

STUDY GUIDE

# OBSTACLES ON THE PATH OF CHANGE



**AL HIDAAYAH**

الهداية

The Guidance for Humanity

Based on the Glorious Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



By Dr Mamdouh Mohammed



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# COURSE OUTLINE

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## COURSE TOPICS

1. Obstacles and its types
  2. The obstacle of attachment to worldly matters
  3. Overcoming the obstacle of attachment to worldly matters
  4. The obstacle of self-admiration
  5. Ways of overcoming the obstacle of self-admiration
  6. The obstacle of addiction to traditions
  7. The obstacle of justification
  8. Is one allowed to use reason and logic under any circumstance?
  9. The obstacle of laziness
  10. The obstacle of focussing on trivialities
  11. The obstacle of lack of reading
  12. Reading and reflecting upon the Qur'an
  13. The obstacle of being biased
  14. Major reason for being biased
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# COURSE OBJECTIVES

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## COURSE TOPICS

1. Learning and understanding about the various obstacles that one faces on his/her path of change
2. Understanding about the various ways one can overcome their obstacles

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## QUESTION & ANSWER BUCKET

## TRANSCRIPTS

## ASSESSMENT

Multiple Choice Questions

Match the Columns

True or False

## COURSE DURATION

Video	-	2 hours 45 min
Study Guide	-	50 min
Assessment	-	10 min
Total Duration	-	3 hours 45 min

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LESSON 1

# LOVE OF THIS WORLD





1

## OBSTACLES AND ITS TYPES



Every human being wants to change and has the desire to be good, but obstacles are something that affect almost every human being, Muslims, and non-Muslims alike.

We wish to be more effective and productive in our communities and societies, but when one embarks on the path of change, he/she is bound to be faced with obstacles and difficulties.

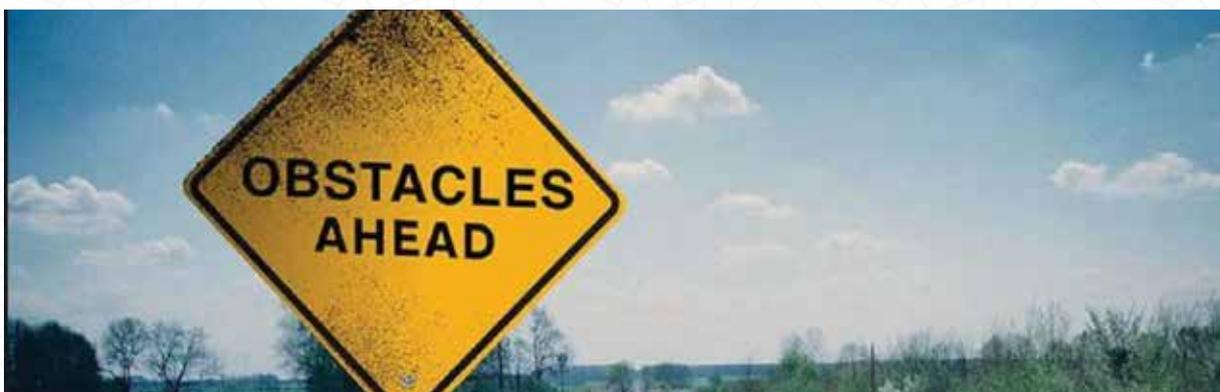


**The obstacles that one may face are basically categorised into three types:**

**i** Internal obstacles: These are obstacles and factors that affect a person internally, and one needs to work hard upon themselves to change them.

**ii** External obstacles: These are obstacles and factors that affect a person externally and prevents them from being good.

**iii** Combination of both factors: A combination of both internal and external obstacles and factors working together and having their impact on an individual.





2

## THE OBSTACLE OF ATTACHMENT TO WORLDLY MATTERS



The obstacle of attachment to worldly matters was also termed by the Prophet (pbuh) as love for the Dunya because the main focus for many individuals is the life of this world.



