



AL MAHDI MADRASAH

AKHLAQ SYLLABUS - CLASS 8

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Comment: this note is good but could do with more acnhorage to hadith and quranic ayats.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 1

WHY SHOULD WE HAVE AKHLAQ?

In Islam there is a lot of emphasis placed on moral conduct.

Why is this so? Why should we behave well, and respect others? What is the reason?

This can be explained to us by the following explanation.

When Allah created the human being, He created it in two parts. One part was like an empty car shell, used to hold something, this is known as the BODY. The other part was like the engine, this is known as the SOUL.

Our body is such that it needs looking after, we have to feed it and keep it warm, otherwise we will become ill, and suffer.

The soul, known as the NAFS, also needs looking after, otherwise it will also become ill. The way to look after this soul is to listen, to think, to respect, to help. When we help someone, we feel happy, but it is not the body that feels happy. It is not the arms, or the legs, or the head that feels happy, it is something else. That something else is our NAFS. The **Akhlaq of Islam is food for the soul**, and if we feed it regularly, it will remain healthy.

This brings another question. Other religions also preach respect, so why don't we follow them?

All the religions which were sent down by Allah were brought with their own codes of conduct. Each religion expanding and adding, until with the advent of Islam, all the rules had been perfected. The other religions have been altered by man in one way or another, and only Islam remains as pure as the night it was revealed. This means that by following the Akhlaq of Islam you are feeding your nafs with the best food.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

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

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There is also a saying in English, that the eyes are the window to the soul. That means that whatever you look at, **DIRECTLY** affects your NAFS.

If you look at things which are Haraam, you are lowering the standard of your NAFS, while if you refrain from looking at Haraam, you are strengthening your the faith of your nafs.

The problem with the world today is that the body is being looked after very well, but the soul is being totally neglected. This causes the disease of the soul, which people do not realise, such diseases cause intensive, and long term damage.

The greatest doctors of the nafs, who have given us rules and examples to follow are the Fourteen Ma'sumeen.

Now we shall examine this nafs and see what it is like. Allah tells us in Qur'an, that we are not capable of understanding the nafs and its creation. However we have been told of the different types of nafs.

In general, there are three main facets of the nafs, called

- a. **NAFS-E-AMMARA** : This is the nafs in its worst form. Where it leads towards evil. When a person reaches this stage, he is lower than the animals in the eyes of Allah. At this stage, he is selfish, he looks at Haraam, he does not care about anyone else. These are the symptoms of this illness, the same way a cough and runny nose is the symptom of a cold.
- b. **NAFS-E-LAWAAMA** : This is the stage where we are not evil, but we still do wrong. It is this nafs which is known as the conscience, because when we do something bad, this nafs tells us that we should not have done it, and that we should repent.
- c. **NAFS-E-MUTMAINNA** : This is the stage which is the goal of this life. To reach the stage of TOTAL CONTENTMENT with Allah. To commit no sin knowingly and to take pleasure in doing good acts. It is this soul which was called on the day of Ashura, when Imam Husain (A) put down his sword and heard the voice saying "Oh soul that is content! Come back to your Lord, well pleased (yourself) and well pleasing to Him."

Imam Ali (A) has said that :

*"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."*

"The restraining the soul (or self) from its appetite, is the greatest holy war."

Here, he is referring to the Nafs-e-Ammara.

Homework

Explain in your own words the meanings of the hadith above.
Also look up the following words in the dictionary and write their meanings.

a. contentment
d. nobility

b. conscience
e. symptom

c. character
f. refrain

CLASS 8 - LESSON 2

CLEANLINESS

By now, cleanliness would have been covered a number of times with you in the younger classes of the Madressa.

Comment: to be clean is amongst the habits of the prophets

Although it is very important to remain clean and in a state of purity (Taharat), this note is to emphasise a different aspect of cleanliness.

We should think about cleanliness, not as something which we do or do not do, but as part of us. Cleanliness should be in all our actions, thoughts and deeds.

We should not only keep our selves physically clean, but keep our thoughts and actions clean.

Our soul is like pure water, and that which holds it (our body), is like a vase. Whatever we see through our eyes enters the water of our soul. If we look at bad things, then we are polluting (making dirty) the water and so our soul becomes dirty. When this happens, we start wanting (desiring) to see and do things which will cause us even more harm, until the water of our soul will become so murky that we will suffocate and drown ourselves in its filth.

We have to keep our soul uncontaminated by only allowing those things which are virtuous to enter it.

One of the ways we can do this, is by remaining in a state of Taharat. Being in wudhu, or performing regular ghusl on Friday and other recommended days, we will keep our mind thinking about Allah, and this will act as a shield, guarding us against Shaitan and the evil thoughts which he so craftily plants into our heart.

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 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."

Even simple acts such as performing wudhu before sleeping are highly recommended. If this is done, the whole night is counted as if you were performing prayers.

Other actions of cleanliness are external. We have always been taught to keep our bodies and our clothes clean, but we should also take a part in keeping our houses, and the surrounding areas clean.

