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CLASS 8 - LESSON 2

CLEANLINESS

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 also 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

BROTHERHOOD & UNITY

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, Sura Al-Hujurat, Ayat 10:

"The believers are surely brothers; so make peace among your brothers..."



The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has said that a Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue other Muslims remain safe.

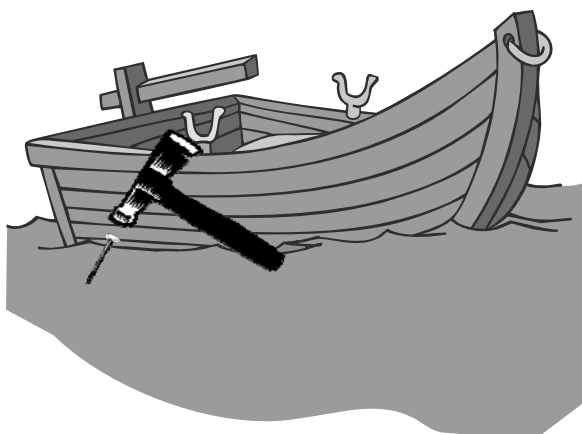
The above hadith tells us that if a Muslim hurts another Muslim in anyway, physically with his hands, or emotionally with his tongue, by what he says, then that person is not a Muslim.

The idea of brotherhood was introduced by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) after Hijrat, when the Makkans had to leave their homes and belongings to move to Madina. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) made one Makkan a brother to one Madinite, so that they could help each other.

Islam considers the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) as the father of all the Muslims, so all of us are connected and joined with each other through Islam. The whole of the Muslim community is like one big family and **what one person does in that family affects the rest of the people in the family.**

Once there was a group of people in a boat who were arguing that there was no need for brotherhood (unity) and that each one could do as they pleased without it being the concern of anyone else.

The person who was saying that there was a need for brotherhood went to one corner of the boat and started making a hole in the bottom of the boat.



The rest of the people who were saying that there was no need for brotherhood asked the man if he had gone mad, because if he continued they would all drown.

The man replied that they should not worry about what he was doing as they themselves had said that every person could do what he liked without worrying about anyone else.

The people then realised that it was true, to live happily with each other you had to care about others and have a form of unity.

Remember each and every Muslim has a right over you as a brother, and we are all united together through Islam.

MAINTAINING CLOSE CONTACT WITH OTHER

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

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

One group of people who are always taken for granted are the family, however, when we fall and everyone deserts us, our family will be there to pick us 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. Allah says in Surah 16, Ayat 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.”

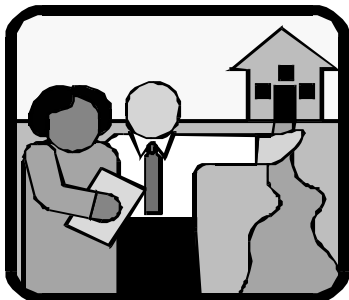


Remember our 4th Imam's (a.s.) prayer, in Sahifa e Kamila:

"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 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.a.w.w.) 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 wills when they died!!

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 we feel if after we had lived and given our life in service to the community, and then our own youngsters were to ignore us and forget us. We must not only respect our elders, but also thank them and

listen to their advice. No matter how much we know, our elders have had experience, and Imam Ali (a.s.) 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.a.w.w.) 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 also 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.s.) had a servant who used to help in the housework. Instead of Bibi Fatimah (a.s.) just sitting, while the servant did all the work, Bibi Fatimah (a.s.) 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.

CLASS 8 - LESSON 4

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 called **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 go and ignore help or aid from another.

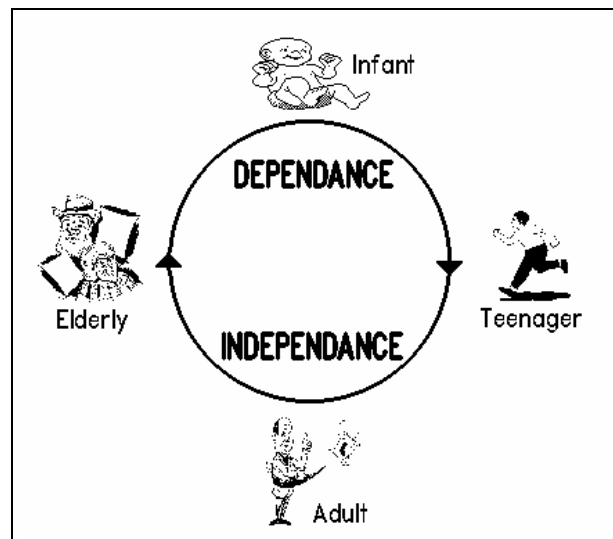


Figure 1: *The circle of life*

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.

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 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."

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."



"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."

Holy Prophet (S)

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

CLASS 8 - LESSON 5

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 your 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 emphasized 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 worldwide 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.

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: **"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."

CLASS 8 - LESSON 6

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 Muslim 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.

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 Salaat on time. If possible we should pray Salaate 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 realize 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.

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 7

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.

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.**