However, a Muslim knows and believes that the life of this world is not eternal, and that he/she shall be judged and held accountable for their deeds and actions on the Day of Judgement and accordingly be entered into Jannah (Paradise) or Jahannam (Hellfire) for an eternal life.

We have the right to enjoy the rights that Allah (swt) endowed upon us, but it should be done with a focus of achieving our goals for the eternal life of the Hereafter, in moderation, and used in the prescribed way as commanded by Allah (swt).





“But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world: but do you good, as Allah has been good to you.”

AL QUR’AN 28:77

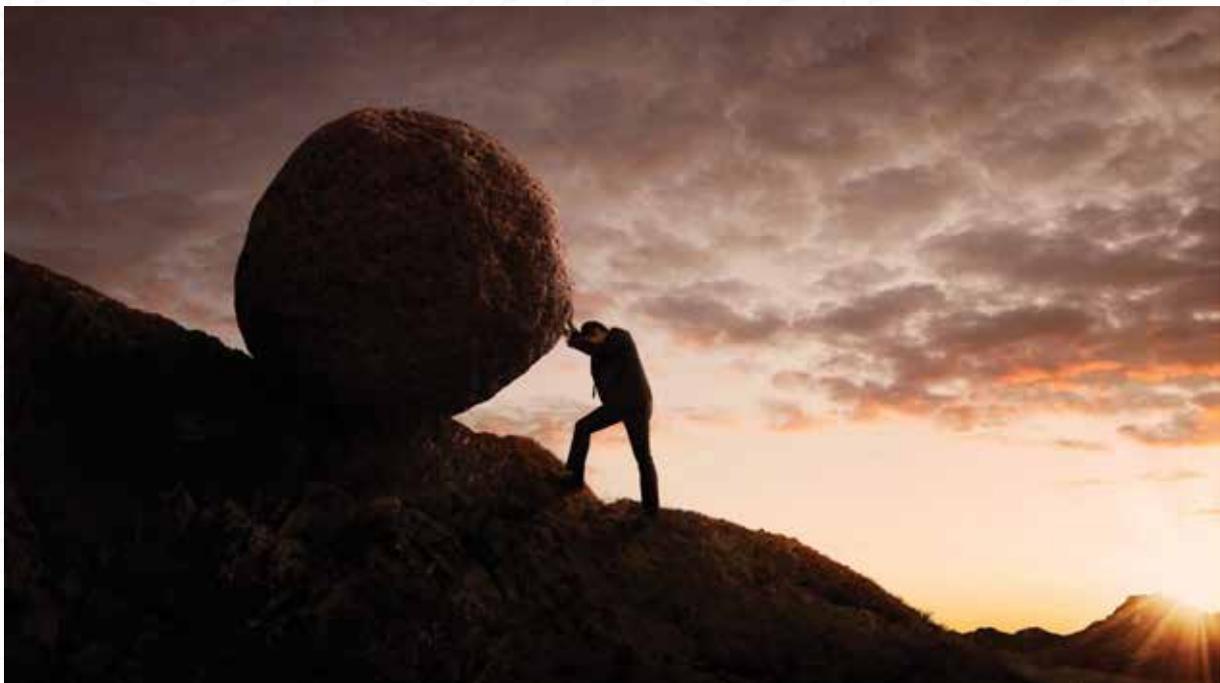




3

## OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLE OF ATTACHMENT TO WORLDLY MATTERS

The Deen (religion) of Islam is so meticulous and complete that it has provided man with all the details and solutions that he/she needs to overcome any obstacle in life.





Islam teaches man that one's entire life (or entire day of 24 hours) should be dedicated for the purpose of pleasing Allah (swt) and seeking His reward.

If the intention for any act one does is to help and guide other people towards the straight path, then even though one may be enjoying themselves or having fun doing that deed/action, it would be considered for the sake of Allah because that is the ultimate goal of any Muslim.

Being mindful of your actions and giving credit of your blessings and achievements to Allah (swt) is one of the ways of controlling the impact of the love of Dunya upon you.