One of the signs of a Muslim is that when he uses something, he leaves it in a cleaner condition than it was before. This means that we should set an example to the non-Muslims, and keep the streets free from litter, keep our houses tidy. If we do this, no one will be able to point at us and blame us. On the contrary we would give Islam the reputation it deserves.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 3

MAINTAINING CLOSE CONTACT WITH OTHERS

Throughout life, you are constantly moving on a journey from cradle to grave. During this journey, you meet a sea of people, some whom you will forget before they leave your eyesight, while others who you will remember even after they have crossed the furthest seas.

Each person you meet adds to what you are in one way or another. How you deal with people in general will be personal and different on an individual basis, and this will be reflected in how you yourself are treated by others.

Comment: the hadith about do to others what they want from you

One group of people who are always taken for granted are the family, however, when you fall and everyone deserts you, your family will be there to pick you up.

Family

A family is a group of people with a special connection binding them. This connection can be by blood, or in some other ways. No matter how badly our family treats us, or how difficult they are to please, we should always keep the family united, and maintain contact with our relatives.

Sometimes it may be difficult to tolerate abuse, or insult from those who are close to you, but if you return kindness to those who are mean, then you will show yourself to be higher and Allah will reward you for your example, which they should follow.

16:90: *God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to KITH and KIN, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may receive admonition.*

Remember our 4th Imam's (A) prayer, in Sahifa e Kamila, "*Oh Allah, give me the grace to act with sincerity to those who were insincere to me.*"

It is your duty to keep with your family, even if they are in the wrong. Do not let pride, or politics enter your thinking. Act in the way Allah would

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like best, and all will be well.

Neighbours / Elders

Respect to Neighbours does not necessarily mean only those people living next door, but all the people in the area close around you (meaning 40 houses). We should have consideration towards our neighbours and try not to do things which will cause inconvenience to them. We should also help them in all ways i.e. sacrificing time and if need be, helping them financially.

Prophet Muhammad (S) was so polite to his neighbours and did so many things for them that the Muslims of the time were worried that it would become wajib upon them to include the neighbours in their will !! (i.e. inheritance).

One way in which we can respect our neighbours is by sending them Halwa or some other sweet when we have our celebrations, such as Eidul Fitr. In this way, we can show them that Islam is a peaceful religion, and Muslims are friendly and helpful.

Respect to elders is a very important concept. Elders are not just old people, but people who have done their share for the community. They have worked hard and it is thanks to them that we have all the things around us today! Is it fair that when they are too old to work, that we should forget them and send them away to old people's homes. We are young now, but how would you feel if after you have lived and given your life in service to the community. and then your own youngsters were to ignore you and forget you.

We must not only respect our elders, but thank them and listen to their advice. No matter how much we know, our elders have had experience, and Imam Ali (A) has said,

"What is better than knowledge is experience."

Allah tells us that the best ornaments of a community are its elderly people. They are the cause of so many blessings that if the younger people knew how much Allah loves the elderly, they would never leave them alone for even a moment.

Under Privileged / The Sick / Servants

These people are in a position where you have authority or control over them. It is one thing to respect and have consideration for people, but a different thing all together to deal with them.

Once there was a poor person who used to work in the fields. His clothes were dusty and tattered. He came to the mosque for prayers and sat down next to a rich man. The rich man moved his clothes to one side so that they did not touch the poor man. The Prophet (S) saw this and asked the rich man as to why he acted in such a manner. Did he think that by touching the poor man, his poverty would be transmitted? The rich man apologised, and offered to share half his wealth with the person he had insulted. The poor man refused, saying that he was afraid that if he took the money and also became rich, he might also become proud and would forget to respect those who do not have as much. This shows that we should not only respect others, but treat them as equals.

How many of us have ever visited a hospital to cheer up those who are sick. We take the health that Allah has given us for granted. There are many who do not have the same luck that we have. You never know, you might be ill one day, or you might have an accident. The way we should thank Allah for the grace He has shown us is to visit those in hospitals, make them feel that they are not forgotten, talk with them and give them small gifts so that they do not feel left out. In doing so, you are showing Allah that you are truly thankful, and that you are using your health and wealth to help those who might not have it in the same amount.

Servants are not slaves, but people who work for you. If you have a maid, or someone who does the housework, or runs errands for you, then they work for you. We should never treat servants, or other employees as if they are second class, or lower than us. If we do, it is a sign of pride and arrogance. Bibi Fatimah (A) had a servant who used to help in the house work. Instead of Bibi Fatimah (A) just sitting, while the servant did all the work, Bibi Fatimah (A) shared the chores. One day she would do the work, and the next day, the servant would do it. When they ate the evening meal, they all ate together, at the same table. This shows the way in which we should treat people who work for us.

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CLASS 8 - LESSON 4

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

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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."

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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.....

CLASS 8 - LESSON 5

SELF RELIANCE

To rely on someone means to **DEPEND** on them.

When a child is born, for the first few years, it is totally **RELIANT**, it depends totally on its mother for nourishment, clothes, warmth, love and affection.

Allah has given us a life where we are born dependant; when we become adults, others are dependant on us (like our children), and finally when we become old, we are again dependant on others due to our frailty.

So life is like a circle, where we move from one position to another, eventually coming back to the point at which we started.

