it reminds you of a place where Haraam is performed.
- Musical sounds, and any combination of human voice is Haraam.

*Satan's plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, **and hinder you from the remembrance of God**, and from prayer: will you not then abstain? Surah 5:94*

AKHLAQ SYLLABUS - CLASS 10

Lesson Topic

LESSON 1 - MEANING AND OVERVIEW OF THE SUBJECT OF AKHLAQ

LESSON 2 - GUNAH E KABIRA (THE MAJOR SINS)

LESSON 3 - HAPPY FAMILY LIFE

LESSON 4 - ISLAMIC MANNERS

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LESSON 15 - TAKABBUR & VANITY

LESSON 16 - PERMISSIVENESS

LESSON 17 - CHASTITY

LESSON 1: MEANING AND OVERVIEW OF THE SUBJECT OF AKHLAQ

21:16 *Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between!*

30:8 *Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends and for term appointed, did God create the heavens and the earth, and all them: yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting with their Lord (at the Resurrection)!*

38:27 *Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between! That were the thought of Unbelievers! But woe to the Unbelievers because of the Fire (of Hell)!*

"I have been sent to complete the nobility of character."

[Prophet Muhammad (S)]

A child is born. What does it have to look forward to in life? Anything, anything at all?

If life is just to live, to use and then we are no more, then what is the point of living? What is the point of studying for 25 years of life, what is the point of working for a further 30 years of life, of being in debt, of paying a mortgage, of marrying, of bringing up children? All this effort is pointless if there is no higher purpose to life.

Conscience Will / Desire

If you look at animals, they can communicate, they can eat and drink. They are created for this world only. The only thing they lack is a conscience will, a desire to do something.

An animal eats when it is hungry, and sleeps when it is tired. A human being has been given an extra facet of intelligence. When we eat, we eat the food that we enjoy, we taste the food. Sometimes, we eat when we are not hungry, we laugh, we joke, we have friends, we study we learn, we have hobbies, we create. These are all characteristics that make us different from other animals.

Emotions

We also have emotions which animals do not share. On the positive side, we have emotions such as compassion, sympathy, consideration, loyalty, and friendship. On the negative side, we have jealousy, greed, hatred, enmity, and deceitfulness.

This shows us that man cannot be judged or compared to other creatures on the planet. If he uses his emotions of compassion and friendship than he can be the best of all the creatures, if he lets himself become mean and greedy, selfish and jealous, than he becomes the worst creature on the planet, because even the animals do not have these emotions.

Intelligence / Humour

Mankind has the ability to extrapolate and synthesize thought. This means to start off with a piece of information, and make conclusions, based on other pieces of information. Mankind has the ability to communicate in a social way, to interact and to laugh. Laughing is a very human characteristic, and according to many philosophers, is a fundamental difference between Man and Animal.

The result is that man is unlike the rest of creation. He has something extra that cannot be explained by science, can not be explained by evolution, can not be explained by any theory at all EXCEPT by religion and belief.

15:28 *Behold! your Lord said to the angels: "I am about to create man, from clay, from mud molded into shape;*

15:29 *"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him My spirit, fall down in obeisance unto him."*

15:30 *So the angels prostrated themselves all of them together:*

Now that we have understood man is unique, the next point to ask is that why is he different?

Allah explains us that man was made for a purpose. It is that purpose which we have to try and discover.

Allah is our creator, He made us from nothing. After having created us, he placed in us a portion of His spirit, His will, the electricity that keeps us ticking. Allah had created the world and the stars, all the fabulous things that you see in space, but He had a plan, His plan was to create the BEST CREATURE, something that would not just obey His command because He who commanded, something that would obey His command with free will. Something that would search for Him until it found Him. This creature was MAN.

3:59 *This similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam: He created him dust, then said to him: "Be", and he was.*

Man was created and taught all the names of the heavens and the earth. Then he was placed on earth to live his life. He was given the tools to find Allah and then it was left to wander, to find the path.

When we are lost in the forest, we use a compass to find something that we cannot see. The compass follows a magnetic field which cannot be sensed with our eyes, ears, touch, taste or smell. Even then we know the field exists, because the compass points to it. Well there is another force, a light which flows through every object, every stone, tree, leaf. That is the Light of Allah, the light that keeps everything existing. Allah wants us to discover this light and to realise how great it is.

The tools we have been given for this search is our soul, our heart. Our soul is receptive to this light of Allah, the same way a compass can guide towards a magnetic field. We have to open our hearts to the world around us, and then follow the path which it takes us through.

Whenever we do something, we get a feeling which is deep down inside us, which tells us whether that action is taking us towards Allah or away.

This feeling is provided by our conscience. If you do something Haraam, then stop for a second and think, you will feel a small tugging feeling that will try and pull you back toward the right path, the more you listen to this the stronger this sensation will become until your thoughts themselves become pure. In the same way, the less you listen to this conscience, the weaker it will get, until a stage comes when you will not even hear it when it is trying to tell you something. That is the day Shaitan will jump up and down with glee, because he will have gained a new follower.

So Allah has set this task, this test, for every human being and to make it easier for us, He gave each of us the ability to pass this test, to reach the end of the journey.

One point about this Universe is that everything has been created in pairs, each has its opposite. There is black and white, strong and weak, good and bad, heaven and hell. Inside of man there are also these pairs. For every good emotion that takes man towards Allah, there is an evil emotion which will take him away. Allah has given man the ability to judge between right and wrong. To make matters easier, to every single group of people Allah sent a Warner, to show the way towards him, so that on the Day of Judgment people could not say, "We did not know, we were unaware". All we have to do is choose which way we want to follow.

10:47 *To every people (was sent) an Apostle: when their Apostle comes before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, they will not be wronged.*

If the choice is so easy to see, why is this world so unjust?

There is one main reason why this simple choice between good and evil is made difficult.

Man forgets easily. Man always thinks of the present and leaves the future to sort itself out. If you want to do something Haraam, the pleasure is immediate.

If you want to steal then you receive the goods immediately. If you obtain power, then you can control others at once. If you want to eat Haraam, then the pleasure of eating is there as soon as you swallow the food. If you have a sexual desire, then you can satisfy it as soon as you commit the act. However, when you want to do something good then the rewards are not immediate, they come later. The same way when you study, the rewards come after you have finished your exams and you are shown the results. When you plant a seed, it will be many years before the tree matures, and you taste the fruit. Well, the reward for the good deeds you perform are not only physical such as the pleasure of the bad deeds. You do not get money for helping someone, nor do you feed your hunger by fasting. So when a human being has a choice, if he is ignorant and cares nothing for the next life, then he will make the choice that will benefit him immediately.

This is where the whole concept of Akhlaq comes in. Akhlaq is not just good and bad deeds, but learning to understand that good deeds actually help you in the long run, and learning to enjoy helping others, and most importantly knowing that good Akhlaq is a torch that will guide you towards Allah amidst the darkness.

24:35 *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.*

2:257 *God is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith the patrons are the Evil Ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (for ever).*

So we have understood that man is different from other creation, that he has a purpose to his life, and we now know what the purpose is and how to fulfill it.

The next point to understand is: **Why should he follow that purpose?**

When we accept that Man can be the greatest of creation, and can reflect the light of Allah, then we should realise that those who reach such a stage, where their purpose has been fulfilled, will be elevated to such a high level that they will be brought as close to Allah as it is possible to be.

The reward for man, for his effort to find his Creator, to find the one who made him is the closeness of Allah's mercy for eternity.

This reward is paradise or heaven, lasting forever and ever. This is not governed by time, because time is a creation just like the earth, and when this creation ceases, and a new one occurs, then time will also cease to exist, and man will be in a dimension without time, without age.

So if man obeys Allah's commands then he will receive the promised reward, but if he fails, then he has also been promised punishment.

People argue that punishment is unfair and unjust, and that only an uncaring god punishes his creatures. Such people should try to understand the following.

- if a person harms others then it is fair that he is punished
- if there are two people, one who puts in effort to do good, and one who does not, is it fair that both people are rewarded equally, or that both are punished equally?
- if you are warned of a danger, and you do not heed the warning, fully aware of the consequences than it is your own fault that you have to bear the consequences.
- Allah has given the chance for us to repent, if we do so sincerely, but a person who disbelieves and commits acts which hurt others until his dying breath can not expect to be forgiven, especially when he did not even request forgiveness.

So punishment will occur for those who deserve it, but those who try and perfect their Akhlaq will find it a shield from the fire of hell.

2:24 *But if you cannot, and of a surety you cannot, then fear the fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith.*

LESSON 2: GUNAH E KABIRA (THE MAJOR SINS)

- 4:111** *And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against his own soul: for God is full of knowledge and wisdom.*
- 4:112** *But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, He carries (on himself) (both) a falsehood and a flagrant sin.*
- 6:120** *Shun all sin, open or secret: those who earn sin, will get due recompense for their "earnings."*
- 11:116** *Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth--except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)? But the wrongdoers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin.*
- 34:28** *We have not sent you but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not.*
- 83:29** *Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed,*
- 83:30** *And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery);*
- 83:31** *And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting;*
- 83:32** *And whenever they saw them, they would say, "Behold! these are the people truly astray!"*
- 83:33** *But they had not been sent as Keepers over them!*
- 83:34** *But on this Day the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers.*
- 83:35** *On Thrones (of Dignity) They will command (a sight) (of all things).*
- 83:36** *Will not the Unbelievers have been paid back for what they did?*

Allah has given us Islam as a way of life. This way of life has rules which are to be obeyed. To live effectively, there are always rules which are to be followed so that no-one breaks or infringes the rights of others.

The question then arises, why can't we make our own rules. Why do we have to follow what someone else (i.e. Allah) says ?

This question can be answered with the aid of the following examples, firstly, if you were organising a party, or an occasion for a group of youngsters, would you tell them to organise, or would you prepare beforehand so that things occur smoothly. The answer to that is quite obvious.

Secondly, if you had a small child who was by the beach, he wants to go into the water, but you can see the red flag is up indicating that the water is unsafe. Would you allow him to enter the water?

Lastly, if you were an architect or an engineer, and designed a suspension bridge, crossing a river. If the wind starts to blow, and you feel the bridge is not safe for normal traffic flow, and you decided to shut the bridge, who should the officials listen to, you as the creator of the bridge, or the users, who just want to get across?

From this, we can understand, that for a society to function effectively, the rules it should follow should be from "someone" who is aware of how the individuals of that society behave. Who else knows the weakness and behaviour of a human being more than its Creator, He Who says that "*I am closer to you than your Jugular vein*"

50:16: *It was We who created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.*

Also, we should realise that Islamic Laws are there to protect oneself from dangerous or harmful effects, since every rule in Islam is to help you overcome the causes of such harm. The harm doesn't have to be to you only, it could also be to those around you.

If we deliberately reject the rules of Islam, we commit a sin, and we actually are harming ourselves in one way or another.

We should avoid committing forbidden acts, and worship Allah. This can be done for a number of reasons explained by the following words of the Prophet (S)

"There are people who worship Allah for the sake of (fulfilling their) desires and that is the worship of business people. And verily there are those who worship Allah out of fear of Him, this is the worship of slaves. But there are those who worship out of thanks giving to Him, this being the worship of free minded people and is the best of worship"

Below is a list of the prohibited acts (Gunahe Kabira) in Islam:

1. Polytheistic belief
2. To lose hope of receiving any mercy from Allah
3. To completely disregard God's punishment
4. To disrespect one's parents
5. To commit murder, adultery and fornication
6. To accuse a chaste woman of unchastity (fornication or adultery)
7. To take the property of orphans by force
8. To run away from the armed forces
9. To take illegal interest in trade
10. To have sexual relations beyond the limit of marriage, sexual enjoyment through homo-sexuality, masturbation or lesbianism
11. To use magic
12. To swear falsely by the names of Allah (God) or to use his names in vain
13. To ignore the payment of religious dues (Zakat, Khums)
14. To testify falsely against others
15. To drink intoxicating liquors
16. To give up daily prayers or any other religious obligations
17. To break one's promise

18. To disregard one's family (rejecting them , avoiding them, not showing enough love and affection towards them or not doing them the favours that one is supposed to do)
19. To become a resident of a place where one may lose his religion
20. To Steal
21. To ascribe false statement to Allah or to any of his apostles
22. To Lie
23. To deny or hide Allah's revelations or miracles
24. To eat the flesh of dead animals, blood, pork or an animal that is slaughtered without being consecrated with the name of Allah, or is not slaughtered according to the prescribed rules.
25. To Gamble
26. To make ones living from filthy and un-Islamic ways such as money obtained from the selling of wines or any other intoxicating liquors, the money from illegal interest in trade, accepting or giving money in bribery, receiving salary for witchcraft or magic, receiving money from an unjust government, the wages for singing, the sale of prohibited things as a means to earn one's living such as the instruments of games as chess, backgammon or other instruments used for gambling, making statues of animals or human beings.
27. To give less than due measure in business transactions
28. Not to pay one's debts when one has the means and the payment is due
29. To display haughtiness and pride.
30. To be a spend-thrift (Extravagant, spend lavishly)
31. To act proudly and boastfully.
32. To ignore a pilgrimage or abandoning it when it is due.
33. To fight a divine leader
34. To get involved in an un-Islamic business such as singing for fun, playing guitar, dancing just for enjoyment and other useless acts.
35. To persist in minor sins
36. To back-bite (to talk bad behind other's back about things which they dislike)
37. To accuse someone of fault or a defect
38. To abuse or hurt a believer
39. To be a slanderer, causing discord, schism among people
40. To become a pimp
41. To defraud the believers
42. To belittle one's sins
43. To be a hypocrite
44. To use picture, statues to represent Allah

LESSON 3: HAPPY FAMILY LIFE

Charity begins at home. The most important part of charity is that time of yours which you give in aid of others. So before you rush off to make the world a better place, stop, think, and spend a bit more time at home.

The family is the unit, the building block of any society. If you have a pile of bricks on top of each other, and you damage the bottom one, the whole wall will come tumbling down.

Similarly, if you start damaging the families in a society, it will not be long before the society begins to disintegrate around you. This is what we are witnessing in the modern era of the 21st century.

This topic can be discussed from so many angles, but I think what is necessary in today's society is simply understanding the natural feelings that should be present to make the family strong and secure so that those within it will be safe from the destructive influences outside. Friends have often said, that the west is too corrupt, our children have no chance being brought up in such a permissive, devalued, uncaring world. The argument against is that if a family can teach values and morals to its children, and show them how to recognise virtues and how to shun evil, then no evil however great can overcome them. That is why Islam has emphasised family unity and careful upbringing of the children.

Before we discuss the way to a happy family life, let us just mention some of the benefits of a family.

- It is a stable environment for the upbringing of a child.
- It teaches a child how to behave how to recognise the difference between right and wrong in the first years of its life.
- It provides companionship for husband and wife, so that they can rely on each other and trust in each other.
- All members of the family can trust each other and share the same goals.

These are just some of the benefits of being in a family.

A sensible and well-balanced family system is the very foundation of a happy life.

The question is how do we make a family happy?

It all comes down to **CONSIDERATION**. This word is so easy to say, but means so much. With consideration and respect, then almost all those things which could cause unhappiness are avoided.

Think for a moment. In your family, the last time you were unhappy was it not because you felt that no one is trying to understand your feelings, or that you wished people would look at things from your point of view. There you are then!

If you think of the needs of others, brothers, sisters and parents, then the chances are that you will never be in their "bad books".

Of course in any relationship there must be a two-way flow. Things will not work if one party does all the giving, and the other does all the taking.

It is also important to be able to talk. A large percentage of family problems occur because people feel bad, and they hold it within. Then it builds up and then one day "**B A N G ! !**". It all comes out, and there goes the family. Anger and frustration all spilled out breaks a bond that took years to build. Therefore you must be able to talk with your parents and your brothers and sisters about any problems.

Only by identifying these problems and removing them can you move forward.

It is not wealth which makes a family happy. Nor is it fame or fortune, or clothes or cars..... It is love.

The love that the family shares should be the glue that holds it together.

The happy family is one where each brother/sister knows that the rest of the family is behind them and is there to help whenever the need arises.

WARNING !

Do not abuse the help. One of the best ways to turn any relationship sour, is to abuse the privileges. There is nothing worse than making a mess, and expecting others to pick up the pieces. Your family is there to be used by you, not **ABUSED**.

The final words in this topic, on which books after books have been written, are the words of Prophet Isa (A):

If you want to GUARANTEE a happy family life as well as a healthy friendship,

"Treat others the way you yourself would like to be treated"

LESSON 4: ISLAMIC MANNERS

There are certain Islamic manners which are taught, which are often found trivial. These manners might be something that people think should be taught to children only, but it is important that they are reinforced at a more mature age so they can become part of the character.

Manners are not something that are worn on the surface, and then taken off when not required, like a hat or shoes. Manners are something that should be part of your nature, to be present at all times. It is this attitude which is becoming rarer, especially in today's society. The person who has manners and decency is a species on the verge of extinction.

Greeting (Salaam) and Shaking the hand (musafaha)

When one Muslim meets another, then to offer greeting is emphasised, and to return a greeting is wajib. An Islamic greeting is not "Hi" or "All right Mate". Salamun Alaykum is sincere and is meant as a wish that only the Peace of Allah should be on the other. The one who offers salaam is rewarded by Allah much more than the one who answers. Salaam makes us all equal, it is recommended that one who is higher gives salaam to one below, i.e. a man on a horse (or the modern day equivalent) should offer salaam to one who is walking, to combat his own pride.