LESSON 2

# SELF- ADMIRATION





4



## THE OBSTACLE OF SELF-ADMIRATION



We love ourselves and admire everything that we do to the degree that often we forget many other things that are essential and important in life.

In fact, sometimes man is so self-obsessed that even though we may have hurt someone or caused harm to something, he/she tries to look at their actions from a good and positive perspective.





For example, Firawn (the Pharaoh of Egypt). He didn't see his cruelty and torture of the people of Children of Israel, but rather saw himself as the best human being on earth. He said, 'Ana Rabbu Kumul A'laa', I am your highest Lord, because he admired himself so much that he did not see the errors, the mistakes, and the crimes that he had committed against humanity.



**The Prophet (pbuh) said:**

“Three things destroy, and three things save. As for the three things that destroy, they are: greediness that is obeyed, and desires that are followed, and a person becoming self-conceited (and proud) with himself.”



5

## WAYS OF OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLE OF SELF-ADMIRATION

Among the various ways that could help one overcome the obstacle of self-admiration are:

- i Recognising one's lack of knowledge (Islamic and Worldly)

If you compare yourself with others, you will find that above every knowledgeable person is another who is more knowledgeable than the predecessor, and the prophets and messengers of Allah (swt) being the most knowledgeable of all humans, and Allah (swt) above all the humanity and creatures of the universe.





Once we understand this truth, we will definitely feel that we are tiny creatures compared to the vastness of the universe, no matter the achievements and progress we achieve.

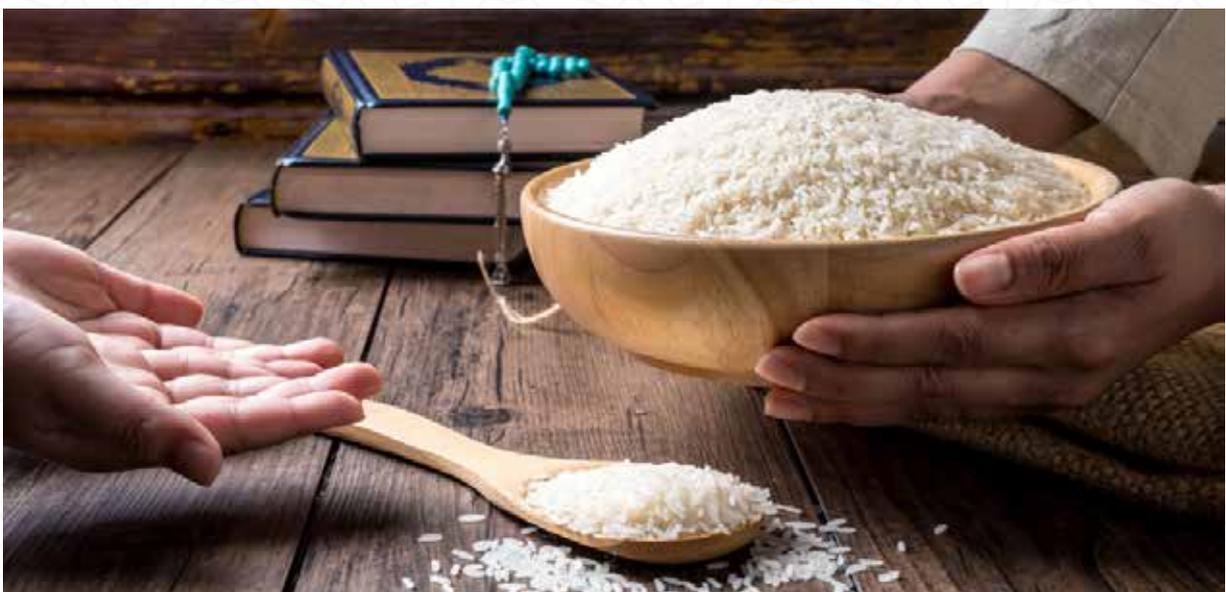




## ii Compete in goodness and benefitting humanity

Umar (ra) narrates that the Prophet (pbuh) ordered us to give charity and at the time I had some wealth. I said to myself, “Today I will outdo Abu Bakr, if ever there were a day to outdo him.” I went with half of my wealth to the Prophet (pbuh), and he said, “What have you left for your family?” I said, “The same amount.” Then, Abu Bakr came with everything he had. The Prophet said, “O Abu Bakr, what have you left for your family?” Abu Bakr said, “Allah and his messenger.” I said, “By Allah, I will never do better than Abu Bakr.”