When we are children, and cannot look after ourselves, we are call **dependants**. Islam teaches us that we should grow out of this stage, and learn to be capable to look after ourselves.

This stage is called **SELF RELIANCE**, and means to do as much as we can by ourselves. **It does NOT mean doing ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING by ourselves.** We should not grow and ignore help or aid from another.

Some people have a habit that the minute they want something, they will ask someone to do it for them, even if they can do it themselves. They do not mean to be bossy, or rude.

This is a **dreadful habit**, and leads to people avoiding them.

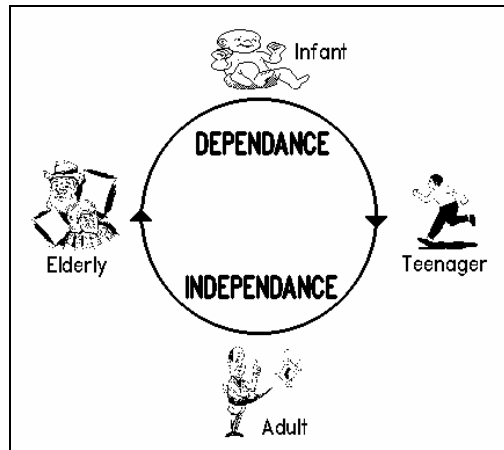


Figure 1: *The circle of life*

Islamic etiquette (*Akhlaq*) teaches us that we should not ask others to do for us what we can do for ourselves, even if we have to go out of our way a little. There are certain groups of people that this does not apply to, like parents, the elderly, those who are handicapped in some way.

Thus we should be self reliant whenever we can.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO US ?

It means that we should make our own beds in the mornings, clean our own rooms, wash our own dishes, do our own chores. We should not expect others to follow us around making sure that our duties are performed for us, that is of course unless we are still little children.

Some people take self reliance too far. Islam explains us that no matter how old we are, our parents still have authority over us. Being older, they have more experience and know (in most cases) what is better for us. Still however, some children will reply to their parents that they know best, and that they will do whatever they want because they are adults now.

We should realise that the we are **DEPENDANT ON ONLY ONE THING**, and that is **Allah**.

No matter how well off we are, or how much we can do for ourselves, we owe our very existence to Allah, who not only created us, but is keeping us alive, every moment.

It was a long journey. At one place, they all decided to rest. The Prophet (S) and his companions alighted from their horses and loosened their luggage. Then they decided to slaughter an animal and prepare a meal. One companion said: "I will slaughter the animal."

Another said: "And I will skin it."

The third one volunteered to cook the meat. And so everyone volunteered to help in one way or the other.

The Prophet (S) said: "I will go to find the fuel."

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Immediately the companions rose to say: "No, O Prophet of Allah, let it be our pride to serve you while you rest. We are here to do the work for you."

The Prophet (S) said: "I know that you could all do that. But Allah hates a person who enjoys such a privilege among his friends and companions. He hates a man who arrogates himself any preferential position."

Then he went towards the woods and brought back with him twigs and thorns which he had gleaned.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 6

COMMUNITY LIFE

Islam is not just a religion, it is the only way to lead a perfect and fulfilling life. The social (community) life of Islam is described below, followed by the codes of conduct by which Muslims are bound.

The word community is defined as *"a body of people forming social unity....having race, religion etc.. in common."*

Islam is a religion which is sent as a gift from Allah to mankind, to bring them together in peace and harmony. This cannot be done unless the whole community is at peace, and this in turn depends on each individual being at peace.

If you think of a community as a football team, for the team to be successful, it has to co-operate, each person must be playing well if the whole team is to play well.

The way Islam has ensured a happy community life, is by laying down social codes (the way to act) which become part of the individual's character and so affect the whole community.

The community is also a test for mankind, because he is subjected to temptation at every stage, as explained below:

There was once a man who went to a cave far away from everyone. He used to stay there, pray, and fast. One day a passer by saw him, and asked him, "Why are you living here, in the middle of nowhere ?"

The man replied, "Over here, I find it easier not to commit sins, and so please Allah. I have not done Gheebat (backbiting), nor Fitnah nor Fasaad (slandering), I have not become angry, and I have not insulted my neighbour. I have been very pious."

The first man laughed and said: "You are only fooling yourself. The only reason that you have remained so noble is that there is NO ONE here for you to abuse. To live with people is a test as to how you can control yourself with them. Whether you can forgive someone who is bad to you, whether you can refrain from backbiting, or teasing etc.. All you are doing is running away, and missing the test."



This is like missing school during the examination period, and then telling you parents "I didn't fail one exam." The thing to realise is that you did not ATTEND one exam!!

The heart of the community is the faith which binds it together and educates it to worship (praise) Allah. This is emphasised in many areas such as congregational (Jamaat) prayers, majalis, and other gatherings. Allah instructs us in Qur'an (Surah 21, Ayat 92):

"Verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I Am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other)."

The strength of the community is based on its unity. There is a saying in English, "Divide and Conquer", which means that if you want to rule over a group of people, you first divide them, and make them quarrel within themselves. This is what the western world is doing to the world-wide community of Islam. We should learn from this, and always stand up for the rights of our fellows.