The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim, when he meets him (Muslim) he greets him with peace and he returns him (greeting) that which is better and he does not refuse to give the necessities of life.

Eating

This habit is like a mirror. You can see a person's manners reflected in the way that they eat. How many people look polite and knowledgeable, pious and respectable, but give them a plate of food, and you have created a frankenstein. They eat as if there was no tomorrow.

There are two ways to defeat or make a man your slave. One through exploiting his desires, and the other through his appetite.

Begin your meal by remembering Allah. Eat when you are hungry, and not just for the sake of it. Do not overeat. When a guest comes to the house, you should begin eating first so that he may feel at home. You should eat in such a way as to respect food, not chewing with your mouth open, spilling it all over the table or floor. Just remember, there are people who do not know when their next meal will be, let alone what it will be; no one is asking you to go hungry, but don't waste or abuse food.

Drinking

Water is the nectar of life. Every living creature depends on it. When you drink water, do not gulp, but sip it. It is recommended to say "Oh Allah, send your blessings on Imam Husain (A), his family and his companions, and curse on those who refused him water." when drinking water.

Sleeping

When you sleep, you should do so on your right side preferably, or your back, or your left side. You should never sleep on your stomach. This is bad for your health.

It is sunnat to perform wudhu before going to sleep, as each breath you take will be counted as prayer. Recite Qur'an and du'a for a few minutes, who knows this may be our last chance to thank Allah.

Dressing

We all know that to dress indecently is Haraam. This has been explained in previous notes. However very few people realise the importance of dressing in their own home, and with their own family. One should not walk around scantily clothed at any time, even if you live by yourself.

Your body is precious and private. It has been lent to you from Allah is yours to look after. You should not abuse it, and you should not use it as a show for others.

You see, if something is expensive and important, it will be guarded and kept away so that people don't use it and damage it, but if something is cheap, it will be left there for everybody to see and use, and no one will care about it. What is more precious than your body, to keep it well guard its respect you should make sure that you dress it well so that it is not expose more than necessary.

When you dress, you should make sure that the clothes you wear are not too tight so that the shape of your body is seen. Also you should be careful not to wear certain clothes to certain places. You would not wear jeans if you were invited to see the Queen, so why wear jeans when you go to the mosque, to be closer to Allah? You can wear jeans at home or when you go out, but you should try and avoid them in places like the mosque.

Even at home, you should make sure that you are dressed properly. It is bad Akhlaq to walk around the home without a shirt, or to walk around wearing only your underwear or boxer shorts. It may sound funny, but many people do this. There is nothing Haraam in wearing boxer shorts by themselves or walking around in underwear in the house, but it is very poor Akhlaq, and not the character befitting to a Muslim.

If you start to treat your own body as cheap, then don't complain when others also treat you as if you were cheap and worthless.

Talking / Conduct in Public

When you talk, you should not shout or speak so much that others cannot get a word in edgeways. More importantly, even if you talk with a soft voice and polite smile, you guard against backbiting or lying. Your actions in public are what people will judge you by. If you do not want any respect, and want people to think that you are still a child, that carry on shouting, but for those who want to maintain dignity and want people to respect them, then speak less and listen more. *"Guard your words as you would your gold"* said Imam Ali (A).

LESSON 5: BATHROOM MANNERS

There is no shame in religion.

When it comes to what a Muslim should know and practise, in public or in private, Islam does not hide behind flowery language or frills. Islam is the religion meant for all human beings and therefore talks directly to them.

People may ask, what sort of religion is it that has rules on going to the bathroom?

The reason why Islam explains topics which people often consider personal, is because Islam is a complete religion, and as such offers complete guidance on all aspects of life.

If Islam was not to explain these points, no one else would and so there would be **NO STANDARD** for people to act by.

Islam **SETS THE STANDARD** for the most complete codes of personal hygiene and highest moral standards anywhere in the world.

In today's society we have the convenience of modern toilets, but these facilities will not be available everywhere you go, i.e. Haj, countryside, woods etc..

In these situations (and all others), certain actions should be performed. Not all acts have been mentioned since the rules should be dealt with more fully in fiqh lessons.

The major reason why this topic is being discussed in this class, is that although all of you have been taught the concept of Taharat in younger classes, it is vital that this is emphasised since you will all be Baligh within the next 1-1½ years, and without Taharat prayers are not valid.

In the majority of the places you visit, school, sports clubs, service stations, and other public areas you will be faced with toilets which do not contain water.

The most common facilities available will be those which are against Islamic codes such as "standing urinals" for boys. Since you are now responsible for your Ibadaat, it cannot be emphasised strong enough that you **MUST** understand how Islam expects you to maintain your hygiene.

- The area where you choose to relieve yourself should be not belong to someone else, unless you have their permission. (wajib)
- If there is a defined place, like a bathroom, you should enter with the left, and leave with the right foot. This has the effect that you are remembering rules and therefore remembering Allah, and are not entering the bathroom absent minded. This means that you will be more conscience about the other acts you are to perform. (sunnat)
- It is sunnat to cover the head while in the toilet. This can be traced back to areas where hygiene is not very good, and covering the hair prevents infection from "little nasties". (sunnat)

- You must not sit in a position where you are facing Qiblah or where your back is to Qiblah. This is respect for the Sajdah which we perform in the direction of Qiblah. (wajib)
- It is Makruh to urinate in a standing position. This also applies to those places where there are special facilities to urinate while standing, i.e. school toilets etc..
- It is Makruh to hold yourself from going to the toilet when the urge arises, as this is unhealthy.
- It is sunnat to visit the toilet before prayers, any sexual relations and before going to bed.
- It is Makruh to talk while in the toilet or to extend the "visit" for longer than is necessary, i.e. listening to the radio or reading the newspaper etc..
- It is also Makruh (in open areas) to sit where there is a strong wind, or where the wastage will be close to people (i.e. roads, side-walks, by the entrance of a house, by water (especially still water) or under a tree).
- To wash the private parts twice (wajib) three times (emphasised). This must be done otherwise Namaaz will not be acceptable since you will be in a state of Najasat.

What do you do if you are in a public toilet where there are no facilities for washing yourself?

If possible, you should try and carry a collapsible cup which you can fill with water and use to clean yourself.

If you do not have a cup, then you can use tissue to dry yourself. This will protect your clothes from becoming Najis, since your private parts are dry. You can then go somewhere else to wash yourself with water to make yourself Pak, since you cannot pray until you are Pak.

LESSON 6: MANNERS OF TRAVELLING

When a person travels, he leaves the comforts of his own home, often to go and meet other people for either business or pleasure.

One important thing to realise is that, once you leave familiar surroundings you become a stranger, and in a sense you are free to do what you want. There is no pressure from family or friends, because here, no one knows you, and no one can report back on your activities.

This means that your nafs will make suggestions to you, to go to places that you would not do in your own area, for fear that others may see you.

It is consequently very important that when you leave your house, you should begin your journey with the name of Allah. You should recite Bismillah, ayatul Kursi and a few short du'as. In this way, you are asking Allah to protect you FROM YOURSELF as well as from other dangers.

When Prophet Nuh (A) left for the greatest journey of his life, with all the animals on his ark, Allah told him

11:41: *So he said: "Embark upon the Ark, in the name of God, whether it move or be at rest!"*

When you remember Allah, He will always remember you and watch over you. One way of remembering Allah is to take a few coins and put them in a box for sadqa (the poor).

2:152: *Then you do remember Me; I will remember you.*

Many journeys are undertaken for pleasure. If we really want to make Allah a part of our lives, then what better time to remember and praise Him when we are happy, and laughing?

Journeys are often very enjoyable, but they can also be very dangerous. Its a wide, wide world, and no one can predict what can happen. It is recommended that when a large family travels to a destination, they should not all go together. They should try to split up among a number of groups so that if anything happens to one group, at least others are still safe.

People tend to forget Allah when going on journeys. Once a man came to Imam (A) and asked him to do Istikhara as to whether he should go with a trading caravan. The Istikhara came out adverse, and Imam (A) advised against travelling. The man went anyway. He came back after the caravan returned and told Imam (A) that the journey had been the most successful he had ever been on, so the Istikhara was wrong. Imam (A) replied, do you remember than on this particular night you slept late, and in the morning you missed your Fajr prayers, it was because of this that the Istikhara came out bad.

This shows that no matter how important our journey, we must still perform our wajibaat.

When you travel through the world, try and see Allah's handiwork. We are told in Qur'an so often that we should try and understand how Mighty and Supreme Allah is by looking at the world around us, and the marvels which it holds. So do not be one track minded, open your eyes to appreciate the creation all around you and you will get even closer to Allah.

Other recommended du'as/suwer to be recited are:

- reciting Ayatul Kursi before leaving
- Sura al Ikhlas, Naas, Kaafiroon and Falaq
- Suratul Qadr
- Sura-e-Ale Imran

Imam Ja'far-asSadiq (AS):

"I begin in the name of Allah, Allah is enough for me and on Him I rely. Oh Allah, I pray Thee for the welfare of all my affairs and seek Thy shelter from the evils from in this world and the torments of the Day of Judgement." **(Allah will accomplish all his worldly and spiritual tasks of salvation).**

Therefore, before leaving for a journey, remember:

- create a will
- settle debts
- seek forgiveness from friends and relatives
- prepare kafan (this is a REALISTIC, not PESSIMISTIC, act)
- sadaqa
- thank Allah (s.w.t.) because the journey would not be possible without His help.

When leaving, Imam Musa-ibn-Ja'far (AS) has said to stand facing the house and recite Suratul Hamd followed by:

"Oh Allah keep me and all the things with me safe and sound and let them reach the destination safely."

The Holy Prophet (S) recommends to pray for your family:

"Oh Allah" I leave unto Thy care my life, my wife and children, my merchandise, my generation my world here and hereafter, deposits under my custody and place my end of life in Thy hands."

Staying as a guest

Remember that we represent our families and Islam so must have good Akhlaq, do not impose on those you are staying with and help the family you are staying with as much as possible.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) advised Imam Ali (a.s.) to recite the following when arriving at a new place in order to keep safe from its mischief and avail of all the benefits of the place:

"Oh Allah! make my arrival over here rewarding, for Thou art the best host and caretaker."

On arrival to your destination, thank Allah before any other action. It was through His will and guidance that no calamities befell you, so show Him that you appreciate this.

If you stay with hosts, remember that you are a guest. Do not impose yourself on them and try and be as helpful as possible without disruption. You are representing your family and so have to maintain your self-respect.

If you are going on a fairly long journey where there is uncertainty of your return, it is important that you make a few provisions before you leave.

You should write a will, and ensure that all your debts have been paid. Make sure you do not owe people money and that you have returned everything that is not yours. It is also recommended that on a journey you should carry your own burial shroud (kafan). This is not morbid or pessimistic, but realistic. Should anything happen, you want to be ready to meet Allah with all your "accounts in order".

On return from any journey, again thank Allah. This thanking may seem very little or unnecessary but you do not realise how many accidents are avoided just by the words Bismillah and Alhamdulillah. When you recite these words, you are calling upon Allah to protect you, and Allah never forsakes those who have faith in Him.

17:110: *Say: "Call upon God, or call upon Rahman: by whatever name you call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.*

LESSON 7: CONCEPT OF THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

The Day of Judgement (*Yawmul Qiyamat*) is one of the pillars of the Islamic faith. In fact, if a person does not believe in the day of Judgement, then the whole concept of religion become nothing.

It is also referred to as the day of resurrection. On this day, Allah will raise every human being from his grave, and they will all be brought forth to answer for their actions.

This is the day for which we are waiting. It is the day that our examination results are announced. The day when we find out whether we have passed the test of this life, or have failed. Either we wait in fear or with hope for our success.

After all this, many people do not believe in it! It is a common human habit not to believe in something until you see it; but if we wait until we see the day of Judgement then it will be too late to do anything about it.

"The day of Judgement has been promised, but we do not care, why should we? It is far away, we are still young, and we have a long way to go. When I get old, then I will start worrying."

This is by far the most common attitude among people. They think that it won't happen to them, but if it does.....

It is a terrible and frightening day. For those who do not care to obey Allah, there is plenty to be afraid of.

We are taught that Allah is Merciful, that we should not fear Him out of dread or terror, but on that day if we have not tried to lead a meaningful life then we should be scared.

If we cannot raise enough self-motivation to live Islam, then think of that day, and think of the consequences.

Portions of Al-Infitar 'The Cleaving Asunder'

*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
When the Sky is cleft asunder;
When the Stars are scattered;
When the Oceans are suffered to burst forth;
And when the Graves are turned upside down--
(Then) shall each soul know what it has sent forward and (what it has) kept back.
O man! what has seduced you from your Lord Most Beneficent?- Him Who created you. Fashioned you in due proportion, and gave you a just bias;
As for the Righteous, they will be in Bliss;
And the Wicked --they will be in the Fire,
Which they will enter on the Day of Judgement.
And they will not be Able to keep away therefrom.
And what will explain to you what the Day of Judgement is?
Again, what will explain to you what the Day of Judgement is?
(It will be) the Day when no soul shall have power (to do) anything for another:
for the Command, that Day, will be (wholly) with God.*

Whenever we do something, we should ask ourselves whether it is right or wrong. If we are tempted to commit the action, knowing that it is wrong, just remember the wrath and chaos of the day of Judgement. We do not have to become *Ma'sum* (sinless), we do not have to give up school or sports or university or fun. All we have to do is be aware of our actions, and use them to do something positive for others.

This world is temporary and elusive. It does not mean that you should not enjoy it, but you should be careful that it does not deceive you. In Qunut, we ask Allah to help us in **this world and the hereafter**. The *Akhira* (next life) is determined by our actions here. We are in the world for only a short time, but we have been created to live forever. Ask yourself, where do you want to live, in heaven or hell for the rest of eternity?

The Prophet (S) said *"You have not been created to perish but to remain for ever; only you transfer from one home to another and the souls are strangers on earth and are in the bodies like prisoners."*

Imam Husain (A) said on the day of Ashura: *"Patience O children of noble souls, because death for us is nothing but a bridge which takes you from difficulties and troubles to the vast Paradise and everlasting bliss."*

Imams (A) were human beings. They could have committed sins **if they wanted to**. It was not that they were physically unable to do wrong, but they were AWARE of all the consequences of committing sins. Such consequences are the harm to yourself, the displeasure of Allah and His wrath. It was this knowledge that protected them from breaking Allah's rules.

If we were to have a picture of hell in front of our eyes all the time, then we would definitely think twice before every action we perform.

The day of Judgement is not a joke, do not treat it like one because the laugh will soon fall from your face....Think about it!

LESSON 8: INDECENT DRESSING

Indecent is defined as offending against recognised standards of decency (respectability).

Indecent dressing means to have a form of dress which is disrespectful, i.e. which reveals the shape of the body in such a way as to attract attention from others.

It doesn't matter whether the garment is loose, or tight, see-through or dark, or any other combination. If the garment reveals part of or all of the shape of the body, than, according to Islamic standards, it is classified as indecent.

If someone wears clothes which are revealing, it becomes necessary for those who are present to cast down their gaze, so they should not look directly at the person. (Surah 24 ayat 30-31)

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and God is well acquainted with all that they do.

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over themselves and not display their beauty except to their husbands..."

Islam helps to secure a females modesty by preserving her beauty with Hijab. This way when a person talks with or looks at a lady, **he sees her ideas and thoughts** rather than just her attractiveness.

A male should not wear tight or revealing clothing either, and should wear a beard so that he is easily distinguished from a female, so that they do not begin to dress like ladies and wear their clothes.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CARE ABOUT THE WAY THAT THEY DRESS?

People wear clothes for many reasons besides just covering themselves. Some reasons are as follows :

- a) covering themselves
- b) for comfort
- c) protection against cold, wind, rain etc..
- d) to look and feel good

All of these reasons and many more are acceptable, even to look good, as long as it is not intended to show off to others.

However some people wear clothes on purpose which are to attract the attention of others. This is wrong, since this is trying to show off to others.

"If a person wear dresses and prides himself over others by means thereof, a flame of hell overtakes him, and he will swing in it till the day of Judgement."

This means that he will be punished partly in this life (i.e. part of hell in this life). The punishment can be no friends, or no happiness, no satisfaction ...

When we wear clothes, other people see them. If we dress in ANYWAY such that other people can become aroused or affected, then those clothes are indecent.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH EXPOSING YOUR BODY, EVERYBODY DOES IT ?

Islam has the highest standard of morals existing in any society on the face of the earth.

Islam tries to make morals part of the individual, so that s/he will act correctly in any circumstance.

It comes down to this. By dressing in such a way that you expose your body, you are inviting people to look at you. By looking at you they can see something that can arouse their desire. This desire can influence their thoughts and make them think about these pleasures. If every one, or even a large proportion of society were to be influenced by these thoughts (influenced by desire) society would break up with people going out with each other, loose and casual relationships, marriages breaking and generally society becoming permissive.