We should not only focus on competing with each other in gaining money and fame, but rather we should compete with each other in areas of goodness and benefiting others too.





### iii Acknowledge your faults and shortcomings

One must learn to accept and acknowledge their faults and shortcomings when pointed out by others, because the obstacles of self-obsession and self-admiration prevents one from focusing on his/her faults.



**The Prophet (pbuh) said:**

“My Lord has mannered me, so he perfected my manners.”



We should be mindful that whenever we are praised, we should resist this temptation of admiring ourselves by attributing the good qualities that we have to the blessings of Allah (swt), because He's the One who blessed us with it.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to associate all his good and praise to Allah (swt), helping him overcome the obstacle of self-admiration because he never took credit or praise for any of his actions.

In fact, when you feel that the praise of people causes self-admiration to creep into your heart, make Istighfaar (repentance) and ask Allah (swt) for forgiveness by immediately attributing the praise to the guidance and help from Allah (swt).





LESSON 3

# ADDICTION TO TRADITIONS







People in certain cultures follow in the footsteps of their elders and traditions without filtering them or checking if a certain culture or tradition is in conformity with the commands of Allah (swt) or against them.



“When it is said to them: “Come to what Allah has revealed; come to the Messenger”: They say: “Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following.” what! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?”

AL QUR’AN 5:104





When the Prophet (pbuh) asked the Makkans about why they worshipped idols, the only answer they had was that they found their parents and the society around them worshipping the idols.

But the greatest thing about Islam is that it tells humans not to follow anyone or anything blindly, but rather be rational and have evidence and proofs for your belief.

A Muslim is someone who follows what was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) without letting the culture and traditions affect his/her religion.



For example, the culture of a wife paying dowry to her husband. Though this may be a common practise in some places around the world, but it goes against the Islamic culture. According to Islam, it is the husband who must pay the dowry to his wife and not the other way around.

But on the other hand, another example could be that people in some countries eat in plates that are white or other colours. These are things that are not related to religion and therefore one is permitted to do what he/she wishes to do.