We are allowed to compromise, but only as much as the Shari'a will allow. We can never compromise our principles or our faith. For this we should look at the lesson taught to us by Imam Husain (A) on the plains of Karbala.

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As well as the community being a test, it is jointly a reward, because a person can surround himself with true friends who are there to help when in need. Allah announces in Qur'an (Surah 49, Ayat 13)

"O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair).. and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (Not that you may despise each other). The most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you."

The way in which a community should live is described by Islamic values, known as the Islamic Code of Social Life, and is now explained.

Islamic Code of Social Life

Islamic social codes are the ideals by which Muslims should try to live within a community.

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

In 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 an infinite (countless) ways to behave in a community, the essence of all the social codes is CONSIDERATION. If one considers the needs of his brother, then he will act accordingly.

Prophet Muhammad (S) has said:

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

In a very short Surah (Asr) Allah explains the social code for the whole of mankind, 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 not done any good deeds, 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 yourself is not enough, you must also serve the community by guiding them towards the truth and enjoining them towards good.

So, another important code of social life is to do **Amr bil Ma'aruf** (enjoin towards good) and **Nahy anil Munkar** (forbid from evil).

Islam is the only religion that can claim to have developed a science in human behaviour, in manners and in the art of perfecting the soul. Apart from being a Muslim, one who follows the teaching of the 12 Imams (A), and believes in the justice of God is called a Mu'min (a believer).

Once Imam Ali (A) was asked, Who is a believer ? He answered as to what the characteristics of a believer should include,

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

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."

Homework

Look at the answer of Imam Ali (A) to the question "Who is a believer" above, and explain in your own words what each answer means.

All homework is to be signed by parents

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CLASS 8 - LESSON 7

ISLAMIC CULTURE

A culture is a set of habits, rules and regulations which a group of people follow as part of their lives.

Islamic culture is how we should behave. It is the way Muslims are taught to live and is based on the two sources of Qur'an and Hadith. A Muslim should understand and practise this knowledge, since when these two sources are combined, we have the way and means to lead a life which will lead to perfection and contentment.

There are countless examples of what we should do, and how we should act, but the essence of all these actions is having good Akhlaq.

To have good Akhlaq, you have to follow a very simple rule. Prophet Isa (A), Imam Ali (A), and Prophet Muhammad (S) have all emphasised one message and that is:

Treat others the way you would like them to treat you.

This just means to have CONSIDERATION, whether it is family, other relatives, or friends.

Whenever you meet others you are carrying the flag of Islam. This means people will look at you and say, "This is how Muslims behave".

There was once a school which had many Muslims students in it. The principal of that school was once asked what he thought of the month of Ramadhan. He responded that it was the worst month in his year. When he was asked why, he replied "The students are all fasting, and so they spit all over the walls, and the floor, since they do not want to swallow their saliva."

Now this shows the example set by the students to the principal. As far as he was concerned, all Muslims spit all over the place during Ramadhan. This gives a bad and untrue image of Islam to the non-Muslim.

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Whenever you do an action, ask yourself, "Would Imam Ali (A) do that?". Then think about your answer before you perform the action.

The Prophet (S) was once asked why he came to the world, what was his purpose. He replied,

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

This means that the main purpose of the Prophet (S) was to improve and perfect the culture, the character of a person, and thus the community.

It is very important that we should have a good Islamic Culture at home, since this is where the foundation is set for growing children. We should make sure that we all recite Namaaz on time. If possible we should pray Namaaze Jamaat at home, with the father leading, and the children following. The mother should teach the girls the importance of wearing Hijab, and the parents should explain about music, about discos, and all the other habits which Islam discourages.

Some parents tell their children not to fast during examinations. This makes the children feel that fasting can be missed for such reasons, and reduces its importance. How can you blame the children, when it is the parents who encourage them? The point that people do not realise is that if you obey Allah, He will help you. Allah has said that for every 1 step you take towards Him, He will take 10 steps towards you. So make a niyyat and fast. Do not look at fasting as if it is going to harm you, but think that it will help your concentration, it will help you to study, and you soon see how well you can actually do.

Comment: reference this step 1 to 10 of Allahs

We must make Islamic culture part of our day to day lives, not just something we put on for the mosque, or for Madressa. Only then will we benefit both in this life, and the next.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 8

DEVELOPMENT OF WILL POWER

What is will power ?

Put simply into words, it means the ability (POWER) to control your desires (WILL).

Will power is very important because, as we have already learnt, the highest stage of this life, is to attain the pleasure of God, to be content; and that **cannot be attained except by controlling and developing the will.**

In the world around us, we are always exposed to objects which are **dangerous**, drugs, alcohol, pornography. If we were to yield (give in) to these temptations, we would ruin our lives.

To have will power means to be able to keep yourself from all these bad habits, from simple points such as sleeping in late to behaviour which is much worse, such as not offering our prayers on time, or even not offering them at all!!

The whole month of Ramadhan is an exercise of will power. **The easiest thing in the month of Ramadhan is NOT to eat food.** It is very easy to fast, compared to what else we must accomplish. We must control ourselves from looking, listening to things which are Haraam. We must control our tempers, and our language. At the end of the month, we would have conquered that voice inside us which invites us towards evil. The voice of our nafs.