Apart from that, women would be looked at as just objects of desire once again, rather than constructive members of society. A further reason, is that by exposing yourself, you are lowering your dignity. How can a person have so little self-respect so as to dress up just for other people to look at? It is like selling your self in a shop window.

If desire is stopped from being fuelled by exposure, then people will have more respect. There will be less chance of crimes of passion (rape, adultery ...etc.) being committed, and the streets in general will be a safer place to be.

No one is refusing us to wear good or fashionable clothes. Qur'an itself says in Surah 7 ayat 31/2

*"O children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God loves not the wasters.
Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, which He has produced for his servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance?"*

LESSON 9: THE VALUE OF QUR'AN

When we are told about Qur'an and du'as, we think that this is just worship and prayers, something that we only perform on Thursday nights and on nights of amaal.

It is this narrow attitude which leads us to have less faith since we do not see the benefit connected with such habits.

When we recite Qur'an and du'a, it is not Allah that benefits. With Qur'an, we are told over and over to read it and to memorise its pages, but we just leave it on the top shelf, and polish it now and again.

Qur'an is a Miracle, it is powerful. It is the spoken word of Allah. Can you imagine, the God that we cannot see, hear or feel, the God who created the whole universe, who has unlimited power. The God that spoke to Prophet Musa (A) is now speaking to us. This God, has given to us a book which contains His actual words! Can you not imagine the power such a book?

2:185 » Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong).

27:1 » Ta Sin. These are verses of the Qur'an--a Book that makes (things) clear;

This explains to us that it was during the blessed month of Ramadhan that Allah revealed the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (S), and that the purpose of the revelation was to provide signs to guide mankind between right and wrong. It is a book which makes things clear for us.

41:44 » Had We sent this as a Qur'an (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger) an Arab?" Say: "It is a guide and a healing to those who believe; and for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears, and it is blindness in their (eyes); they are (as it were) being called from a place far distant!"

This verse explains why the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. Notice that to those who believe Qur'an is not only a guide, but a healing. It heals the hearts, makes stronger the faith, and brings a person close to Allah. This heals the person from any sorrow or distress. While those who choose to ignore its message are described as narrow minded, blind to the truth.

We are told to read the Qur'an often, but we do not. This Qur'an is so unique, that only Allah could have created it. It is such a miracle of language, that Allah challenges anyone else to try and reproduce even a fraction of it.

10:37 » *This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than God; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book--wherein there is no doubt--from the Lord of the Worlds.*

17:88 » *Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.*

Finally, look at the power of the Qur'an. If we have faith in Allah and in Qur'an. There is nothing we cannot achieve.

59:21 » *Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain verily, you would have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of God, such are the similitude's which We propound to men, that they may reflect.*

13:31 » *If there were a Qur'an with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak, (this would be the one!) But, truly, the Command is with God in things!*

This shows that if we ask sincerely, and recite Qur'an with faith, then no prayer of ours will be unanswered. No matter how great the problem, the reading of Qur'an and faith in Allah will protect us and help us. It is this book that will shield us on the day of judgement.

We have also been told to recite portions of the Qur'an and memorise them. If we do this our own memory will improve. If you spend time to memorise Ayatul Kursi (Surah 2, ayat 255 to 258), and recite it often, Allah will protect us and will improve our memory to such an extent, that people will think that we are magicians.

Allah is the source of ALL knowledge. If we read His word, we will also benefit by learning from Him, and understanding more.

6:59 » *With Him are the keys of the Unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf does fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read).*

The message to you at the end of this note is "Read Qur'an, do not play with it". Do not just respect it, but read it, understand it, and memorise it. This will help you more than you can ever imagine, in both this world, and the next. Consider, wisdom, power, knowledge, memory and a guard all at our fingertips, and we don't even bother to use it!

17:89 » *And We have explained to man, in this Qur'an, every kind of similitude: yet the greater part of men refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude!*

LESSON 10 & 11: THE IMPORTANCE OF DU'A

Du'a is a prayer, a supplication. A frequently repeated notion is that Du'as are only for mullahs, or for the old people who now want thawaab or have nothing better to do. This is limited thinking, and is at the very least untrue.

Du'a is when you ask Allah for something. If we realise the Allah created us, and that we are His creatures, then we have a right to ask him for our needs. Allah wants to give us so many things, He wants to help us, and to make us benefit; but He also wants us to realise that He is there, so we must ask from Him.

You do not have to wait until you need something before you ask. You should make a habit of talking with Allah every single day. Thanking him for what you have, asking his protection against performance of wrong, asking for help to make the day successful and happy.

If you do this you will notice something. You will notice that you feel good inside, that things are going well at school or work. That everything is looking suddenly brighter. You will also find yourself thinking of Allah more, and thanking Him for the favours Has given you. The more you thank Him, the more He gives you.

17:110 » *Say: "Call upon God, or call upon Rahman: by whatever name you call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names."*

This shows that Allah wants us to call Him, to ask Him when we are in need. You should go to Allah first, since He created you, He should also help you when you require it. If you remember Allah, then He will also remember you.

2:152 » *Then you do remember Me; I will remember you.*

In Du'a e Kumail, we ask Allah, and we are told that Allah has promised to answer us.

For You have decreed Your worship for your creatures, You commanded them to pray to You and You have assured them that they would be answered.

Imam Ali-Zainul Abedeen (A) has given us a collection of du'as known as Sahifa e Kamila. This collection contains many du'as for all occasions which is one of the treasures left behind by the Ahlul bayt (A). He has also given us short du'as to be recited on each day of the week.

These du'as will help and guide you. There is a guarantee of success to anyone who makes a habit of reciting these regularly, every morning after fajr, or before going to school or work. They are reproduced below.

What language should we recite du'a in?

Reciting a du'a is relatively easy-it is the SINCERITY with which a du'a is recited which is the hardest thing to focus on-when you recite a du'a, your heart should speak at the same time. So do not do it ritually-do it with meaning. If you do not have time to recite a du'a in Arabic and English then recite a small portion of it, in Arabic and English, each day/ week.

So why are some du'as not answered?

Many people often wonder that if Allah tells us to seek Help from Him as much as possible and the Ma'soomeen have left many examples of how Merciful Allah (s.w.t.) is, then why are some du'as not granted?

We have to remember that Allah (s.w.t.) is All-Knowing and knows far more about what is good for us than we could ever hope to ourselves. It is important not to be disappointed and lose faith or be angry. Allah (s.w.t.) wants to give us the most suitable of rewards. We may, unknowingly, ask for things that will not benefit us. If we are patient and faithful, Allah (s.w.t.) will open many more doors for us and reward is many more, much better, ways.

The following poem conveys these important points and emphasises how we should look to the teachings, manners, beliefs and practices of the Ahlul Bayt. They are our role models in all spheres of life, even with regard to how and why we should do du'as!

Worship, what is it? What does it mean?
Is it, that can purify and clean...?

Our weak bodies and our yearning souls
Something to make us hopeful for our goals?

A kind of attraction to nature and its Master
A feeling which makes the heart beat faster

Do not pray, recite and yell!
Only for the fear of hell!

For the greed of heaven, don't obey!
For these selfish reasons do not pray!

Yet not all can follow Ali's way
From the depths of their heart not all can say

"Only for my love do I worship God"
For some this reason of worship is odd

Why would a strong powerful man weep?
And pray all night without any sleep?

Why would he feel so weak before his Lord?
When he fights like a warrior with his sword?

Why does he cry and weep all night,
and beg God to show him light?

Ali worshipped in his own unique fashion
His worship was full of love and compassion

He cries all night and begs for God's love
Who else is powerful, greater...above?

He begs mercy for his sins
From the God of men and Jinns

He says, "Forgive the mistakes I have made!"
Oh bountiful One, I beg for aid!

Guide me, forgive me, have mercy on me
Oh you who controls land, air and sea

Accept my prayer and forgive my evil deed
Save a servant who is desperately in need

Lord! Free me from this worldly affair
Free me from sorrow, pain and despair

Oh my Lord! Calm the struggles of my heart
In your vast kingdom let me be a part

Lord, the reasons for your orders I don't know
Your plans are a secret to your friends and foe

Your kingdom is so great, your love so fast
Owner of the two worlds, forgive my past

You are my love, my only hope
Without your help, how could I cope?

Oh master, let my tongue talk of thee,
and of evil let my heart be free

You the friend of the sincere hearts
Teacher of names, knowledge and arts

You the ultimate goal of the believer
Do you hear the cries of a self deceiver?

You have promised to listen to our cries
To hear the poor, the hungry and the wise

Those who bear your name and power they feel
Your sacred name becomes a cure and a heal

Your name brings remedy and affection
You are the symbol of perfection

Peace unto any being who seeks you
The one who's intention and love is true.

ALEH MARVASTI
02-02-95

SUNDAY

With the name of Allah, besides whose mercy, I hope for nothing; I fear nothing except His justice and trust nothing but His word, and do not cling to anything but His rope.

To You do I beg for shelter, O Lord of forgiveness and acceptance, from tyranny and oppression, from the changes of time and succession of grief, and from a life ended without preparation.

And to You do I beg for guidance in which there can be reformation and improvement.

And to You alone do I pray for help in granting me success and satisfaction.

And I seek Your protection O Lord, from the suggestions of Shaytan, and with Your power I guard myself from the tyranny of kings.

Therefore accept whatever be of my prayers and fasts and let my morrow and thereafter be better than my present hour and day and make me respected amongst my kindred and community;

And guard me in my waking and my sleep; for You are Allah the best preserver, and You are the most Merciful.

O Lord, in this my day and on Sundays to follow I clear myself in Your presence of ascribing partners to You and of disloyalty and pray to You sincerely to obtain Your answer and am obedient to You hoping for Your reward.

Therefore, bless Muhammad, the best of Your servants, the preacher of Your truth; and honour me with Your dignity which cannot be diminished and watch me with Your eye which does not sleep; and finish my affair so as to make me independent of others and rely on You alone and terminate my life in forgiveness. Verily, You are the Forgiving, Merciful.

MONDAY

Praise be to Allah who called none to witness when He created the heavens and the earth, and took no assistant when He created the spirits.

Never had He any partner in His Godhead nor was He ever helped in His Oneness.

Tongues are unable to praise Him to the fullest extent, reason incapable of knowing His essence, the mighty humble themselves before His Majesty their faces bent downward on account of His dread and all the great submit to His Glory.

Therefore, to You belongs all praise in increasing succession and unbroken continuance.

And may His favour be on His messenger eternally and peace perpetually, forever.

O Lord, let the first part of this my day consist in amendment the middle of it in prosperity and the last of it in success.

And through You I seek refuge from a day which begins in fear, the middle of which causes distress and which ends in pain.

O Lord, verily I ask Your pardon for every vow I vowed every promise I promised and every covenant I made with You and then failed to discharge them.

And I pray to You concerning wrongs done to Your creatures; therefore whichever servant of Yours or hand-maid of Yours has suffered from me any wrong which I may have done to his person or reputation or property or kith or offspring; or any slander whereby I may have spoken ill of him; or anything I may have imposed on him on account of inclination or passion or force or jealousy or hypocrisy or prejudice; he being absent or present, alive or dead; and thereafter my hand become too short and my means too narrow to make amends to him or obtain his forgiveness; in that case, I bet You O You who are the Lord of requests (and they are obedient to Your will and ready to conform to Your wish), to confer favour on Muhammad and his family and reconcile him to me by whatever means You choose, and let me have mercy from You; verily pardon causes You no loss nor does bounty injure You O most merciful.

O Lord, grant me on every Monday, two gifts from You, good luck to obey You at the beginning of the day and the blessing of Your pardon at the end of it.

O You who are the only object of worship and except whom none can forgive sins.

TUESDAY

Praise be to Allah - and praise is His due, as He deserves it - abundant praise!

I hurry to Him for refuge from the mischief of Shaytan who adds sin to my sin; and I guard myself through Him from every wicked tyrant, oppressive king and overpowering enemy.

O Lord, let me be of Your force; for verily Your forces - they are victorious and let me be of Your band for verily Your band - they are happy; and make me one of Your friends,

for surely - Your friends have no fear, nor shall they be sorry.

O Lord, reform my faith for me, for verily it is a safeguard for my affairs and make easy for me my hereafter for certainly it will be my place of rest and to it will I retire from the company of the wicked.

And let my life be an enhancement of every good to me, and my death a comfort to me from every evil.

O Lord, bless Muhammad, the last of the Prophets, the one who concluded the number of sent ones, and his family, the pure, the holy and his chosen companions; and in this third day of the week, grant me three things; leave me no sin un-forgiven,

no sorrow un-removed and no enemy un-vanquished by You.

With the name of Allah, the best of names; with the name of Allah, the Lord of the earth and the heaven, I drive away every evil, the first of which is His displeasure; and desire to achieve every good, the foremost of which is His approval. Therefore let my existence end in Your pardon, O lord of benevolence!

WEDNESDAY

Praise be to Allah who ordained night to be a cover and sleep to be a mode of rest; and made the day to be the time of dispersion.

All praise to You for raising me from my sleep, for if You had wished, You could have made it everlasting; a praise perpetual, unceasing and which the whole of creation would be unable to count.

Praise be to You, O lord, for, You did create, and did so with symmetry. and You did measure and dispose, and cause to die, and to live, and make sick and restore to health, and give safety and does afflict, and You are exalted above the Throne and are in full possession of Sovereignty.

I pray to You like him whose cause is weak and whose resource is cut off, and whose death is fast approaching and whose worldly hope has shrunk and whose need for Your mercy has become pressing, and whose regret for his default has grown intense, and whose guilt and error has been too frequent and whose repentance to You is sincere.

Therefore, bless Muhammad the last of the Prophets and the members of his house, the pure, the holy, and let me have the intercession of Muhammad, may Your favour be on him and his family and do not deprive me of his company; verily, You are most merciful!

O Lord, in the fourth day of the week grant me four things: employ my strength in Your service; let my delight consist in Your worship, make me love Your reward; and cause me to abstain from that which would make me deserving of punishment from You. Verily, You are kind to whoever Your wish.

THURSDAY

All praise be to Allah who removed the dark night with his power and brought the bright day with His mercy; and clothed me with His light and gave me His blessing.

Therefore, O Lord since You have kept me alive for this day, be pleased to spare me for other days similar to it; and bless Muhammad and his family and do not afflict me in other nights and days for my having done things forbidden and for my having committed guilt; and confer on me its benefit and the benefit of what is in it and the benefit of what follows; and turn away the mischief of what is in it, and the mischief of what comes after it.

O Lord, verily I seek adherence to You through the guarantee of Islam; and rely on You through the honour of the Qur'an; and seek intercession with You through Muhammad, the chosen. May God bless him and his family, therefore O Lord recognise my guarantee, whereby I hope for this satisfaction of my need, O most merciful.

O Lord, in the fifth day of the week, grant me five things, which none has power to vouchsafe except with Your generosity, and which none can afford without Your bounty: a soundness whereby I may gain strength to serve You, and a devotion whereby I may deserve Your magnificent reward: and an immediate prosperity by means of fair earnings: and guard me on occasions of danger with Your protection and place me under Your defence against future sorrows and anxieties.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his family and let my adherence to him be effectual intercession at the day of Judgement, verily You are the most Merciful.

FRIDAY

Praise be to Allah, who existed before creation and the giving of life, and who shall continue to exist after all things have perished.

The knower, who does not forgets the one who remembers Him, Who does not diminish the one who gives Him thanks who does not disappoint the one who prays to Him: and does not frustrate the hope of the one who places hope in Him.

O Lord, I call You to witness - and You are sufficient as a witness: and I call Your angels and the inhabitants of Your heavens and bearers of Your throne and Your prophets and Your messengers whom You did entrust with Your mission and the various creatures that You have created; to witness that You and You alone are Allah, there being no god but You; You are alone there being no associate with You no peer and there is no untruth in Your word, nor change.

And that verily Muhammad - may Your blessing be on him and his family - is Your servant and Your messenger; he delivered to Your servants the message with which You did entrust him and exerted himself in the Your cause, as it deserved; and he gave happy tidings of a reward which was certain and threatened with punishment which was true.

O Lord keep me firm in Your religion as long as You keep me alive; and let not my heart deviate after You has guided me, and let me have mercy from You; verily, You and You alone are the Giver.

Bless Muhammad and his family and make us of the number of his followers and his adherents and raise me (on the last day) among his band and give me the grace to be regular in my performance of the Friday prayer and to win such of Your bounty as You will assign to the deserving observers of Fridays, on the day of recompense. Verily, You and You alone are the Mighty, the Wise.

SATURDAY

Bismillah which is the creed of those who seek protection and the motto of those who want refuge.

I hurry to the exalted Lord for shelter from oppression of tyrants, from the devices of the envious and from the treachery of the wicked and praise Him above the praise of all those who praise.

O Lord, You are the One without associate and the King without being made a king.

Your command is unopposed and Your sovereignty undisputed.

I beg You to favour Muhammad Your servant and Your apostle, and to inspire me with such gratitude for Your favours as would enable me to deserve the utmost extend of Your approval; and with Your loving kindness help me to serve You and worship You regularly and deserve Your reward.

And favour me by restraining me from acts of disobedience to You as long as You keep me alive; and give me the grace to do that which would benefit me as long as You spare me; and enlighten my mind with Your book, and remove from me the burden of sin because of my reading it: and favour me by keeping my faith and my life safe, and let not those that love me be frightened from me; and continue Your goodness to me during the rest of my life as You have done during the past, O most Merciful.