LESSON 4

# JUSTIFICATION

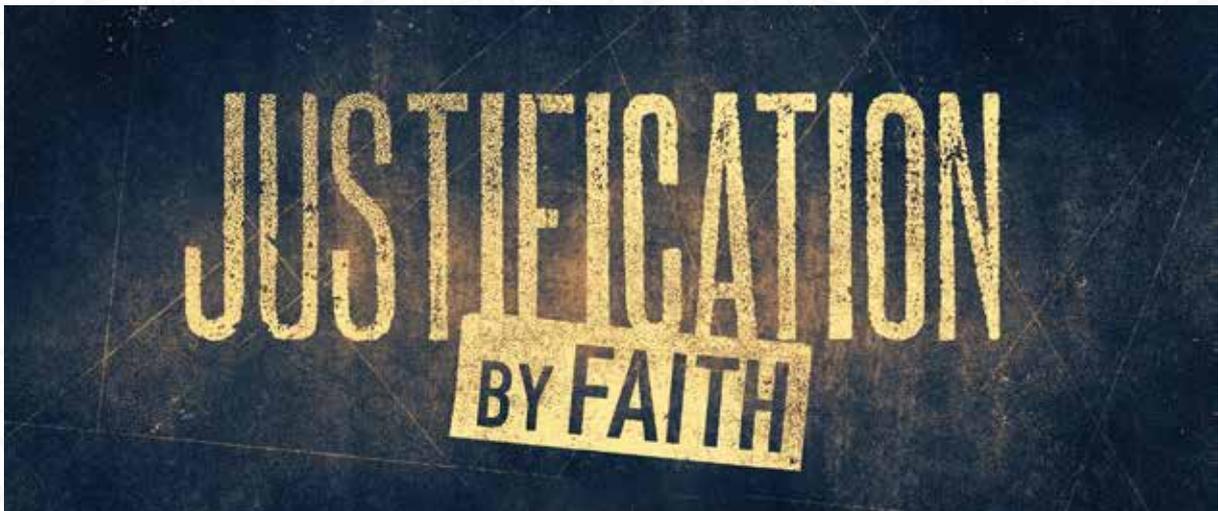




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## THE OBSTACLE OF JUSTIFICATION



People love to justify their words and actions to defend their beliefs and positions without reflecting upon their answers. Some may do it with a seemingly rational answer, while others may try it by speaking loudly or telling people that they are more qualified than them.

What people need to realise is that none of this is an acceptable justification, and the only reasoning and justification that can be considered as an acceptable justification in terms of religion is what is acknowledged by Allah (swt) in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh).





For example, during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) when the disbelievers didn't want to pay Zakaah, the justification and logic they gave was that why should we worry about feeding and spending on those whom Allah (swt) Himself didn't want to feed.



“And when they are told, “Spend you of (the bounties) with which Allah has provided you,” the Unbelievers say to those who believe: “Shall we then feed those whom, if Allah had so willed, He would have fed, (Himself)? - You are in nothing but manifest error.”