Once, the Prophet (S) was asked, don't you have a voice inside you (a Shaitan) which tells you to do evil ? And he replied, Yes I do ! But I keep it locked up.

It was not with chains of metal that the nafs was tied up, but with the fetters of will power. This shows that the most powerful weapon against evil, is what Islam teaches us to use and develop, the will power.

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When Islam teaches us to offer our prayers on time, it teaches us discipline, which strengthens our will power. The same way a mother will tell the child to go to bed exactly at 7.00 pm, so that by discipline, the child will learn to go to sleep early by itself, Islam teaches us that **only by discipline, will we be able to control our NAFS.**

CLASS 8 - LESSON 9

TRUTHFULNESS

Truthfulness is something which everyone knows is important, but yet it is one of the most difficult virtues to make into a habit.

How many times do we lie in a day. Sometimes to avoid people or responsibilities, sometimes to get out of trouble, or sometimes just to make ourselves look big, and to get attention.

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."*

There should never be any reason to avoid the truth. If you are honest in your dealings with people, if you have nothing to hide, then you should be able to say the truth without fear.

Qur'an also tells us to tell the truth, and not to cover it with lies.

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

further more, our Prophet (S) has explained to us,

"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 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.**

CLASS 8 - LESSON 10

EHSAN, SHUKR

In essence this means to thank Allah, for the favours which He has provided for us.

To be thankful to Allah is an important part of worship, or faith in Islam. Imam Ali (A) has said,

"Eiman (faith) is divided into two halves: one half lies in patience and the other in THANKFULNESS".

People often ask how you can call being thankful an act of worship, but Prophet Muhammad (S) explains to us in very simple words the following,

"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"

Allah does not require our thanks, He does not benefit from it in any way. As always, the reason why Islam asks us to perform any action is so that we may benefit from it ourselves. By thanking Allah, we make ourselves remember that it was He who granted us His blessings, it was not just our own work.

He declares in Qur'an Surah 27, Ayat 40,

"...and he who is grateful, verily he is grateful to his own self, and whoever is ungrateful, then verily My Lord is Self-Sufficient and Bounteous."

A thankful person always benefits, from Allah, as well as the people he lives with, as the following hadith shows:

*"That man best deserves a kindness who, when he is put off, bears it patiently; when he is refused, excuses it; and when he receives it, is **THANKFUL**."*

If we thank Allah, and show our appreciation, then with His infinite Grace, He will grant us even more. In Qur'an, Surah 14 Ayat 7, we are told,

"If you are grateful I will increase My favours unto you..."

But instead, mankind has built up a very bad habit, they think that everything they get is from their own work, rather than from Allah.

When we tell people that Allah has given us everything, they laugh and say, " This money which I have here, and the money that is in the bank, who has given that to me! Nobody has given that money to me, **I** have earned it all by **MYSELF**, with **MY** hard work."

This shows that they do not understand. The example is very simple and is explained below:

A young boy was sitting at home on his birthday. Suddenly the door bell rang, and the boy rushed to see who it was.

When he opened the door, he saw the postman with a **HUGE** parcel. The postman gave the parcel to the boy and went away to deliver the rest. The parcel was so big, it was almost as big as the boy. He rushed forward to open it, and when he unwrapped it, he saw a big, new, shiny bicycle. He was very happy.

Then, later on in the evening, the phone rang, and the boy went to pick it up. When he picked up the phone, he heard his grandmother on the other side of the line, she said to him:

"Did you like the bicycle that I sent you?"

The boy replied, "You did not send the bicycle, **the POSTMAN did.**"

This shows that the boy did not understand that the postman only delivered the bicycle, and did not send it.

In the same way, when we do something good, or come first, or get a reward, we should thank Allah, because He is the one who sent it to us.

How should we be thankful ?

If there is a person who has been successful in any way whatsoever, 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.

Yet, even after all the blessings Allah, grants, we still forget and pretend as if it was all our own doing.

Allah says in Qur'an Surah 100, Ayat 6-8,

"Truly Man is, to his Lord, ungrateful; And to that fact He bears witness by his deeds; and violent is he in his love of wealth."

After we offer our prayers, we should go into Sajdah, and actually talk to Allah, thanking Him for the favours we received that day, thanking Him that no accident occurred, that we have been given another day to live.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 11

CHARITY

This means to love one's fellow men and to give assistance to those in need.

Charity is an act which has a VITAL role in Islam. To help those in need is important to the concept of community life, and Islamic morals.

WHY SHOULD WE HELP THOSE IN NEED ?

Allah has assisted us in our difficulties, we hardly even find time to thank Him. What right have we to refuse help to our own fellow human beings, when Allah has never refused us ?

Allah spoke these words to Prophet Musa (A) in Hadith e Qudsi,

"Oh Musa, when you deal well with My creation (people), I am so pleased, it is as if you have dealt well with Me."

This shows that besides fulfilling an obligation by being charitable, you are also gaining the pleasure of Allah.

To be charitable, you do not have to have money. On the contrary, one of the best and most appreciated forms of charity is the giving of one's TIME for a good cause.

When a person donates anything, time or money, he feels as if he has lost it. However, Allah promises in 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."