LESSON 12: LIES VS HONESTY

To lie means to say something that you know is wrong on purpose.

We all know that lying is a great sin. The unfortunate point is that we do not realise how often we are doing it.

Our Sixth Imam (A) said that it is more difficult to repent for many small sins than for one big sin. Remember the story of the two men who came to Imam (A) to repent for their sins.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

"Leave falsehood and make speaking the truth a habit."

"If a person has a habit of speaking lies, he is a hypocrite until he rids himself of the habit."

"A person who is not honest cannot have a perfect and strong faith".

To lie is haraam since you are deceiving others. There are many reasons why people lie, some of them are,

- a. as an excuse to get yourself out of trouble,
- b. to cheat somebody out of something you want,
- c. to get someone else into trouble.

As you can see, all the above reasons are sinister. If you have done something which will to trouble, then you should face it, and not lie your way out of it because that is being very irresponsible.

Qur'an also tells us not to lie,

2:42 » And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when you know (what it is).

Prophet Muhammad (S) has also said:

"Beware of association with the liar for he is like a mirage which draws the far one nearer to you and the nearer far from you."

If someone entrusts something to you, you should be truthful and return it back to him when it is asked for. It does not matter what the value of the item is, it does not even matter if the person is your enemy.

Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (A) says:

"Whenever a person entrusts anything to you do not commit breach of trust, although that person may be (the worst person on earth like) the murderer of Imam Hussein (A).

"If the murderer of Imam Ali (A) entrusts his sword to me and I accept the trust I shall not misappropriate it and shall return it to him as and when he asks for it".

What does this show. If you accept something into your trust, you must preserve your honour by holding true to your word. If you do not like the person, or feel something wrong will result, then do not accept the trust, but once you have given your word, you are bound by it.

And on another occasion he says to one of his companions:

"I recommend two things to you: one of them is truthfulness and the other is honesty, for these two are the key to sustenance."

If you make the habit of lying, then you will lie very often without realising. You will lie to your family, your friends and everybody you meet. Then one day you will be caught out because you will have trapped yourself in a corner, and there will be no escape.

Also if you make a habit of lying you will start doing other things which are even worse. One evil leads you to another.

LESSON 13: MASTURBATION

Masturbation is the artificial stimulation of the genital organs.

Before we discuss this topic further, it should be clearly stated that masturbation is a **HARAAM** act to do.

In the west, at school, we are taught that it is natural, and that there is nothing wrong with it. On the contrary, we are taught that it is of benefit.

Why? Why is there such a difference in opinion between Islam, and the west? This is because the western world looks at everything in terms of the **PHYSICAL BODY** only.

Islam on the other hand knows that a man is made of **BOTH** MIND and BODY. That mind is called the soul, the self, the nafs, and the spirit.

When a person masturbates, his desire creates images in the mind to make him/her reach a peak of excitement. For boys, this culminates in ejaculation of semen, after which desire soon vanishes. For girls, there is no definite end, and the surge of emotion can arise a number of times. This stage known as an orgasm. These images are made by the imagination, they are fantasised.

This has one major consequence. The person is visualising something that is unreal. They have total control over what actions are performed in their mind. This may start off with curious thoughts of sexual intimacy, but if masturbation continues, the imagination will fabricate more and more until the person has to resort to thinking of unnatural, perverse thoughts to fulfil the level of sexual lust.

One of the results is when the person reaches a stage where they can engage in a lawful sexual relationship (e.g. marriage), then their lust will not be satisfied within this relationship, and may seek fulfilment elsewhere, either prostitution, homosexuality etc.

There is no argument that one can masturbate a little, since the action is addictive. Once a person is into the habit of masturbation, they will find it very difficult, if not impossible to break.

In a certain documentary people were asked about masturbation. They replied that initially they would fantasise normal acts between a man and a woman. **However, after a while, that was not enough to arouse them.** They would start fantasising things which were indecent and perverse, until they started thinking of homosexuality and other crimes which are unnatural.

This is what masturbation results in. It causes you to imagine unreal situations, and unnatural actions. It is **ADDICTIVE**, since once you start, you will find it very difficult to stop.

Sexual desire is one emotion which is different from the rest. With the desires of hunger or thirst, you will reach a limit when you are full that you cannot eat or drink any more. With sexual desire, there is no limit, you will want more and more. The more you have,

the more you will want until you burn yourself up. That is why sexual desire is so dangerous, and needs to be **CONTROLLED**.

Another harm caused by masturbation is that it is an escape from reality. Sex is a natural part of a human being, but it is something that should be private and personal. When a person masturbates, he is living with his imagination, where he has total control. As a result, when he is ready to marry, and is with his wife, he will be at a loss. He will be so used to his imagination, that when the time comes to be with a real person, he will not know how to react.

The western world says that masturbation is necessary to relieve sexual tension, but this is nonsense! If a person is tense, then the body will relieve that tension naturally. When the person sleeps, he might have a wet dream; this releases the tension in the body if necessary. It is important to realise, that a person **MUST** perform Ghusl of Janaabat after semen is released.

The way to avoid masturbation is not to watch or read those things which arouse your desire. You should not sleep without clothes on, nor should you remain naked at any time, even by yourself, because Shaytan is always there to put suggestions in your mind.

Only a person with weak will power will masturbate. When you masturbate, you allow your mind to be taken over by your desire.

Why do people start to masturbate?

The sexual awareness at adolescence is a natural process, and is part of reaching maturity. Curiosity will cause a person to wonder why certain changes are happening in their body, why on occasions thoughts enter their mind.

Without someone to explain or talk to, the adolescent will want to experiment, will wonder why certain actions will arouse him/her, and will wonder why certain actions provide physical pleasure, and will continue with those actions, unless there is a reason not to do so. Some people may stumble across masturbation quite innocently, while bathing or taking a shower.

The important point to understand is this. Islam does not say that sexual activity is evil. It merely confines it within lawful boundaries. What is damaging is self-stimulation since that can cause the lust to imagine and fantasise.

What Islam is guiding you towards, is the natural fulfilment of sexual desire when you are married, not the animalistic satisfaction of lust with yourself, or other partners which has no other purpose.

You should **NEVER** let your **MIND** be a **SLAVE** to anything, not food, not music, not alcohol, not drugs, and not desire.

LESSON 14: EARNING A HALAL LIVELIHOOD

We are always used to understanding **Halal & Haraam** in terms of objects, i.e. to eat this is Haraam, this meat is Halal and so on... However, we never think about our actions.

Actions, like objects, can also be classified as to whether they are Haraam or Halal.

If I see £5 note on the ground, on my way to school, I can **EITHER** pick it up and put it into my pocket, **OR** hand it in to the police.

If I travel on the underground all the time, I can easily find a way to skip paying my fare, should I do this or not?

These are all things which can happen to us anytime, and we should find a way to choose the right action.

Our **LIVELIHOOD** is the way in which we live and earn in our day-to-day lives.

For adults, it is the way they earn their money, the way in which they help their friends, how they act to other people, how they pay taxes, how they run the business, whether they pay Khums etc..

For youngsters, still at school, it is the way they treat their friends, the way they do their homework, what excuses they make if they do not do something, etc..

Islam emphasises the importance of making sure that these actions are not against Shari'a i.e. making sure all these actions are HALAL.

The attitude of very many people is that it doesn't matter how you do something, for example, it doesn't matter if I usurp someone else's property, as long as I give some of it to charity. It doesn't matter whether I pay Khums or not, as long as I pray. This attitude is not an Islamic one and it is something that the youth of the community should realise and teach others by example.

Why should we earn a halal livelihood? What is wrong in cheating others?

If we were to cheat someone, we would be gaining at their loss.

If we were doing a job together, and we were paid 10. If instead of splitting it half/half, I was to keep 6 and give you 4 and you didn't notice, I would be gaining ,1 at your expense.

In the same way, Allah has given us a short term on this world. He has put us in a position where we have the choice of cheating or being fair.

If we can stay on the path of Islam, the path of justice, we will benefit **BOTH in this life and the next**. However if we cheat and follow Shaitan, we may become rich, but we will never be happy in this world, and definitely not in the next life.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said

"Whoever lives on halal earnings for 40 days, Allah shall enlighten his heart, and cause springs of wisdom to come from his heart, following to his tongue."

This does not mean that we should earn a halal life for 40 days, and then forget it and start cheating!! It shows us the reward that Allah gives us for obeying Him, and resisting temptation.

Imam Ali (A) said to his people:

"Who is a believer ?"

Then he gave a detailed answer, part of which said:

"The believer is one with whom people's life, wealth, and dignity are safe.

His livelihood is earned in an honourable way."

We must always remember, Allah is giving us the chance to prove ourselves to Him. We can gain his pleasure by fighting our nafs and being just in this world, or we can displease Him by following our nafs. Remember the example of Hur, when he saw before him two paths, one was death in an honourable way with Imam Husain (A), and one was riches and wealth without principles. He made the right choice and set us the example. Do we have the courage to follow this?

The choice is ours.....

LESSON 15: TAKABBUR.

Takabbur means to have pride, to think that you are above, or superior to a someone else. This is a very dangerous attribute to have, and leads only to downfall.

If you are good at something, or achieve good results in something, don't start thinking too much of yourself.

When you accomplish something good, your nafs starts to tell you that you are great, and that you are better than the rest. It makes you think that there is no one else like you, and that you have reached the top.

When this happens, you start to believe that you are the greatest, and then you will not try harder to become better.

Takabbur enters our hearts very secretly, it tries to hide from us, and takes our thoughts over quietly, that is why Prophet Muhammad (S) has told us:

"Pride enters the heart like a black ant crawling over a black rock at night."

The first thing that you should do when you achieve something good is to thank Allah. Just by saying 'Alhamdulillah', you will stop your nafs from praising yourself. Remember, it was through Allah's help that you achieved it, so thank Allah instead of forgetting, and thinking that you did it all by yourself. By thanking Allah, we are including Him in all aspect of our lives, and sharing our joy and happiness with Him, and recognising that it is through His bounty that we have achieved success.

In the du'a after Asr prayers we say to Allah

"Allaahumma maa binaa min ni'matin faminka"
"My Lord , whatever talents I have got, it is only from You."

When Allah created Prophet Adam, he told all the creatures to bow down before Adam. Iblis refused, saying that **I am BETTER than him**. This was the first takabbur, the first pride, and it was because of this that Iblis is called Shaytan, one who is removed from Allah's Pleasure.

We all achieve something good in our lives. It doesn't mean that we should not be happy. We should be happy, we should feel glad, we should laugh and enjoy, but we should also remember that it was Allah who helped us, and so we should thank Him. What Islam does not like is that we think "Oh, I am fantastic, there is no one else in the world like me. What a brilliant person I am." If we think like this, then Allah will also remove us from His pleasure, and then we will fall, just like Shaytan.

Allah has created us all equal, how can one person say that he is better than another?

VANITY

Vanity means to have false ideas about how great you are, about your appearance, or about yourself.

When a person becomes vain, they spend a large amount of time making sure they look good, not a hair is out of place, and clothes are new and beautiful. All this is to make others think *"That person really looks the business!"*

Vanity is harmful, since it leads to pride, and it stops you from becoming better. If you spend plenty of time over your own appearance without any reason, then it is bad akhlaq, and this will make you think very highly of yourself. You start spending so much time on your dress and image (outside), that you forget about spending time to improve your character (inside), you forget about Allah, the One who gave you all your qualities.

The Prophet (S) said

"There will come a time when people will have unclean inner selves, but BEAUTIFUL APPEARANCES; they will have greed for the worldly affairs (things) and they will not wish for that which is with Allah. Their religion will be for show. Then they would pray like a drowning one, and Allah will not answer their prayer."

There is nothing wrong with looking and dressing well, but there should be limits to the amount of attention you pay to yourself. If you start using mousse, cream and gel just for an ordinary occasion such as going to school or with friends, and if this takes up time, then you should try and avoid it. If you have an appointment, an interview, or some other occasion, which requires you to be presented in a special way, then it is perfectly acceptable to spend more than your usual amount of time on dressing.

The most important thing to note is that you should not dress up to impress others, to show off or to act as something, which you are not. This will only make you think that you are great and then you will be fooling yourself as well as others. Be happy with what you are, and everyone else will also be happy with you.

LESSON 16: PERMISSIVENESS

This means to be too liberal, too free or too loose.

It is a moral judgement and is difficult to define, but can be explained as follows:

When people say that the western world is bad, what they actually mean is that the moral attitude is bad. The west itself technologically is very developed, but unfortunately there has been no parallel development within, in the morals.

Whenever you walk down the main road you will see people walking with scanty clothing, you will see books and magazines in windows, which reveal scenes, which are sexually attractive.

This is also true in the case of television, where programmes often tend to provoke reaction and desires in their audience.

When society becomes such that almost every aspect of it tends to cater for human desires, (not needs), especially sexual, than that society is said to be permissive.

In Islam, a human being is provided with a quality by Allah known as "Hayah". This means modesty, bashfulness, and nobility all in one word. It is this quality which is constantly under attack in the western world.

The reason why it is so easy to fall into the trap of becoming permissive is because there is a physical pleasure, which attracts a person more and more, and it is very difficult to avoid or deny.

When a person reaches the stage of responsibility and maturity (baligh), he has changed his spiritual appearance as well as his physical one. His desires are loose now, he is attracted by things which did not bother him when he was a child. That is why Islam has made its rules wajib for those people who are mature, because they will require ways of cleansing themselves from the filth which enters their minds from outside.

If one takes no heed and ignores these rules, he will slowly become more like the thoughts that enter his mind until he will give himself totally up to his desires which will just waste his life away.

Examples of being permissive is dressing such that enough of your body is revealed to cause others to look at you, dressing with tight clothes so that the contours of your body can be seen, telling jokes which are crude, watching programmes which arouse your own sexual desires.

Going out on dates to discos, or with girl/boyfriends, keeping loose relationships are all common examples of a permissive society.

The desires for companionship are not evil or wrong, but they have to be CONTROLLED within the border of Islam. It is like a fire, if you use it properly, it is a great help to cook food and keep warm, but if abused, it grows and spreads until it becomes out of control and consumes everything.

The real test of a person is to let the self control the desires, and not the desires controlling the self.

Permissiveness is one extreme of society, to be too loose, to be too free with your desires, the other extreme is celibacy, which means to never get married and to stop your desires all together. Both these are extremes, and Islam says that extremes are wrong. Islam takes the middle path of chastity, where you are allowed to fulfil your desires, but only within the boundaries of marriage.



Islam explains to us the concept of chastity, which lies between these two extremes, and allows us to CONTROL our desire, rather than STOPPING them.

Why does a society become permissive? If you were given a locked box, and told that you should not look inside it for many years, you would always be curious of what is within. If that box were placed somewhere where it was easy to see, then day-by-day your curiosity would develop. If you were then given the key, and still told not to open it, you would feel a terrible urge to just unlock it when no one was looking, and take a peek inside.

Why? In the western society, from a very young age, we are exposed to behaviour and scenes, which only display the glamorous and provocative aspect of sex. Yet, at that age, we are told that this is not something for children. Then as we grow up, we become baligh, and have the ability to "unlock the box" in the example above. Since we do not know what is in the box, or we think the box contains untold pleasure, we are tempted to open it and experiment. This is the cause of permissiveness.

The mistake that is made is that sex is not discussed in its moral framework. Sex is not dirty or wrong, but at the same time it is not to be displayed and performed as a show. Since western society displays sex as exciting and daring, without responsibility and love then youngster who are coming to grips with this new emotion are bound to experiment. This may seem enjoyable in the short term, but very quickly they will find themselves slaves of sexual desire, and not masters. This concept will be discussed in detail in a later note.

LESSON 17: CHASTITY

To be chaste means "Abstaining from immoral or unlawful, from sexual intercourse, to be pure, virgin, decent of speech, restrained, pure in taste or style, simple." - The Concise Oxford Dictionary.

This is the opposite of permissiveness, which has been discussed earlier.

Islam puts great emphasis on chastity and it is this aspect, among others, which is under attack in the western world.

Why should we be chaste?

We should be chaste in our every action by not doing immoral or unlawful acts, by not using foul words. We should regard these things as wrong and avoid them.

Islam also tells us that until nikah (marriage) is recited, all relationships which can lead to intimacy between two people are disallowed.

A person's chastity is a gift given by Allah. It is a sign of purity and noble character. It is a very prized and personal possession. When a person marries, he/she enters a new stage of life. The bond of marriage is cemented by the couple sharing something that is personal and intimate to them. This helps to secure the marriage from breaking during future ups and downs and helps to make it endure.

If people do not guard their chastity, and treat sexual relationships as casual, then they are losing the higher purpose which Allah has made, the sharing of something very intimate which binds the two people.

If it is treated as easygoing and as enjoyment with any partner, then the sensitive side of the relationship will be closed off.

Allah has made the human being from several elements; one is the physical element with the five senses of touch, taste, sight, smell and sound. Then He added a whole new level to human beings, he gave them thought and understanding.

If we treat our most private parts without modesty, and go and abuse them carelessly, we will gain a physical pleasure, but we will lose all the "love and contentment" which our mind can give us.