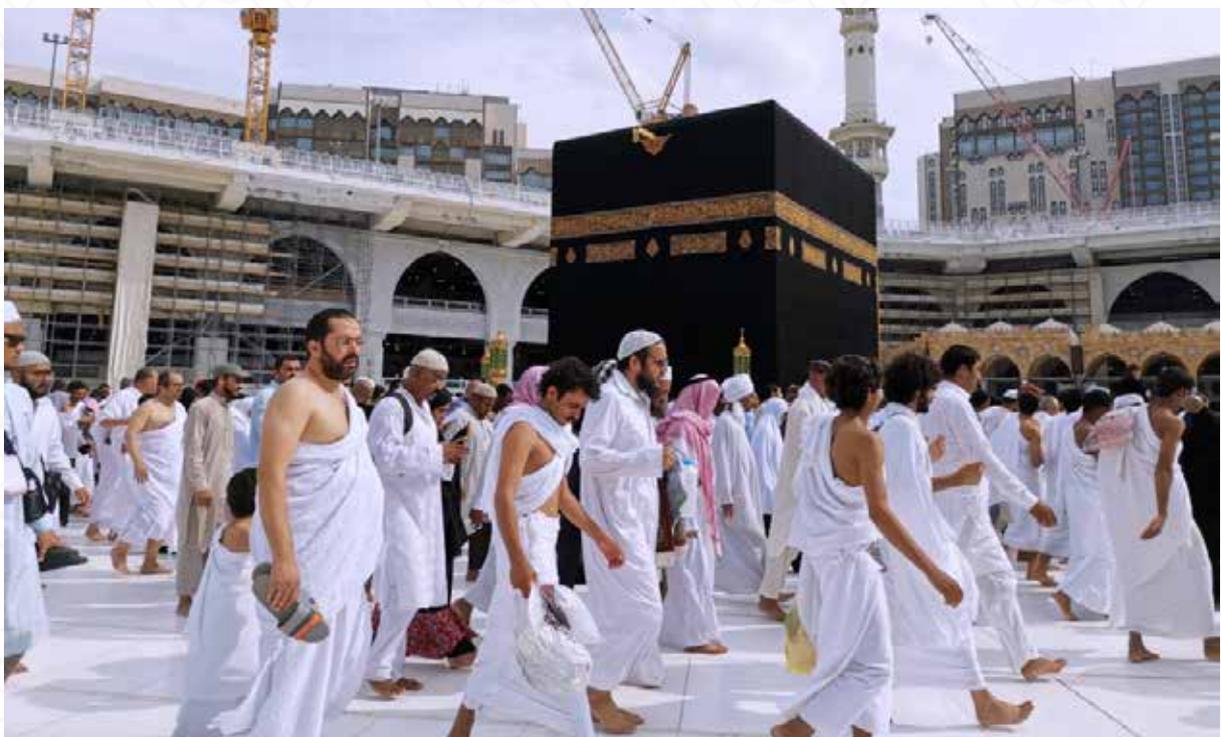
AL QUR'AN 36:47





This sort of reasoning and justification is not acceptable because it goes against the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. We should know that we don't have the right to ask Allah (swt) about what He decides to do or how He wishes to test someone because He is the All-Knowing and therefore wants and does the best for every human being.

Another example of the form of justification that the Arabs used to make is that when they used to make pilgrimage, they used to be naked while making Tawaaf (circumambulation) around the Ka'bah. They justified their actions saying that since we made sins wearing these clothes, our Tawaaf is not accepted if we performed it wearing them and therefore, we must do it naked.





Even though it may make sense to a person on the face of it, but it is not permitted because it goes against the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

If we depend on our logic, we will deviate because every person may have a different reasoning and logic for a certain issue, and many may contradict each other.





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## IS ONE ALLOWED TO USE REASON AND LOGIC UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE?



A logical question that is raised is whether Islam allows one to use logic and rational justifications in any aspect of our life.

Islam permits and encourages us to use our logic and wisdom in any aspect of our life if it does not relate to religion. The moment you find guidelines and directions for a certain action from the Qur'an or the Sunnah, you are obligated to follow the guidelines and not permitted to use your reason or logic because Deen is not open to change or human interpretations.



Majority of the people who deviate from the straight path of the religion is because they try to find justifications which may sound to them logical but are not logical or acceptable Islamically because they go against the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.





LESSON 5

# LAZINESS





9

## THE OBSTACLE OF LAZINESS



The obstacle of laziness is a combination of an internal and external obstacle at the same time. It may seem like something easy to get rid of, but sometimes it is so chronic that people act like handicaps and are not able to get over their laziness.

He (pbuh) was aware about the obstacle of laziness, and he used to constantly ask Allah (swt) (especially during the mornings) to give him support and refuge to overcome this obstacle.



**The Prophet (pbuh) used to say:**

“O God, I seek refuge in Thee from anxiety/worry, grief, incapacity, slackness, cowardliness, niggardliness, the burden of debt, and being overpowered by men.”

Among the ways that we as adults (parents and teachers) can look into and overcome this obstacle and social disease of feeling lazy is:





i

Raising the children to be active since their youth



**The Prophet (pbuh) said:**

“Command a boy to pray when he reaches the age of seven years. When he becomes ten years old, then beat him for prayer.”

We must apply the Sunnah in our daily life making it a part of our habit, because certain times, when a person feels lazy, he needs external support and motivation to encourage him/her to continue on their path.





## ii Try to minimize the effects of peer groups

A child's friend circle/their peer group plays a very important role in their character and upbringing.

As adults, we must teach our kids and help them make a good selection from the people around them to be their close friends. Being in the company of good and righteous friends will help and train one to emulate them and follow in their footsteps.





10



## THE OBSTACLE OF FOCUSING ON TRIVIALITIES



The correct way of living a successful life is for one to focus on the greater priorities first and then gradually move on to the lesser priorities of life.

But unfortunately, a lot of people are reversing this, and they pay attention to trivialities of life rather than focussing on the bigger picture, keeping their minds busy and ignoring the important things in life.





For example, the most important thing and priorities for a Muslim is the Shahaadah - Laa Ilaaha Illallah (the first pillar of Islam), and then the Salaah and the other pillars of Islam.

The main priority for any Muslim should be to enter Paradise and do whatever pleases Allah (swt) because this is one of the most important beliefs that a Muslim has and also teach them to differentiate between the beliefs of a Muslim and non-Muslim, and in this way teaches him the priority.