This means that Allah will increase your own sustenance when you give to others from your earnings.

Allah also tells that we should give BOTH secretly and openly.

We should give secretly so that our niyyat is pure, for the love of Allah. This is so that pride does not enter our actions by giving in front of others.

However, if we feel that by giving openly, that others will see us and follow our example then we should do so.

Without charity, the society we live in will become selfish, and cold hearted.

Always remember, Allah has given you wealth as a test. On the day of Judgement, Allah will ask you, "What did you do with the wealth that I gave you ? Did you spend it on yourself or did you share it amongst the rest of my creation ?"

WITH WEALTH COMES MORE RESPONSIBILITY, because a wealthy person has more chance to be charitable than a poor person. On the day of Qiyamat, Allah will ask who was responsible for the suffering of the poor. Don't let your actions plead guilty for you on that day.

HOARDING

Hoarding means to collect things and pile them up on the side without ever really using them. This is very bad since you are denying others by keeping things for yourself.

A person who hoards things is both greedy and is a miser. He is greedy because he collects everything he can get his hands on. He is a miser because he does NOT USE the things he has, but just keeps them for the sake of keeping.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH HOARDING THINGS THAT YOU LIKE?

If you like things, then it is OK for you to keep them AND USE them. If you do not use them, then you are thinking of yourself more than others since others may require what you have, but may be unable to obtain it.

There is a difference between collecting things and hoarding them. If you collect stamps or books, and you have a keen interest, then that is an acceptable hobby. If you collect items because you do not want others to use them, and you wish to keep them all to yourself, then that is hoarding.

WHAT IS THE WORST THING TO HOARD?

The worse thing to hoard are those things which are necessities of life. If for example I have a well of fresh water in my garden, while others around me are thirsty. If I drink only a bit of the water, but do not give any to my neighbours then that is an example of hoarding a necessity.

A miser may think the money and wealth he is hoarding is very valuable, but this is not the case, since in Allah's eyes they are worth nothing.

Imam Ali (A) has said:

The coin of a miser is as worthless as a pebble.

Allah explains to us in the Holy Qur'an:

(10:57) "O mankind! there has come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts - and for those who believe, a Guidance and a Mercy.

*(10:58) "Say: "In the Bounty of God, and in His Mercy - in that let them rejoice": that is better than the (WEALTH) THEY **HOARD**.*

This shows us that Allah has sent His mercy and His guidance in the form of Islam as a way to cure the diseases in our hearts, and we should be happy and rejoice. All these favours of Allah are much more important, and much more valuable than the worldly things that we hoard.

This world does exist and is for real. No one is denying that fact, but the next world also exists in it we shall dwell forever. It is better to put aside some of the luxuries in this world so that you can save up for the second life.

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If you were working and you wanted to buy a house to live in, you would have to save up from your earnings, and put some aside until you had enough. You know that you will be living in the house for a long time and it will be worth the hardship now to enjoy the house in the future.

Similarly, you are saving up in this life so that you can live comfortably in the next life. You do not need to save up money and wealth, like the hoarder, but you need to save up thawaab and good deeds, and that is by using your wealth to help others.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 12

BEING JUST (ADL) AND JUDGING AGAINST ISLAM.

All men are equal, rich or poor, black or white. This is the basic principle which Islam has always taught. If people are equal in the eyes of Allah, then they must be treated with equality. This is why it is very important to be fair and just when you are making a decision which affects other people.

The story below shows an example of just this :

There was a man who was journeying towards Kufa. When he arrived in Kufa, he decided to be a guest of Imam Ali (A). For a number of days, he stayed with Imam (A) without divulging the purpose of his visit; nor did Imam (A) ask him about it. Finally the man said:

"I have a dispute with a particular party here and I have come to get it settled. Would you act as an arbitrator (judge) ?"

Imam (A) said: "You are party to the dispute, aren't you?"

"Yes," the man replied

"Then you cannot expect me to be your arbitrator. If you wanted me to decide your case, you should not have become my guest. The Prophet (S) said: 'When a person has been appointed a judge or an arbitrator in a case, he has no right to play host to either of the two sides, except when they are both invited together.'"

Justice starts with yourself. You can not fool yourself about what you are doing. If you can be just with yourself, then it is easier to be just with others.

Imam Ali (A) has said that:

"He is the most just man that does justice upon himself without anyone else to judge him."

When we make decisions concerning other people, we have to decide between what we feel is right and wrong. Not between our friends and enemies. It doesn't even matter if family is involved, what is important is that the truth must be told.

This is explained to us by the Holy Qur'an

(4:135) " you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your family, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), in case you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do."

If you feel that it will be difficult for you not to take sides in a decision, then ask someone else to make the decision.

Islam has explained to us how important it is to be fair. Only those people who do not believe in Allah, or who do not care about what Allah says practice injustice.

The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten God; so He has forgotten them.

Allah commands us that we must be Just. If we try to cheat or be unfair, then how can we expect Allah to treat us fairly on the day of Judgement?

(16:90) "God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may receive admonition."

Allah tells us that being just is like being pious, they both gain the pleasure of Allah.