Thus if we just be permissive and have sexual relations whenever the urge arises, we will be lowering our dignity from the intellect to the animal/physical element of our life, and will be missing out in the real sense of living.

What is wrong with being unchaste?

It is a well known fact that once a physical sense is stimulated by an object, it will require more of that object the next time, to reach the same level of stimulation i.e. If I drink alcohol, I will lose physical control over my body. The next time it will take even more alcohol to make me reach the same level of drunkenness, the next time even more... and so on.

Similarly, if I concentrate in sexual activities just for pleasure, the next time I will do more and more until I am addicted and cannot stop.

Thus if we are chaste in our every action (especially sexual), and treat them as something "sacred" not to be squandered, then we will attain a level of discipline that will make us strong, determined and able to achieve anything which we put our mind to.

Why is it difficult to be chaste?

The western society has lost all concept of spiritual life. They have closed the eye inside them and have concentrated totally on physical pleasures. Sex is something, which is made into an open pastime, an enjoyment. This attracts our desires and makes us want to join in. Almost all pleasures are orientated about this idea, parties, videos, books, magazines, discos, film, TV, and cinemas. Then we ask what is wrong with having girl/boyfriends. If they can do it, why can't we?

Would you ask a person who 'shoots drugs', "if you can do it why can't I?"

No you would not, because you can see that he is damaging his mind and body by doing so.

It is only because we cannot see the long-term effects of being unchaste that we ask the above questions. Our elders who have watched and seen these effects warn us, but we call them old fashioned. If we knew what they did, there is a guarantee that we would never even think of following our desires and having sexual relations other than those allowed by Islam.

How can we be chaste?

Being chaste does not mean keeping locked up away from the west and not even listening to what they tell you.

It means listening to everything they ask you and following that which is right and not doing that which is wrong. Only by listening to them can you decide what is right and wrong.

It also means not letting your desires carry you away to commit something which you know might give you physical pleasure, but on the higher level, will make you lose out.

We can be chaste by avoiding telling dirty stories or rude jokes, by not watching films/TV which display other peoples private parts and so cause arousal, by not allowing our relationships with people of the opposite sex to get too close, and by generally asking ourselves in our heart, "Am I doing this because my desires are telling me, or because my intelligence is telling me."

If it is because of desires, then don't do it. If it is because of intelligence, then do it and you will enjoy yourself much more, physically and spiritually.

The path to enjoying life truly is very difficult, and is balanced on both physical and spiritual pleasures. It is like climbing a mountain, only when you reach the summit, can you look around you and see how fresh everything is. And when you look down below, you see everything from a different point of view. You see the maze of life from above; the paths which confused you while you were in the maze are now suddenly clear and easy to see.

AKHLAQ SYLLABUS - CLASS 11

Lesson Topic

LESSON 1 - THE EXISTANCE OF ALLAH

LESSON 2 - FAITH AND RELIGION

LESSON 3 - NAFS

LESSON 4 – JIHAD

LESSON 5 – FAITH, SABR AND SHUKR

LESSON 6 – HONESTY AND LYING

LESSON 7 – HAQQ-UN-NAAS

LESSON 8 – BACKBITING (GHEEBAT AND TOHMAT)

LESSON 9 – RESPECT TO PARENTS

LESSON 10 – SUICIDE

LESSON 11 – EXTRAVAGANCE

LESSON 12 – GREED

LESSON 13 – MISERLINESS / TO BE STINGY

LESSON 14 – USURPING OTHER PEOPLE’S PROPERTY

LESSON 15 – BRIBERY AND USURY

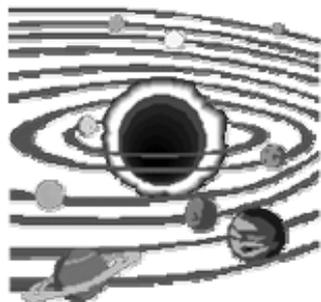
LESSON 16 – CHEATING AND EMBEZZLEMENT

LESSON 17 – DRINKING AND GAMBLING

LESSON 1:

THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH

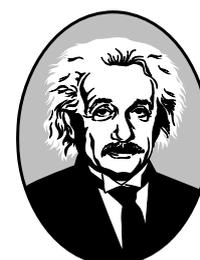
The basis of Islam lies in the uncompromising belief that Allah, the one true God, exists.



There is no scientific proof beyond doubt that Allah exists. However, the design and existence of our Universe and everything within it, leads us to appreciate that it is harder to disprove His existence than to prove it.

'When I see the glories of the cosmos I cannot help but believe that there is a Divine Hand behind it all.'

Albert Einstein



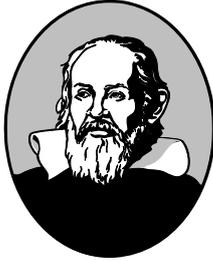
Albert Einstein

So, what do we know?

- There is a **pattern** of creation throughout the Universe; eg. gravitational forces of the planets and the Sun, gravitational forces of the moon and the Earth, etc
- There is **uniformity** in the laws of creation (Physics, Mathematics, etc.); eg. electrostatic forces (atoms are like little solar systems), forces of motion (electricity going through a wire is like water flowing in a pipe),
- The universe appears to be **fine-tuned** for our existence. All the constants in the heavens and earth have been subjected to make sure that life and humanity came to be. This is a fact given the current state of evidence. If certain physical properties were minutely different, even by about 1 in 10^{60} , we would not be here. This is like hitting a 1² inch target on the other side of the observable universe.
- It is unanimously agreed by the Christian and Muslim scientists of this world that these constants have been set with a purpose in mind, and with intelligence.



'This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being.... This Being governs all things . . . as Lord of all.' **Isaac Newton**



Charles Darwin

'Another source of conviction in the existence of God ... follows from the ... impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe... as the result of blind chance or necessity.' **Charles Darwin**

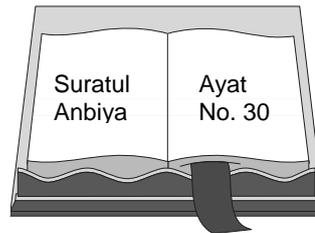
Scientists today accept the Big Bang theory of the creation of the Universe as being the most reliable, with the most evidence to back it up.

This theory states that the Universe's expansion began with an explosive event, called the **big bang**. It is believed that time also began at this instant.



However, the standard Big Bang theory does not explain what **caused** the big bang. Thus, scientists face a problem. Without Allah, the Big Bang is an impossibility.

'Do not the unbelievers see that the skies and the earth were one unit (joined together), then we split them apart...'
Qur'an (21:30)



In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... and the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters... and God said, Let there be light: and there was light... and God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.' **Genesis (1:1-4)**



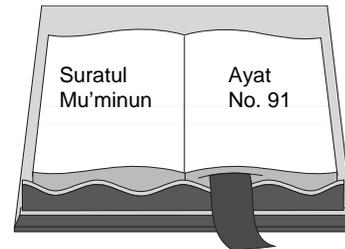
Science also accept Darwin's Theory of Evolution which states that life evolved by adapting to it's surroundings. Islam supports this to a great extent, but we differ when it comes to the creation of mankind.

The Qur'an says that Adam was worthy of worship when Allah gave him a **ruh**. This distinguishes mankind from any other creature, and we don't believe that man just evolved from apes.

Scientists go one step further, and logically deduce from the evidence that the Universe was **intelligently** set by one source, ie. one God. The "oneness" of this source is observed by:

- the uniformity in the workings of the laws of nature all through the universe,
- the common origin of everything in the universe, and
- the blueprint (or design) of life all across the species.

'There has never been any other god besides Allah. Otherwise, each god would have declared independence with their creations, and they would have competed with each other for dominance. Allah be glorified; far above their claims.' **Qur'an (23:91)**



Faced with such scientific evidence, justice demands that we acknowledge the Creator.

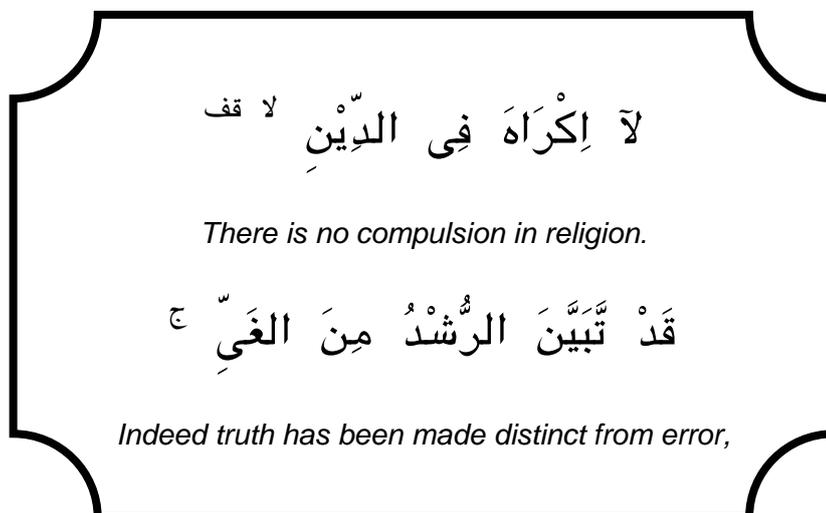
'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities (his eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.' **Romans (23:91)**

LESSON 2:

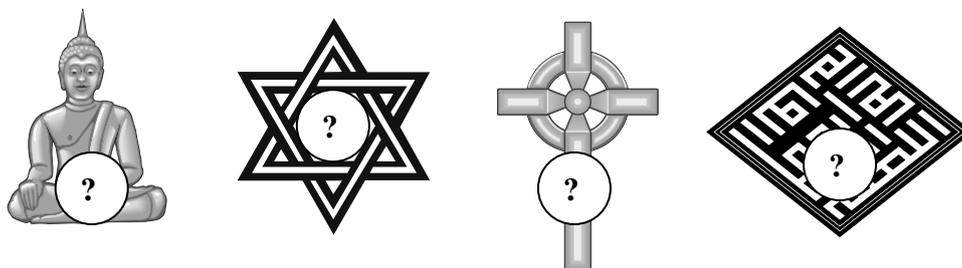
FAITH AND RELIGION :

Islam is a religion that has been revealed by Allah. It is not a man-made ideology or philosophy named after a person like Christianity.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an (Ayat ul-Kursi: 2,256):



Here we are told that there is no force in religion, but the truth has been made clear from the falsehood. However, although Allah has given us the free will to choose what religion we want to follow, it doesn't mean he won't judge us on our choice.



A religion is a way of life, and to bring **faith** in the religion of Islam means we have decided to **submit** to the **will** of **Allah**.

To make such a decision requires the knowledge of Allah's wishes, and the belief in Him being the Kindest, Most Merciful, Most Just and Most Knowledgeable.

Once the choice has been made, to develop our faith we have to understand and believe in the Usool-e-din:

- That there is only one God, He is everywhere, He can see everything we do and, ultimately, we are only answerable to Him.
- That this God is just in every way, even though we cannot understand everything He does.
- That He has sent Prophets and Imams to teach us about Islam, and guide us.
- That we are here to worship Him, and eventually we will answer for all our actions and be punished or rewarded accordingly.

Faith is what our conscience (**nafs**) tells our intellect to accept, and is not directly verifiable. Faith is an in-born instinct. It exists at all times. We have to work at it in order to nurture it. Every instinct and desire has been created for some purpose. These instincts and desires should not be crushed but harnessed for our personal benefit and the general benefit of mankind.



Fighting our instinct (going against our nafs) is going **against** nature.

Faith is dependent on the way we react with our environment. The environment includes:

- what we eat,
- what we say,
- what we do,
- what we wear,
- the friends we keep,
- our family life, etc.

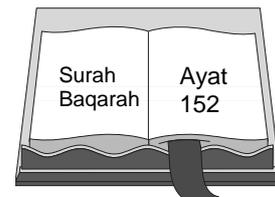


Most importantly, faith is based on **intent** as well as **actions**.

It is not enough to say we believe in the existence of Allah and that we have total faith in His justice if we do not follow up our intentions with our actions; eg. we say we have total faith in Allah, yet when we suffer from hardships we blame Allah instead of being patient.

Increasing our faith involves submitting ourselves entirely to the will of Allah. This means that every aspect of our life, every minute step we take, must be solely for the pleasure of Allah. We must have that uncompromising belief that whatever pleases Allah is the right thing for us.

'Then you (do) remember Me; I will remember you.'



Allah says if we take one step towards Him, He will take several steps towards us. This means that if we make an effort to do something for Allah's pleasure, our merciful Lord will, in turn, help us for sincerely wanting to obey his commands. This further increases our faith.

This divine help is called **tawfeeqe**.

'... every act in consequence of our faith, (further) strengthens (our) faith.' **Anna Letitia Barbauld, English poet.**

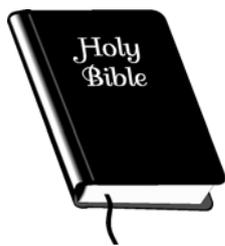
Analogy: Suppose a gardener agrees to assist you to mow your lawn. He turns up with his old hand lawnmower, and starts painstakingly cutting the grass. To ease his hard task, you offer him your automatic petrol lawnmower. So, although you assisted him in that task, his firm intention and will to help was already there.

Similarly, when we have a firm intention of doing a particular good deed, and we have undertaken all the preparations, Allah gives us help to make our task easier.

Now, imagine if that same gardener refused to come and help mow your lawn, you would not offer him the use of your automatic lawnmower. He had no intention of doing the job, so you withheld any help you might have given him.

Likewise, Allah withholds help from those people who choose to disobey his commands, and this is called **khildaan**.

'By it (the Qur'an) He leaves many straying, and many He leads into the right path. But He leaves not straying except those who transgress divine commandments.'



'In return for their foolish and wicked thoughts, which led them astray ... (God) ... punish(es) them ... so that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which one sins.' **Wisdom (11,15-16)**

'Not everyone who (calls) Me 'Lord' ... shall enter the kingdom of heaven ... I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' **Matt (7,21-22)**

Allah gives all of us a soul before we are born. This soul is not gifted to us, so it does not belong to us to do as we like. It is a responsibility (an **ammanat**). We must look after it for Allah, as we will have to **return** it back to Him one day.

When Malakul Mawt arrives to take this soul, entrusted in our care, back to Allah, He will expect it in the same pure, sinless state that He gave it to us in. It is up to us how we return it:

- Either, we will return it as it was given to us – no better, no worse.
- Or, we will return it in a worse condition than it was given to us in.
- Or we will return it in a better condition than it was given to us in.

Curtains of lust, greed, passion, selfishness and excessive love of wealth, wife, children, position and status hinder our intelligence.

'When the passions become masters, they are vices.' **Pensees**

The Holy Qur'an says that only the light of **taqwa** can remove this darkness. Taqwa is having an awareness, fear, love, and overall consciousness of Allah, and acting in accordance with that consciousness.

A person with Taqwa desires only to gain the pleasures of Allah and to stay away from that which displeases Allah. S/he is careful not to go beyond the bounds and limits set by Allah. Taqwa is basically a **protection**, from those things we do that harm our soul.

Remember: do not undervalue any goodness. Likewise, do not underestimate any evil and protect yourself from it.

The Qur'an mentions many benefits of taqwa. We will only discuss two of these:

- Clear-sightedness: with taqwa, we can understand why Allah has commanded us to do certain things and avoid others. The stronger our faith, the fewer the doubts.
- Guidance: when we have taqwa, we are obeying Allah at all times and He has said that if we come a little closer to Him, He will come a lot closer to us, and will at all times guide us towards the truth.

Islam makes it clear that **all** human acts are acts of worship **if** they are done for Allah and in accordance to His Divine Law. So, worship in Islam is not limited to religious rituals.

Islam explains that faith and action go hand-in-hand. Allah has given people freewill, and the measure of one's faith is one's deeds and actions. So, what better religion than Islam?

WORKSHEET 11.2: FAITH AND RELIGION

Describe briefly, in your own words, the meaning of the following quotes:

'Faith is building on what you know is here, so you can reach what you know is there.' **Cullen Hightower**

'Faith is not something to grasp, it is a state to grow into.' **Mahatma Gandhi**

LESSON 3: NAFS:

In Islam there is a lot of emphasis placed on moral behaviour.

Allah has created human beings in 3 parts:

- One part is like an empty car shell, used to hold something, called the **body**.
- The other part is like the engine, without which the car will not function, called the **conscience (nafs)**, and
- the third part is like the battery, without which the car will not run, this is the **soul (ruh)**.

Our body needs looking after; we have to feed it and keep it warm, otherwise we will become ill, and suffer.



The soul also needs looking after, otherwise it, too, will become ill. The only way to look after the soul is to constantly strengthen our faith; and this is where our nafs comes in.

The nafs is the most important part of our being

When we help someone, we feel happy; but it is the nafs, and not the body, that feels happy. Morality is food for the soul, and if we feed it regularly, it will remain healthy.

All the sets of **laws** sent down by Allah had their own codes of conduct. The arrival of Islam **perfected** all the rules. Man in one way or another has altered other religions; only Islam remains as **pure** as the night it was revealed. Thus, by allowing our nafs to follow the Akhlaq set down in Islam we are feeding our soul with the **best** possible food.