*(5:9) "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: **THAT IS NEXT TO PIETY**: and fear God, for God is well-acquainted with all that you do."*

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CLASS 8 - LESSON 13

LOVE OF LEADERSHIP HONOUR AND WEALTH

The love a person has for being famous stems from a desire to be better than others, and a desire to be admired by people.

If you look around, you will always see people who strive very hard to do things, either they work hard for money, practice for sports, or study for exams. If you ask some of them why they are working so hard, they will say that it is because they want other people to notice them.

This idea is totally against the principles of Islam. Everything, every act one does, should be totally for the pleasure of Allah, ('lillah'). This does not mean that we must sit and pray 24 hours a day, but means that we should work to make ourselves better so that we may use our talents to help others, in whatever field we choose.

This love for power and wealth is another of the lower desires that a human being possesses. Communities have fought and families have broken over people who are fighting for some sort of status above others.

Imam Ali (A) has said :

"Desire tends to the destruction of the understanding."

This can be seen in real life where people do crazy things just to get power and wealth, they cheat and fail to understand that what they are doing is wrong. They lose their reason and become one track minded.

There is nothing wrong in being a leader, there is nothing wrong in being rich or famous, or having any thing valuable. The only condition which a person needs when having any of the above, is taqwa (awareness of Allah's presence). We must always remember that it is Allah who has given us our gifts and He has given them to us so that we can use them to help others.

This applies from school to when we are all adults, we must never try to become top or rich just for others to praise us.

One important point which not many people understand is that if you are the type of person who possesses any quality, whether money or fame, you will become a leader automatically if you possess taqwa. You will not have to chase leadership, it will chase you.

Imam Ali (A) has also said :

"Love for the dunya is the head of all evil."

which means that if you are working for things with ONLY this life in mind, then your desires will take you over and you will commit one sin after another.

He also said:

"The love of the present world is the source of all misery."

Which means that if ALL your attention is focused on becoming great by whatever means (wealth, leadership, honour) in this world only, then we might get all our worldly wishes, but we will never really gain happiness.

"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"

No matter how rich we are we can never buy happiness or love.

That is when we realise that the richest thing of all is contentment, which we can only gain by following Allah's command and getting close to Him.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 14

TOHMAT (ACCUSATION)

Tohmat means to accuse someone of doing something without proper justification. It is a form of backbiting.

There are two words for backbiting, one is GHEEBAT, and the other is TOHMAT.

When you speak about someone, and what you say is TRUE, then this is GHEEBAT.

When you speak about someone, and what you say is FALSE, then this is TOHMAT.

TOHMAT AND GHEEBAT ARE BOTH HARAAM (FORBIDDEN)

The Holy Prophet (S) once said,

*"O Abu Zar, keep yourself away from **backbiting** because it is worse than adultery..... After committing adultery, if one repents, Allah forgives him, but the **backbiter** can not be pardoned unless he has been pardoned by the one about whom he has been **backbiting**."*

Imagine you saw someone you know go into a pub (a place where people go to drink alcohol). If you were to tell the world that this man has been drinking, then that is Tohmat. How do you know he was drinking? He could have broken down, and gone in the pub to use the phone, or ask directions.

In Islam, you should always give the benefit of the doubt to others. Even if someone does do something bad, you should hide it, and not tell the whole world. How would you like it if Allah told the whole world the evil that you or I perform ? We all commit sins at one time or another. If Allah can hide our faults, then you should hide the faults of others.

In the the Holy Qur'an Surah 49 ayat 12, Allah tells us:

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*"....And do not spy nor let some of you **backbite** others. Does one of you like to eat the dead flesh of his brother ?"*

This shows us that backbiting is as bad as eating the flesh of your dead brother. This means that once someone you know, ie your brother/sister in Islam 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.

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) has said that if one person **TALKS BEHIND THE BACK** of another, the thawaab of the first person gets

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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."

This shows how bad **Gheebat** and **Tohmat** are.

Once there was a man who did **tohmat** of our Sixth Imam.

Imam (A) 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 (A) 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."

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.

Why are gheebat and tohmat haraam ?

They are haraam because they spoil peoples names and characters. When you speak badly of someone, you make others think badly of them.

Another reason why it is bad is because the people 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.

Gheebat and Tohmat are a result of Jealousy. 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 so that the respect turns to outrage and shame. Such people are cursed by Allah, and are referred to as the whispers of menu.

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CLASS 8 - 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, 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.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 16

DECEITFULNESS & CUNNINGNESS

One of the fundamental principles of living is to co-operate and mix with people so that both groups benefit from one another, and both are satisfied.

We are all after the same goal, to attain the pleasure of Allah and Inshallah enter His eternal paradise. This makes us all like partners, working together to achieve the same ends.

To be deceitful or cunning means to put yourself in a better position by tricking or lying to someone else, while at the same time making them think that you are helping them.



This is why it is an extremely bad act and can not be forgiven by anyone else, but the victim himself.

To gain at someone else's expense is never allowed in Islam.

To commit deceit, you have to make the person believe one thing while the opposite is true.

If I was to tell you that this stamp is very rare and worth £5000, and I'll make you a deal by selling it for £2500.

If you bought it and then found out it was worth only £5 then you have been DECEIVED by me.