'I have been sent to complete the nobility of character.' **Prophet Muhammad (SAW)**

In this materialistic world the body is being looked after very well, while the nafs is totally neglected. This causes diseases of the nafs, which people do not realise. Such diseases cause **intensive, long-term** damage. To keep the nafs healthy, we have to be aware of our every action.

'The nafs is like a wild horse, and you are riding upon him, if you move your attention for one second, he will throw you off.'
Imam Ali (AS)

Three different states of nafs exist:

Nafs-e-Ammara:

This is the nafs in its **worst** form, where it leads towards evil. When our nafs reaches this state, we are lower than animals in the eyes of Allah. At this stage, we incessantly and unrepentantly commit sins without a care for anyone else.



Nafs-e-Lawwama:

This is the stage where we are not evil, but we still do wrong. It is at this stage that our nafs is referred to as the conscience; there is awareness in our actions because when we do something bad our nafs tells us that we should not have done it, and that we should repent.

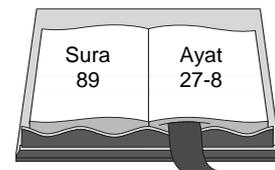


Nafs-e-Mutmainna:

This state is the **goal** of this life: total contentment with Allah. Not to commit any sins intentionally, and to take pleasure in performing good acts.

On the day of Ashura, Allah called to Imam Husain (AS):

'O (thou) soul in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come to your Lord, well pleased (thyself) and well pleasing unto Him.'

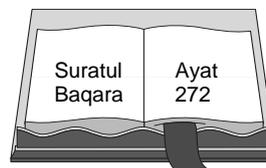


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There are ways of protecting ourselves from the dark suggestions of the nafs:

- Reciting **Bismillah** every time before we do something. This way, we are asking Allah to protect us from **ourselves** as well as other dangers.
- Put some money towards **sadaqa** (for the poor). As a result, Allah will watch over us.

As Allah says in the Qur'an: *"..... and whatever good thing you spend in charity shall be for your own selves; and give not except seeking the pleasure of Allah..."*



- Developing our **willpower**. This is the ability to control our desires. We are always exposed to dangers like drugs, alcohol, and pornography. If we were to give in to these temptations, we would ruin our lives.

When the Holy Prophet (SAW) was asked if he had a voice inside him telling him to do evil, he replied, **'Yes I do! But I keep it locked up.'**

The nafs was not tied up with metal chains, but with the restraints of willpower. This shows that willpower is a very powerful **weapon** against evil. We are able to control our nafs through discipline, which in turn, further strengthens our willpower.

Everything in this Universe has been created in pairs; each has its opposite. There is black and white, strong and weak, good and bad, heaven and hell. These pairs also exist within us. For every good emotion that takes us towards Allah, there is an evil emotion that wants to take us away from Him.

Allah has given us the ability to judge between right and wrong. Furthermore, Allah has sent down a guide for every people, to show the way towards Him, so that on the Day of Judgment people cannot claim ignorance. All we have to do is choose which way we want to follow.

'To every people (was sent) an Apostle: when their Apostle comes before them, the matter will be judged between them with justice, they will not be wronged.'



This simple choice between good and evil is only made difficult because we forget easily. We always think of the present and leave the future to sort itself out.

When we do something Haraam, the pleasure is immediate. Eg. when we steal, we receive the goods immediately; when we obtain power, we can control others at once.

However, when we do something good, the rewards are not immediate; they come later. Eg. when we study for an exam, the rewards come after we have finished the exam and are shown the results; a planted seed takes many years to mature before we can taste the fruit.

Similarly, for every one of our actions there is an **immediate** reaction in our life during the hereafter. Anything we do is not wasted, even if the effects of it are not apparent to us directly.

Only someone who is ignorant and cares nothing for the next life will make the choice that benefits him/her immediately.

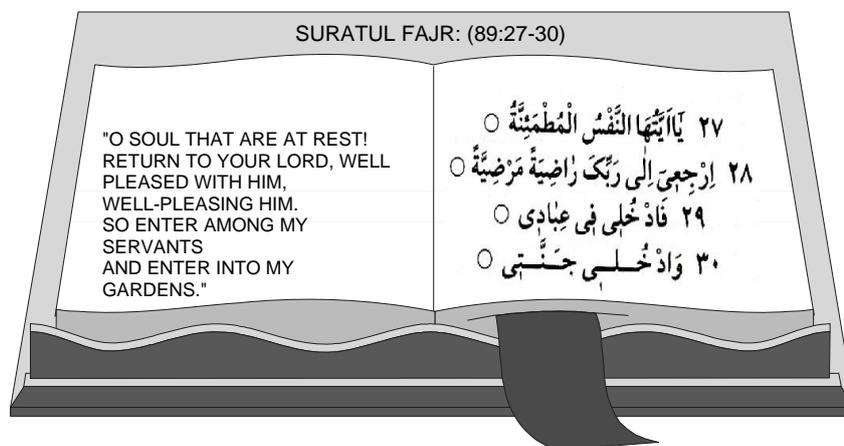
"Whoever dies, sees me, whether he be a believer or a hypocrite."
Imam Ali (AS)

If we are believers, we will be happy to see the Imam, but if we are hypocrites we will become sad when we see him.

When the Angel of Death (Malak-ul-Maut/Israel) arrives, he will tell us not to worry (especially if we have a record of good deeds). Then he will say:

'By Allah, I am kinder to you than your father. Now open your eyes and look.'

Then our spiritual eyes will open: and we will hear the following call:



At that time, if we have let our conscience (nafs) guide us throughout our life then this will be a direct call from Allah to our **peaceful** souls.

Such a soul is both confident in Allah's promise and is sure of the way it made its choices in this world. It was aware of both the excesses and afflictions of the world, but had faith in Allah's **mercy**.

Thus, a true believer leaves this world without any sorrow and without any care. And Allah gives him/her death when s/he desires death above all things, so that s/he may reach the Messenger of Allah.

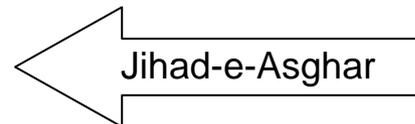
LESSON 4:

JIHAD

The word Jihad means **to struggle** or **to strive**. The most common mistake is to translate it to mean only fighting a physical war. This could not be further from the truth.

If you put effort into any action that gains Allah's pleasure, then that effort is counted as Jihad. Jihad can refer to a physical war if that war is a true fight against disbelievers.

After returning to Madina from a battle, the Holy Prophet (SAW) told his army that Jihad-e-Asghar (the lesser struggle) had been completed, and now Jihad-e-Akbar (the greater struggle) was awaiting them.

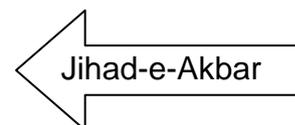


The people, exhausted from battle, looked around anxiously for this new, mightier enemy, but the Prophet (SAW) explained to them:

'... restraining the soul (or self) from its appetite, is the greatest holy war.'

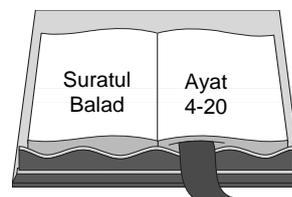
This means that controlling the nafs from its desires takes greater effort than any other holy war. It is the greatest jihad, and we know from our Furu-e-din that jihad is obligatory (Wajib).

Every Islamic action that requires some effort on our part (avoiding Haraam food, praying our Namaaz on time, keeping a beard, wearing Hijab) is jihad.



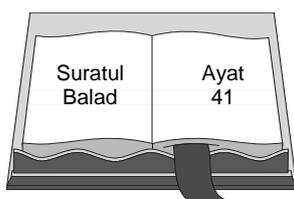
We have been created for a test and must work hard to achieve the results.

'Verily We have created Man into toil and struggle ... And shown him the two highways ... will he be of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (and) deeds of kindness and compassion ... Such are the Companions of the Right Hand ... But those who reject Our Signs, they are the (unhappy) companions of the Left Hand ... On them will be Fire ... (all around).'



Allah explains to us that a person has two choices: to live life the easy way, ie. (aimlessly) and lose out in the next life, or to take the steep slope in this life and benefit in the Hereafter.

Allah explains further about how to perform Jihad:

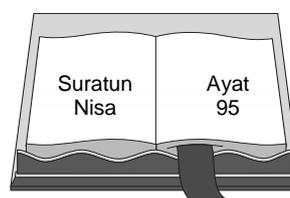


'Go forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the cause of Allah. That is best for you, if you (but) knew.'

So, whether we are rich or poor, able-bodied or disabled, strong or weak, we should each strive towards Allah the best way that we can, to earn His pleasure.

By struggling in the way of Allah we make ourselves better people, and will acquire a reward greater than that for ordinary people.

'Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God has granted (them) a grade higher ... by a special reward.'



**A person who dies in the state of Jihad
is a martyr and the status of a martyr is distinguished.**

The struggle to maintain a marriage is Jihad for a woman. Every moment of effort to preserve her marriage and make it blossom is Jihad, to bring up her children is Jihad, to wear Hijab is Jihad, and Allah will reward her accordingly. The following hadith of our Holy Prophet (SAW) summarises this beautifully,

'Heaven is under the mother's feet.'

Jihad-e-Akbar is regarded as the harder struggle because:

- Its' field of struggle is unlimited.
- It is timeless and boundless.
- Its essence is man against himself.
- The enemy is unseen and cannot be detected by the five senses.

Physical war against the disbelievers is not as long, extensive or difficult as struggling against the desires.

WORKSHEET 11.4: JIHAD:

Explain, in your own words, why Jihad-e-Akbar is considered the harder struggle.

LESSON 5 :

FAITH, SABR AND SHUKR :

Allah has mentioned patience more than 70 in the Qur'an and has commanded patience in more than 16 ways in His Book.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has said that faith is divided into 2 halves:

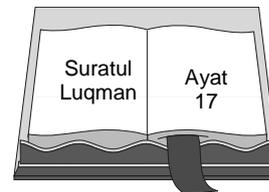
$\frac{1}{2}$ = Patience (Sabr), and

$\frac{1}{2}$ = Thanksgiving (shukr).

Patience (Sabr):

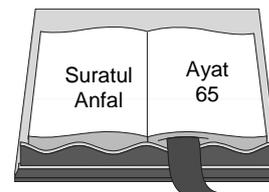
In Islam, patience is a quality that enables one to have forbearance in times of difficulty and hardship:

“O my son, establish prayer, enjoin good, forbid evil, And bear patiently that which befalls you. Truly, these are acts of steadfastness.”



Patience is a quality that is often thought to be a passive and inactive one. People even think that a patient person is a cowardly one. On the contrary, patience is an active and positive action, and requires bravery.

“O Prophet! Urge the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty patient men, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred, they shall overcome one thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand.”



The above verse describes the quality of patience as the quality of a brave soldier.

It is no wonder that Allah repeatedly says in the Holy Qur'an:

“Truly, Allah is with the patient ones.” (Suratul Anfal: Verse 46)

“Allah loves the patient ones.” (Surah Ale-Imran: Verse 146)

“...Indeed Allah is with those who have sabr.” (Suratul Baqarah: Verse 153)

We are told that if we have Sabr then Allah is with us, and we know that if Allah is with us then we have nothing to worry about.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said that patience was required in 3 circumstances:

- **Sabr in times of hardship:** to endure difficult times without blaming Allah, and to carry on with one's responsibilities in spite of the difficulties.
- **Sabr in regards to obedience:** to persevere even though we may find certain acts of worship difficult, like fasting or waking up for prayers or giving khums.
- **Sabr in regards to disobedience:** to resist the temptation to sin.

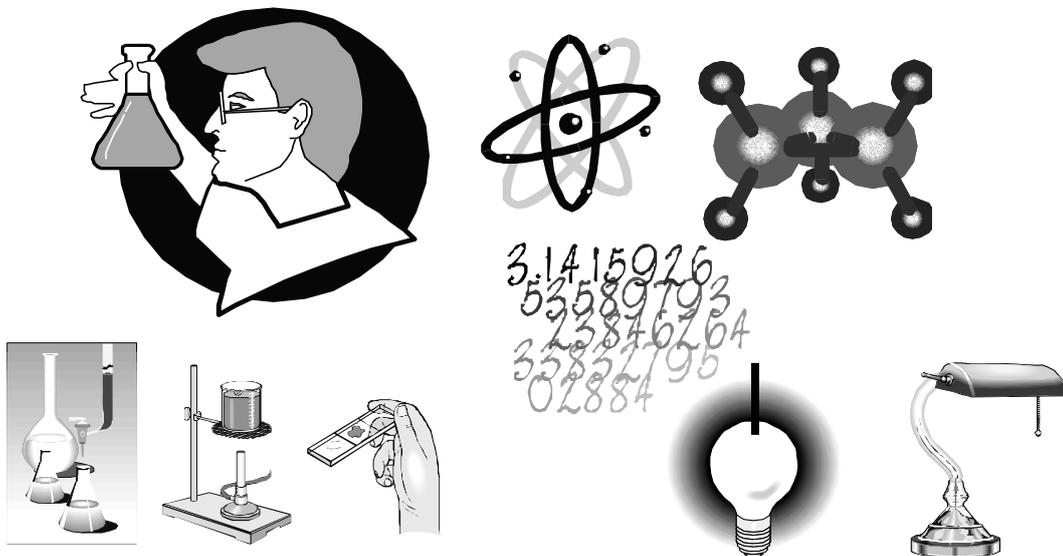
Examples of Sabr:

Eg 1: Kerbala:

The Ahlul Bayt showed by example that, through patience and perseverance, through years of hardship and struggle, we can achieve victory.

Eg 2: Thomas Edison:

Thomas Edison was an inventor. He was expelled from school because he was considered mentally retarded and unsuitable to receive an education. He spent many hours experimenting in the family garage.



His journals show that he went through 10,000 different experiments before perfecting his famous electric lamp. That means he failed 9999 times, but he did not allow his failures to discourage him. He used the same **success formula** that is in the Holy Qur'an, namely **patience** and **perseverance**.

Thanksgiving (Shukr):

This tells us that to have true faith in Islam, we must be patient **and** thankful. We must remember this the next time something unfortunate happens to us.

Once a group of people came to our 4th Imam, Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (AS), and said that they were his true followers.

Imam asked them what they did when they received something nice. They replied that they thanked Allah.



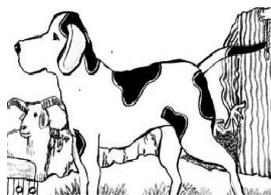
Imam asked them what they did when something nice was taken away from them. They said they got upset, but came to terms with the loss.



Imam asked what they did when they did not get anything. Puzzled, they replied that they did nothing.

Imam replied that these were not the actions of his believers, but those of a dog:

- When dogs are given something, they wag their tails in thanks.
- When something is taken away from them they bark a little to complain, then walk away.
- When they get nothing, they do nothing.



Imam explained that his true followers are those who Allah:

- when they get something,
- when something is taken away, and
- even when they get nothing.



thank

WORKSHEET 11.5: FAITH, SABR AND SHUKR:

Give 2 examples of Sabr and 2 examples of Shukr and explain the role of Faith in both.

LESSON 6: HONESTY AND LYING:

Honesty = truthfulness - in words and actions.

Lying = saying something that we know is wrong intentionally.

The perfect example of Honesty is Our Holy Prophet (SAW), who was known as the Truthful one (As-Sadiq) even by his enemies.

Once a man came to the Holy Prophet (SAW) and told him that he was committing many sins like drinking, gambling, stealing, etc. and now he had decided to become a Muslim but could only give up one of the sins at a time.

The Holy Prophet (SAW) told him to give up lying.

The man agreed, thinking he had gotten off lightly.

The next day, when the man went to do something wrong (stealing), he stopped and thought. If he got caught, he would not be able to deny it because he could not lie. And even if he did not get caught, how would he be able to face the Holy Prophet (SAW) and tell him all the wrong he had done. It would be so embarrassing.

So by giving up lying the man also gave up his other sins.

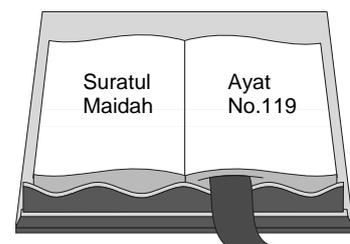
We all know that lying is a great sin; however, sadly, we do not realise how often we are doing it.

One lie usually leads to another, as we try to cover our tracks to keep our lies from being discovered. Therefore, it is better to tell the truth at the beginning; otherwise it will soon develop into a habit.

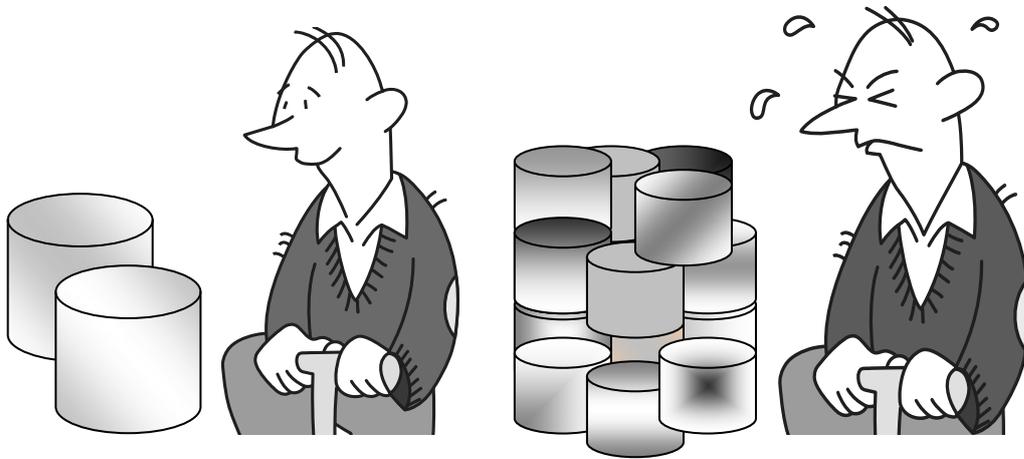
Allah knows everything, so although we may think we have gotten away with telling a lie without anyone knowing, we have to remember at all times that Allah knows, and we are ultimately answerable only to Him.

We have all heard about the English saying "Honesty is the best policy", but what does it actually mean? A policy is a long-term strategy. This phrase means that if we make honesty a part of our character it will not only make our life easy but will also include us among the people "liked" by Allah.

Allah says in the Qur'an.. ***This is the Day that shall benefit the truthful ones their truth; for them shall be gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein forever;....***



Our 6th Imam (AS) said that it is more difficult to repent for many small sins than for one big sin. Remember the story of the two men who came to Imam to repent for their sins.



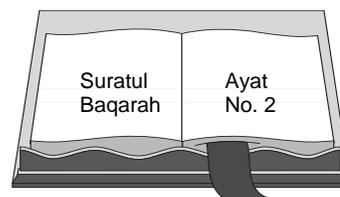
To lie is Haraam because we are **deceiving others**. How many times do we lie in a day? We lie:

- to avoid people or responsibilities,
- to get out of trouble,
- to make ourselves look better, or
- just to get attention.

All the above reasons are bad. If we have done something which gets us into trouble, then we should face it, and not lie our way out of it because that is being very irresponsible.

The Qur'an also tells us not to lie and not to cover up the truth,

"And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when you know (what it is)."



Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has also said:

"Beware of association with the liar for he is like a mirage which draws the far one nearer to you and the nearer far from you."

If we get into the habit of lying, then we will lie very often without realising. We will lie to our family, our friends and everybody we meet. Then one day we will be caught out because we will have trapped ourselves in a corner, and there will be no escape.

Also if we make it a habit of lying, we may start doing other things that are even worse – and cover it up by lying! One evil leads to another.

There should never be any reason to avoid the truth. If we are honest in your dealings with people, if we have nothing to hide, then we should be able to speak the truth without fear.

"A person who is not honest cannot have a perfect and strong faith". Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

"I recommend two things to you: one of them is truthfulness and the other is honesty, for these two are the key to sustenance." Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (AS).

Lying is the doorway to any number of evils. But we may distinguish between lying in the sense of teaching a falsehood about reality (E.g. propagating atheism or a false doctrine) and lying in the sense of deliberately misleading and deceiving another about a matter of which he has certain knowledge.

The first type of lie may in fact be based on honest conviction; the second type of lie is deliberate deception. Untruth in the former sense may be classed as ignorance. Even so, often there is only a short distance between ignorance about truth and lying purposely.

What do other religions say about lying:

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." **Judaism and Christianity: Proverbs 12.22.**

"Do not assert with your mouth what your heart denies." **Taoism: Tract of the Quiet Way.**

"I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." **Christianity: Matthew 12.34-37.**

"There is no evil that cannot be done by the liar, who has transgressed the one law of truthfulness and who is indifferent to the world beyond." **Buddhism: Dhammapada 176.**

"All things are determined by speech; speech is their root, and from speech they proceed. Therefore he who is dishonest with respect to speech is dishonest in everything." **Hinduism: Laws of Manu 4.256.**

"A liar lies to himself as well as to the gods." **Buddhism: Sutra 27.**

When a person maintains honesty and truthfulness, they become characteristics of all his actions and he is righteous.

Scholars have identified **six aspects of truthfulness** that a Muslim must maintain:

- **Refraining** from telling any lies.
- **Sincerity of intention** - which means not to say something verbally and have something different in mind.
- **Truthful resolve** – which means if we intend to do something good, we should strengthen our resolve to do it, especially when the chance presents itself.
- **Acting** on what one has resolved.
- **Sincerity of action**.
- **Sincerity of attitude** – which means that if we say that we rely on Allah, we actually mean it and it is endorsed by our actions.

A person who combines **all** the six aspects of truthfulness is a true believer. Moreover, he is bound to be good, because truthfulness encourages every aspect of righteousness.

When a person maintains truthfulness, he earns the title of “truthful” not merely among his fellow human beings but also with Allah. This is a verdict passed on him and publicized among angels and other creatures of Allah.

Conversely, falsehood leads to evil, since a liar thinks that he can cover up any evil action he commits with a lie. If, he is successful once, he is encouraged to do it again.

In actual fact, every human being is on a journey that lasts throughout his life. He is either moving towards heaven or towards hell. Every deed he does is a step in his journey. He chooses his directions. When he dies, he reaches the position towards which he has moved progressively. He is not admitted into Heaven or thrown in Hell all of a sudden.

It is important to realise that Islam abhors lying in all situations. It should be noted however that there are cases when telling a lie is acceptable. However in normal situations, telling a lie is forbidden, whether it is said in earnest or in jest.

LESSON 7:

HAQQ-UN-NAAS:

Haqq = right (ie. a person's right to have or own something)

Naas = person or human beings.

Thus, **haqq-un-naas** means the rights of people. Every person has certain rights which are vital, and should not be taken away.

Allah can forgive us for the sins that we commit against Him (eg. qadha namaaz), provided we repent for them sincerely; but how can He forgive us for the sins that we commit against others. That would be going against His justice. We cannot be forgiven for breaking the rights of others, **unless** the person whom we have wronged forgives us, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim, a sinner or a believer.

A person has a right over you even when he is not there. Imagine you were at a gathering, talking with others. Even if I am not at that gathering, I still have a right that my name should not be insulted, nor my reputation tainted.

This means that if you do **gheebat** or **tohmat** in which my name is mentioned then you have committed a sin against me.



This sin against me cannot be forgiven unless I have forgiven it. This is the reason why we should avoid committing actions that breach the rights of others. Islam is a religion that not only benefits a person directly, but also helps the community in general. Where else can we find laws that command us to guard other peoples' reputation in public and private. Each of us has a responsibility to the other: to maintain justice and respect the rights of the other.

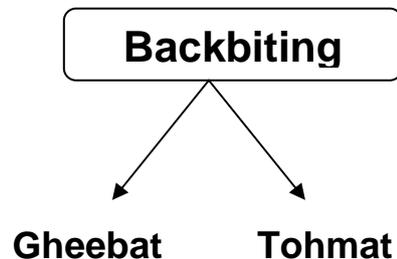
Islam advises that we should seek forgiveness from the person whom we have wronged before one of the parties dies. If one person dies before forgiving the other, there is no direct way of obtaining forgiveness, and that sin will carry forward until the day of Judgement. Consider the danger of this sin!

These social crimes break the community as they cause enmity and hatred. Let us remember this the next time we are about to commit a sin against another human being.

LESSON 8:

BACKBITING (GHEEBAT & TOHMAT)

Backbiting = talking about a person in his/her absence in such a way as to displease him/her.



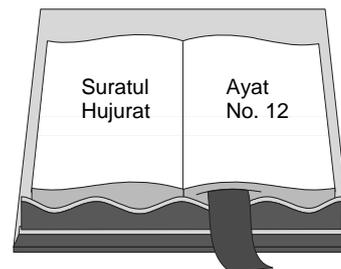
Gheebat = when you say something bad about a person and it's true.

Tohmat = when you say something bad about a person and it's a lie.

Both are considered major sins and are strictly forbidden.

A famous quote from the Qur'an says,

"....And do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the dead flesh of his brother ?" (49:12)



This shows us that backbiting is as bad as eating the flesh of our dead brother. If someone you know has done something bad, they have killed their own reputation. By telling others what they have done, you are enjoying and gaining at their loss. It is as if you are eating and feasting on the reputation they have already destroyed.

Backbiting is haraam because it spoils peoples' names and characters. When you speak badly of someone, you make others think badly of them.

Also, the people who are being talked about are not there to defend themselves. If you hear wicked things about others, you should give the others a chance to defend themselves by explaining, before you believe what you hear.

It is the duty of a good Muslim to stop others from speaking ill of a person, and if that is not possible he should go away from the people who are talking ill.

Story 1:

In the early days of the first few Imams, there were two men. Let us call the first one Haroon and the second one Khalid. One day Khalid started telling everybody bad things about Haroon. He was spreading lies all around.

After a few days Haroon heard about this. The first thing he did was to go home and put all his money and gold and silver in a big bag and then took the bag to Khalid's house.

When Khalid saw Haroon coming he became scared because he thought that Haroon had come to beat him up. Khalid came out of his house and fell on his knees and begged to Haroon, "O Haroon, I am really sorry, I did not mean to tell tales about you, O please do not beat me!!"

Haroon said, "I have not come to beat you, I have come to give you this money, and this wealth." Khalid had the shock of his life.

Haroon continued, " Khalid, I have come to thank you, here have this wealth of mine." Khalid stood up and asked, "Why are you giving me wealth when I have insulted you and spoilt your name among the people?"

Haroon replied. "The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said that if one person TALKS BEHIND THE BACK of another, the thawaab of the first person gets transferred to the second." he continued, "So now that you have spoken bad of me behind my back, I am thanking you for giving me all your thawaab. This money is too little for the amount of thawaab that you have given me."

Story 2:

Once there was a man who did tohmat of our Sixth Imam.

Imam did not know about it until a few days later when one of his 'friends' came to him and said, " Oh Imam, I have heard terrible news. This person has been going around and saying this about you."

Imam became angry at his 'friend'. He said, "Think of the person who did tohmat towards me as if he shot an arrow at my body. I did not hear him so it is as if the arrow missed me; But by telling me this news, you have picked up the arrow from the ground and have hit me with it."

In Islam, we should always give the benefit of the doubt to others. Even if someone does do something bad, you should hide it, and not tell others.

Reasons to hide others faults:

- A person may repent & Allah forgive, but people still remember.
- How would we feel if Allah made others aware of the wrongs that we perform?
- If Allah can hide our faults, then you should hide the faults of others.

Gheebat and Tohmat are often a result of jealousy or a need for attention. If a person is respected, has done good, has helped others, there will always be people who are angry and bitter that such a person is respected by all. The result is to try and slander and destroy this reputation by sowing seed of venom in their character, by telling the world lies or exposing sins to turn that respect into outrage and shame. Such people are cursed by Allah, and are referred to as the evil whispers of mankind in Suratun Naas

Consequences of Backbiting:

In this world: loss of reputation, etc. It has become second nature for our tongues to wag continuously with tales of other peoples' lives, regardless of the devastating effect this has on our souls, our family lives, and ofcourse our society as a whole.

In the hereafter: On the day of Judgement, the person who was backbitten about will claim retribution from the one who spoke ill of him. Allah will compensate the victim by handing over the good deeds (the currency of the Hereafter) of the culprit to him. If the latter has no good deeds to his credit, the sins of the victim will be transferred to him.

A tremendous loss indeed! How often do we engage in gheebat, yet regard ourselves as free from this crime?

To comment about a person being 'fat' or 'skinny' or being a 'slowcoach'; etc. is also gheebat. Negative comments about a persons' dressing habits, eating habits, manner of walking or speaking. Physically imitating the action of a person - often done merely to amuse others, too is gheebat.

Thus in a mere facial expression, one is passing over his hard-earned precious good deeds to the next person. Can we really afford to do this?

The Harms of Gheebat:

- duas are not answered,
- good deeds are not accepted, and sins are increased
- causes ill feeling, hatred and animosity between people.
- people soon become wary of a person who constantly backbites, since they fear he will also talk ill of themselves to others. Thus people lose trust and confidence in such a person.



LESSON 9 :

RESPECT TO PARENTS:

Allah has mentioned kindness to parents at 7 places in the Qur'an.

Why have parents been mentioned so many times? It is because **parents play a very important role** in the upbringing of the children.

Why do our parents look after us so selflessly? It is because we are their children, and they love us. They want us to grow up being healthy and well adjusted. Since they work so hard to make us better people, shouldn't we also love, respect and obey them in return?

Our parents give us love and attention; they teach us the difference between what is right and what is wrong, provide food, clothing and shelter. Even if there is only enough food for one person, they willingly give it to their child.

This is one of the reasons why Islam has said the way to heaven is through the pleasure of your parents.

"Heaven lies under the feet of your mother." Holy Prophet (SAW)

A man came to the Prophet and said,

'O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?
The Prophet said: "Your **mother**"

The man said, 'Then who?'
The Prophet said: "Then your **mother**"

The man further asked, 'Then who?'
The Prophet said: "Then your **mother**"

The man asked again, 'Then who?'
The Prophet said: "Then your **father**"



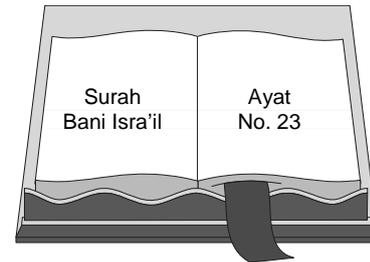
Allah says in the Qur'an,

"Worship Allah and do not join any partners with Him; and do good to your parents."



He also tells us,

"Your lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one of them or both of them become old in your life, do not say a word of contempt (not even "UF") to them or repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say: "My Lord! Bestow upon them your mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."



Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq (AS) said that if a milder word were to exist in the language, Allah would have used it instead.

"Things taught to children become engraved on their minds like engravings on stone." **Imam Ali (AS).**

A prayer for parents from the Holy Qur'an (Bani Israil,24):

"Rabbir Ham Huma Kama Rabbayaani Saghira".

"My Lord, look have mercy on them (our parents), as they looked after me when I was little."

The behaviour of young children is predominantly influenced by their parents. Islam places great emphasis on moral conduct and behaviour.

Children are not born knowing everything right or wrong in social norms. They need clear guidelines about good and bad behaviour, and the Islamic and un-Islamic way of life. The greatest effect is of the parent's attitude and example rather than the words in a book.



Parents help children make appropriate decisions and be responsible for their decisions. Younger children can only make decisions about the present (i.e. what clothes to wear that day), but grown-ups can make decisions that may affect their future, under parental guidance (i.e. selection of career, school and hobbies).

Children left to grow on their own will come to regret a lack of direction in their childhood.

Children are very susceptible to any and every influence. As they grow, their organs of reception start working and accept new ideas and influences.

It is our parents who mould our development from birth so that we learn to accept the right ideas and reject the wrong influences. The influence of parents is high during early age (0-8 years).

A man once went to the Prophet (SAW) and asked him if there was any act worthy of Allah's mercy. The Prophet (SAW) asked him whether his parents were still alive, to which he replied yes. The Prophet (SAW) replied that the best deed worthy of Allah's grace was to be kind to parents since this was preferred over all acts.



Indeed, the first thing that Allah caused to be written on "Lauhe Mahfuz" (the stone tablet created before time) was that "I am Allah, and there is no god except Me. I am pleased with the man with whom his parents are pleased, and displeased with him whose parents are not pleased."

Duties to Parents

There are many ways to respect your parents, some of them are:

- Never raise your voice at them.
- Do not speak when they are speaking.
- Never correct them in front of others.
- Do not displease them or make them angry.
- Never insult or argue with them.

Nothing a son normally does for his parents may be considered adequate repayment for the love and kindness they showed him when he was young (indeed, parents' love, care and kindness overflow throughout our lives).

Bill of Rights for Parents:

- Parents have a right to receive love, respect and affection from their children as mentioned in the Qur'an.
- Parents have a right to educate and discipline their children as mentioned in the Qur'an and shown by the example of Prophet Muhammad.
- Parents have a right to know more about their children, and monitor other influences affecting them.
- Parents have a right to say no to unusual demands of children.

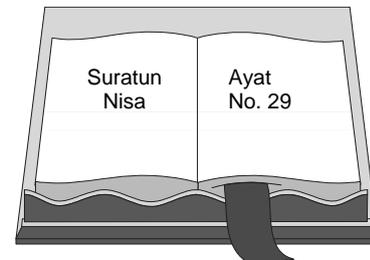
LESSON 10 :

SUICIDE :

Suicide is defined as a conscious and deliberate taking of one's own life.

It is Haraam to commit suicide.

"O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will: NOR KILL (OR DESTROY) YOURSELVES: for verily God has been to you Most Merciful." (4:29)



Before we discuss why suicide is Haraam, we should look closer as to the causes and reasons of suicide.

People could commit suicide for the following reasons (among others)

- Frustration
- Insanity
- Lack of attention (feels neglected and unwanted)
- Desperation (inability to cope with problems)

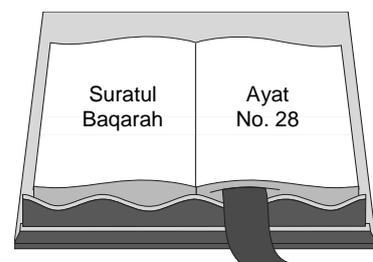
All the reasons above are causes, but what is the result? Every person performs an action to obtain some sort of result. The result of suicide is escape, to escape from the problems of this life.