A lot of people do this in real life and claim that in business, everything is allowed!

This sort of business will lead to ruin. Your name will be spoilt and your heart will become mean and no one will trust you.

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Once you have lost trust then you will never find happiness in your life, nor when you rise on the day of Judgement.

Not only do we have to be fair and true, but we must be aware of those people who try and deceive us !!

There are people who pretend to follow Islam, but try and lead us away from the right path. When anything good happens to you, they pretend to be happy, but really, they are very jealous and mean. These people are just trying to deceive you into thinking they are good. Allah explains to us in the Holy Qur'an (Surah 3 ayat 120):

*"If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if you are constant and do right, not the least harm will their **CUNNING** do to you, for God compasseth round about all that they do."*

Shaytan is always trying to deceive us. He makes us think so much of this world, that we forget that we are here only temporarily. But Allah explains to us, in the above verse and in the next, that if we believe and have faith, no one will be able to trick us (Surah 4 ayat 76)

*"Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil: so fight you against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the **CUNNING** of Satan."*

The worst thing to be tricked in is your belief. When people come to you and talk to you, and say that what you are following is wrong, think about what they say. Do not follow them blindly, but question yourself and try and understand your faith. Allah tells us that there will always be someone trying to guide us astray, we should be careful and avoid these people (Surah 6 ayat 112/3),

*"Likewise did We make for every Messenger an enemy, evil ones among men and Jinns, inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of **DECEPTION**... To such (deceit) let the hearts of those incline, who have no faith in the Hereafter: let them delight in it, and let them earn from it what they may."*

We are told in this ayat, the ONLY PEOPLE who will be deceived are the ones who have no belief in the next life, and in the Day of Judgement. If we keep firm on our path, Allah will guide us through all dangers and trickery.

When a person commits deceit, they might gain for a little while, in this world. They might gain money or fame, but in the long run, they are losing because on the Day of Judgement, the person they tricked will be in front of them, and only then will they be sorry, but it will be too late !!

(Surah 6 ayat 123):

"Thus have We placed leaders in every town, its wicked men, to plot (and burrow) therein: but they only plot against their own souls, and they perceive it not."

The points to learn from this is that if you commit deceit, you are harming yourself in the long run. You should never let others suffer from your gain. If you do, that is selfishness and going against the creatures of Allah, and therefore against Allah Himself.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 17

LOYALTY AND BREACH OF PROMISE

Loyalty means to be faithful to ones duties (promises).

Since loyalty is a word that we very often use, we tend not to dwell upon it much, however its importance in Islam can be shown by the following hadith from Prophet Muhammad (S):

"He who is untrustworthy has no faith"

Loyalty is part of the akhlaq that Islam has taught us, and to have loyalty makes a person higher (more dignified) in the eyes of Allah.

We know that the opposite of loyalty is betrayal. This is to break your promise, or let someone down. The Holy Prophet has also said:

"There is no higher kind of betrayal than to relate an incidence to your fellow brother whilst he believes you whereas you have lied to him."

This shows that to control you tongue (speech) is an important part of loyalty, however, loyalty covers the performance of actions as well.

When you make a promise, then you are bound by it. Others are then relying on you, and you can not let them down. If you are not sure that you can do what ever you said, then don't promise. Just say that you will try to do it.

People often make promises which they do not or cannot keep.

What do you think are the reasons for this. Why do people make such promises. Can you think of some examples?

YAQEEN (CERTAINTY)

We have discussed faith, and eiman.

Yaqeen means to have certainty, to be sure, and it is a higher stage than eiman.

We are told that there is a God, have we seen Him ? When we read and learn, and when we are explained we get faith, and we believe that God then exists. Then we use our logic, we see that God must exist, we see His signs all around us, and we know through our intelligence that, yes there can only be one God, and He must exist. This is faith.

When we have faith, we then try harder to obtain Allah's pleasure, we talk to Him from our prayers, we talk to Him when we are in need, and if we are sincere enough, if we mean what we say, we will feel His answer. Allah will talk to us. He will not talk to our ears, but will talk directly to our hearts.

That is why when Imam Ali (A) was asked "Do you worship a God that you cannot see ?"

Imam (A) replied "No, I would never worship something that I can not see. I see Allah with my heart, not with my mind."

This shows that when we reach the state of yaqeen, (Inshallah), we will know for a fact that Allah is there. We will have felt his presence everywhere, and we will be sure without doubt. Then Shaytan will not be able to put doubts in our head.

That is why Yaqeen is such a high stage. One which can only be reached with patience, and understanding.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 18

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.

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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,

! for the sake of showing off to others.

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- ! buying something just because your neighbour has it, (keeping up with the Jones)
- ! 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.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 19

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.

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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 youngsters 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?

Comment: hadith about restraining the soul, or the temptation, or battle against nafs

CLASS 8 - LESSON 20

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

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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, ie 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 here 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, ie leaving it on

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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, ie 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.

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and those who, from what is vain, keep themselves aloof.

Lghv ie 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:

- a. Music by itself is not haraam, unless it reminds you or is similarly to a place where haraam is performed.
- b. Singing of the human voice, by itself is not haraam unless it reminds you of a place where Haraam is performed.
- c. 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