When a person commits suicide, he is taking his life. He may think that he will leave the problems of this world behind, but is he so confident of his good deeds, that he thinks he is ready to face the day of Judgement? He may have even more problems in the next life if his record of good deeds weighs lightly.

Suicide can take many forms, it can be drinking poison, slitting wrists or even taking substances, which you know, are lethal and will eventually kill you (drugs).

Allah has given us life as a gift. The body is on "loan" to us, and will be returned to Allah after we have used it. The soul however cannot be killed or destroyed (except by Allah's Will).

"How can you reject the faith in God? Seeing that you were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will you return." (2:28)



WHY IS SUICIDE HARAAM?

Suicide is Haraam in principle because the person who commits it

1. Loses his faith in God
2. Defeats the purpose of his existence
3. Destroys that which he has not right to destroy

These are explained below:

1. One of the Gunahe Kabira is to lose hope in receiving any mercy from Allah. When a person commits suicide due to frustration or desperation, he feels he can no longer cope with the pressures of life, then he is losing hope in Allah's mercy.

Allah tells us in Qur'an in Surah 2 ayat 155

*"Be sure We shall **TEST YOU** with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give **glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.**"*

Allah is explaining to us our faith will be tested with hardship in this life. Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere means to give good news to those who try hard and are patient. Those on the other hand who are impatient and give up (i.e. commit suicide) lose faith in Allah's mercy, because He has **PROMISED** us that after hardship He will give us relief.

He has also promised us that He will not give us so much hardship that we cannot bear it; it is only a test, like an examination. (Surah 2, ayat 286)

"On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns."

2. The purpose of this life is to be tested. It does not mean that we cannot enjoy this world, but it does mean that this world should be only part of our final aim. Think of an examination, it is hard work but if you study well and revise hard, than you will enjoy sitting the paper, and look forward to the results.

To commit suicide is like walking out of the exam half way. When you end your life, your book of deeds becomes shut. If you try your best in the exam, even if it is very difficult, **THE MORE YOU ANSWER, THE MORE MARKS YOU WILL GAIN.** However if you were to stop writing half way, any marks which you could have gained are now lost. Similarly any blessing or change of circumstance due to Allah's mercy is lost once you commit suicide, you've walked out of the biggest exam of your life. The results will not be too good on the day of Judgement either!!

3. Allah has given us the greatest gift "**L I F E !**"

To return it to HIM is to show ungratefulness and is like a son answering back to his father.

Allah says in Qur'an, Surah 17 ayat 33

"Nor take life - which God has made sacred - except for just cause."

The body and life have been given to us with the grace of Allah. By killing oneself, we are rejecting Allah's blessing and refusing it.

Here we are, unable to thank Allah for life, and instead we destroy what we should be thankful for.

LESSON 11:

EXTRAVAGANCE:

Extravagance means to use too much of something when it is not necessary. It means WASTAGE.

The Arabic word for this is pronounced as ASRAAF.

Allah explains to us in the Holy Qur'an, Surah 5, ayat 90:

"O you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which God has made lawful for you, But commit not excess for God does not love those given to excess."

In Islam, we place great importance on stopping wastage. Most children will remember that when they leave food on their plates, then they are told not to commit Asraaf. However, Asraaf does not apply only to food, although that is an important area.

When non-Muslims see a Muslim finish every morsel of food on his plate, they think that this person is greedy, or that he is stingy. This just shows a lack of understanding on the other person's part.

Islam teaches us to have respect for all things that Allah has blessed us with, and what is more worthy of respect than the sustenance (food) that HE has provided?

This means that we should respect food, by not abusing it. We should not play with food, even for fun. We should never abuse it in any way, and should NEVER throw it away unless it is spoilt. If we throw food away without reason, then we are throwing away a gift from Allah. This shows how ungrateful we are.

If I was to give you a present, and you were to throw it away in front of me, this would obviously be due to lack of respect for me and my present. Similarly with food.

If we are hungry, no one is saying that we should not eat. However we should put only as much on our plate as we think we will be able to finish. If we are still hungry after finishing, we can put some more. But how many times have you seen people who are hungry, put a heap of food on their plates, eat half of it, and throw the rest away!!

How many people are there in the world who do not have enough to eat, and don't even know where their next meal will come from. What right have we to take food for granted so as to be able to throw it away, as if it were rubbish.

This extravagance is very often seen in day to day life. Even buying food to eat outside, when you know there is food waiting at home is a form of Asraaf.

Islam explains to us that to waste is not allowed. Allah has given us whatever wealth we possess. No one is telling us not to spend it. No one is telling us not to buy expensive things, cars, clothes, food.

No one is refusing us to buy good things, food or clothes.

The Holy Qur'an itself says in Surah 7 ayat 31.

"O children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters."

It is not wrong to buy valuable things if WE ARE GOING TO USE THEM. However, to spend money unnecessarily on something of no use, this is not allowed.

Why are there people who spend extravagantly on purpose, what are their reasons ?

Reasons for Asraaf include,

- 1) for the sake of showing off to others.
- 2) buying something just because your neighbour has it, (keeping up with the Jones)
- 3) having no value for wealth, buying for the sake of buying.

All these reasons are abominable and show the person has lack of responsibility with his/her wealth. When, on the day of Judgement, Allah will ask "How did you spend the wealth with which I provided you ?", the people who have committed Asraaf will have no excuse, and will earn the displeasure of Allah.

If we think of Allah whenever we spend the money He has given us, and think whether He would approve of our purchase, than we will never commit Asraaf.

LESSON 12:

GREED

The Arabic word for greed is Hirs.

To be greedy means to always want more and more without ever stopping. There are many areas in which people have greed, from food, clothes, power to money.

Greed, on most occasions, is bad because it means that you are not satisfied with what you have.

There is however **ONE** occasion where being greedy is good; this is when you are greedy for knowledge.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said

"Two greedy persons are never satisfied; those greedy for acquiring knowledge and those greedy for accumulating wealth."

One of the reasons to avoid greed is that it lowers the respect people have for you.

Example

If a person is being greedy with food, and is eating with both hands and swallowing as much as possible, then people will look at him and wonder if he has ever seen food before!! They will think that he is still a baby and will have no respect for him.

You should always try to be satisfied with what Allah has given you. If you want more, then work for it, and Inshallah it will come. When you have a certain amount of something, ask yourself whether you **NEED** more, or are you being greedy. One of the best ways to stop greed, is to share what you have with others who need it.

LESSON 13:

MISERLINESS / TO BE STINGY

The Arabic word for miserliness is *Bukhl*.

A simple meaning for miserliness is to be stingy.

This means giving very little of what you have to someone who needs it.

Example: Imagine you were eating, and you had plenty of food. If a poor man came to the door and asked for something to eat, and you gave him a FEW GRAINS OF RICE, or a FEW CRUMBS OF BREAD, then that is being miserly.

Allah tells us in the Holy Qur'an:

"Make not your hand (tied like a miser's) to your neck, Nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute (have nothing left)."

This means that you should always be generous, but not so generous that you have nothing left!

If your mother asks you to help her for five minutes, and you set your stop-watch so that you help her for **exactly** five minutes and then go away, then that is being stingy.

There should **never** be any miserliness in the home. If your brother/sister wants to use something of yours, you should give it freely, and not count how much of it was used or how long it was used for.

The opposite of being stingy is being charitable. We have already talked about generosity, to be generous is to be charitable.

Allah explains to us about charity in the Holy Qur'an, Surah 2 ayat 261:

"The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears with a hundred grain in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing."

LESSON 14:

USURPING OTHER PEOPLES' PROPERTY

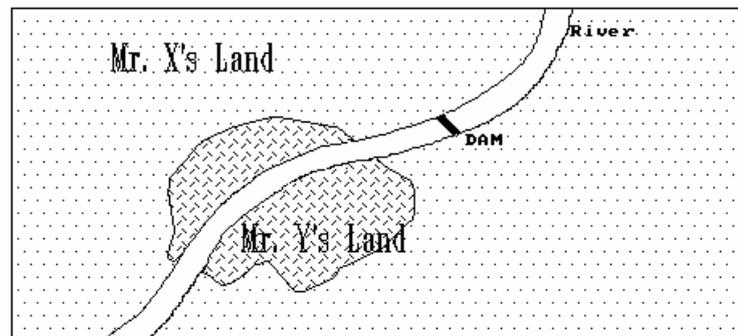
Usurpation means to take something (seize) which is not yours, by force. The force can be physical, but is more often threats of another nature (blackmail etc.)

Usurpation is haraam because it is an unfair gain at the expense of the victim (person whose things are being usurped) who is powerless to help himself.

The person doing the usurping is using the worldly power and wealth given by Allah, to acquire the property/rights of someone who is not as well off.

Imagine there were two farmers Mr.X and Mr.Y.

Mr.X's farm is very big, and he wants to buy Mr.Y's farm to make his own farm even bigger.



However, Mr.Y refuses to sell his farm. Mr.X then builds a dam across the river and blocks it off from Mr.Y's land. This means that Mr.Y runs out of water to feed his cattle, to water his crops, etc...

Mr.Y goes bankrupt and has to sell his farm to Mr.X, who then opens up the dam.

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF USURPING OTHER PEOPLES PROPERTY, because Mr.Y is forced to sell the land, even though he doesn't want to.

One of the worst things to usurp is another person's right. In many countries, you will find that the central authority do not give the population the basic, human rights which Islam commands for all people.

STEALING

To steal is **HARAAM**. It means to take what does not belong to you with the niyyat (intention) of not returning it.

There are people who say that it is alright to steal as long as it from a non-Muslim. Does this make sense to you? Of course not !!

You are not allowed to steal from anybody, whether he is a Muslim or not.

Stealing does not just mean going and taking something. Very often it can occur in a more subtle way. If I buy a train ticket to get from A to B, and I use that same ticket to go to place C, even though I know that I am not allowed, then that is also stealing. This is known as fare cheating, and many people do it saying that it is not really stealing, but it is.

What about if you use someone else's travel card or ticket to go somewhere, after they have finished using it? Is that stealing. Think about your answer.

When an object is stolen, that object becomes **Ghasbi** (stolen property).

If for example a man who is fasting steals a shirt and wears it. Then, later on he offers his prayers, and in the evening he breaks his fast. Since the shirt was **Ghasbi**, both the Salaat and the fast will not be accepted.

WHY IS STEALING HARAAM ?

Stealing is forbidden because you are benefiting from other people while they lose out. **You are gaining at someone else's loss.** If someone is working to earn or get something, and you take it away from them, then it is unfair, and it is called stealing. That is why stealing is haraam.

LESSON 15:

BRIBERY AND USURY:

To bribe someone means to influence their decision by offering them payment of money or some other worldly gain.

This is a **MAJOR** sin and is condemned by Islam.

Imam Ali (A) has said that:

*"God has **cursed** one who **TAKES** a bribe, one who **GIVES** a bribe and one who **CAUSES** a bribe to be taken."*

The reason that Allah has forbidden bribery for us is that it is very UNFAIR.

Suppose that there is a person who is stealing money from a company. Now, if a second person sees the thief taking the money, this person can go and tell the Police.

If the thief says to the person, "If you don't tell anyone, I will give you some of the loot!!"

This means that the second person has changed his mind from calling the police to helping the thief get away. (i.e. he has been influenced.)

This is bribery. It is haraam because the person is letting money or other riches make up his mind, not his heart or conscience.

If something is right, you should do it, it doesn't matter what others say or think. If something is wrong, you should not do it, no matter how much people will pay you for it. Never let anything influence your decision from the truth.

A person who accepts a bribe is cursed by Allah, because he is selling his heart (conscience) for this world, this means in the next life, he will be among the losers.

What other examples of bribery can you think of?

USURY

Usury means to charge too much interest.

We all know that to charge interest is HARAAM anyway.

Interest means that if you lend money, you charge a bit extra when the person comes to pay you back.

Example: If you lent 10 to me, and when I come to pay you back, you ask for 11, then this is interest at 10%. This is haraam.

Usury means to charge too much interest.

Example: If you lent 10, and when I come to pay you back, you ask for ,16, then that is usury, because the interest rate is now 60%.

Allah tells us in Qur'an, Surah 2, ayat 275,

*"Those who devour **usury**..... they say "Trade is like usury", whereas Allah has made trade lawful and has forbidden usury."*

Surah 2 ayat 278,279

"Oh you who believe! Fear Allah and give up your demand for usury, if you are indeed believers."

"If you do not, take notice of WAR from Allah and his Apostle."

Why is Usury haraam?

One of the reasons why usury is haraam is because you are taking advantage of people who are not as well off as yourself.

Whatever you have, money, or good clothes or some other wealth, you should thank Allah, because He is the one who gave them to you. Does He charge you interest on what He gives you?

Since that money is given to you, you have no right to lend it to somebody **and** ask back for more than you gave, because that is being greedy.

LESSON 16:

CHEATING AND EMBEZZLEMENT:

To cheat means to gain something by *trickery*.
Cheating is **HARAAM**.

There are many different ways of cheating, a few examples are:

- a) To hide the defect of a thing one sells to another person.
- b) To copy someone during an exam.
- c) To borrow money off a person and then never pay it back.
- d) To collect money for a charity, and then spend it on yourself.

In English there is a saying,
"The end justifies the means"

This means that no matter what you do, it doesn't matter as long as the end result is good.

In Islam this is **NOT** the case. If you have to cheat to do something good, it is better not to do the good deed.

Example:

I want to donate some money to the mosque. Now, if I go around telling people that I am in hardship, and that I need money, and I donate the money which I am given to the mosque, will I get thawaab?

The answer is NO. Instead of getting thawaab, I will get gunah (sins) for cheating the people.

One thing about cheating is that no matter how many people you cheat, or how well you can cheat, you can **NEVER** cheat yourself or Allah. If you are cheating someone, your conscience (the positive aspect of the nafs) will realise immediately.

Some people say that it is OK to cheat people, as long as they are not Muslims.

This is NONSENSE!. All people have rights, and to cheat them out of their rights is forbidden, it does not matter who they are or what they believe in.

THE REASON WHY CHEATING IS **HARAAM** IS BECAUSE :

- 1) YOU ARE GAINING SOMETHING AT SOMEONE ELSE'S EXPENSE.
- 2) YOU ARE GAINING SOMETHING WITHOUT WORKING FOR IT.

Islam is very strict on justice. If you are to get something good, it must be through your own deeds, and not through someone else's.

EMBEZZLEMENT

This means to cheat someone by committing some type of fraud, or to divert money by deceit for one's own use.

This is a very common thing among large organisations, especially in the world today where very few people are guided with moral values. Even in such cases where the person committing the crime is aware of his actions, and his conscience is warning him of the act, he will silence himself, stub out his conscience by saying that it is allowed during business, because business is played by a different set of rules !

Embezzlement is haraam for many reasons, amongst which the unfair gain at someone else's loss is of primary importance.

We must always remember, no matter what action we do, Allah is a witness, watching over us. We should not commit any unlawful act for a variety of reasons, some include Taqwa (to be ashamed of gaining Allah's displeasure), and fear of the day of Judgement (Allah is not cruel, HE will, if HE wishes, forgive those sins committed accidentally, or repented for, but due to His justice, how can we expect forgiveness for those sins we do on purpose against others ?).

LESSON 17:

DRINKING AND GAMBLING:

Another word for liquor is alcohol. When we say alcohol, we mean all beers, spirits, wines and ciders.

We all know that to drink alcohol is HARAAM. Do we know why alcohol has been forbidden?

The answer is yes, and it is because alcohol is bad for us. We all know that Allah is the Most Gracious and The Most Merciful, so He would not forbid anything for us unless it was harmful.

The way in which alcohol is harmful is that it takes you away from your real self. The alcohol reduces the concentration of the mind, and so you are not able to have complete control over your NAFS. As a result you are more likely to commit a sin than you would have been otherwise. This lack of concentration also affects your mind, and your judgement. You can get very angry, you can do things which you can regret later on. All this is caused by the fact that your mind does not have total control over your body.

Alcohol damages the body by destroying the liver and slows down the reactions. This can cause accidents in many things, such as driving. Alcohol is also bad for society in general. The importance of this will be discussed in later classes.

Remember, Allah only forbids us those things which are bad for us and cause us harm, be it on the mind, the body or the soul.

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GAMBLING

To gamble is HARAAM. This sin is as bad as drinking and Allah has put them next to each other, when He tells us in Qur'an, surah 5 ayat 93

"O you who believe! Verily intoxicants and GAMES OF CHANCE, stones and arrows are only a abomination of Shaytan's handiwork, so stay away from it that you may be successful."

Surah 2 ayat 219:

They ask thee about wine and gambling. Say "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; But the sin is greater than the profit."

Gambling is Haraam because a person can lose everything he owns without thinking, and put not only himself, but those who depend on him in hardship. Also it is ADDICTIVE (you can not stop once you have started).

Never let yourself become addicted to anything, because then that thing can have control over you. Islam only want your mind to have control of the body, and nothing else. If a person gambles, he keeps on gambling and forgets everything else, including his Creator, so his life will be in ruins.