LESSON 6

# LACK OF READING





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## THE OBSTACLE OF LACK OF READING



Lack of reading does not refer to the number of books read by a person, but rather refers to the lack of quality reading. Reflecting upon the meaning of what one reads and analysing it and keeping the brain busy.

Knowledge is the most important weapon in our daily life and developing the habit of reflective reading from a young age is an excellent quality for one to have because the more one reads, the more exposure and knowledge they gain, making them into leaders and knowledgeable members of the society.



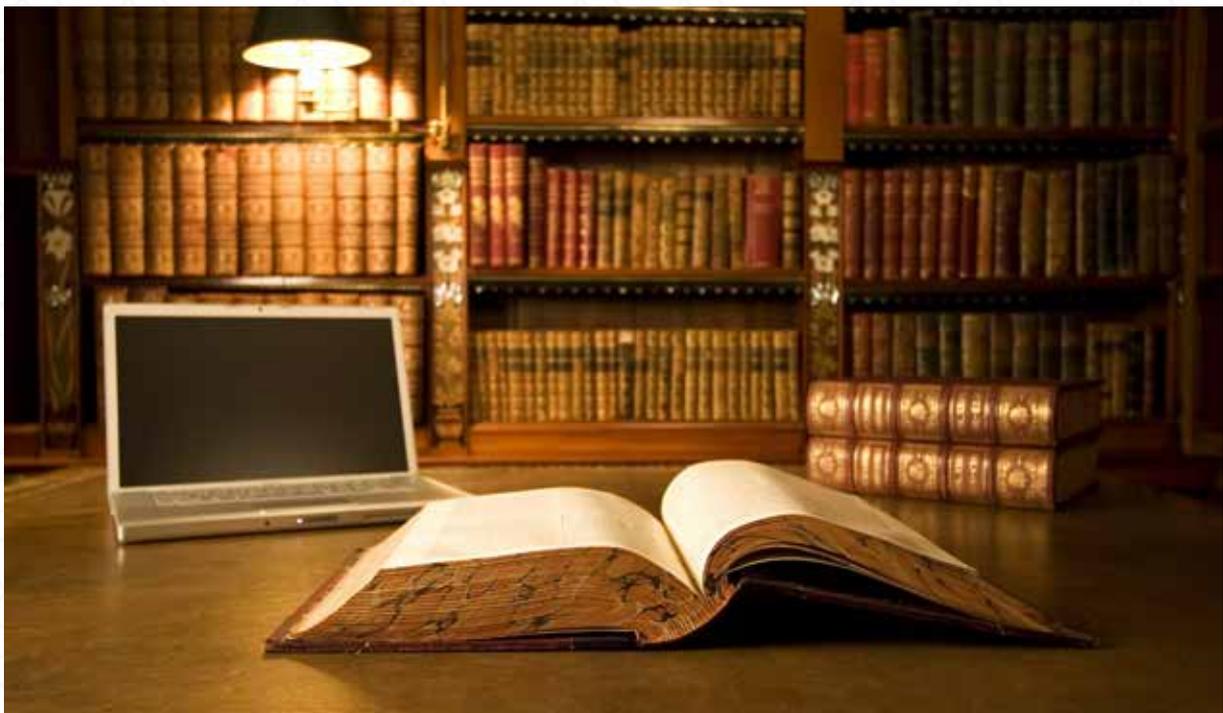
Another obstacle that people might fall into is that to overcome the lack of reading, they may start reading anything they get their hands onto. They may indulge into reading about trivial matters like sports, celebrity gossips and parties, and other topics which would have no effect or improvement on their lives rather than focussing their reading upon matters like environmental issues, global threats, and other important topics that interest one and help them make a lasting change in the world.





Further, reading does not mean reading and forgetting what has been read after a short time, but rather meaningful reading includes interacting and understanding what one reads, asking questions and investigating the answer to one's doubts, and finally applying and putting it into practice in one's daily life whatever one has learnt and read.

Both, the teachers and parents should play their parts in encouraging and training children to indulge in extensive external reading since their youth because acquiring the habit of reading is a continuous process which never ends.





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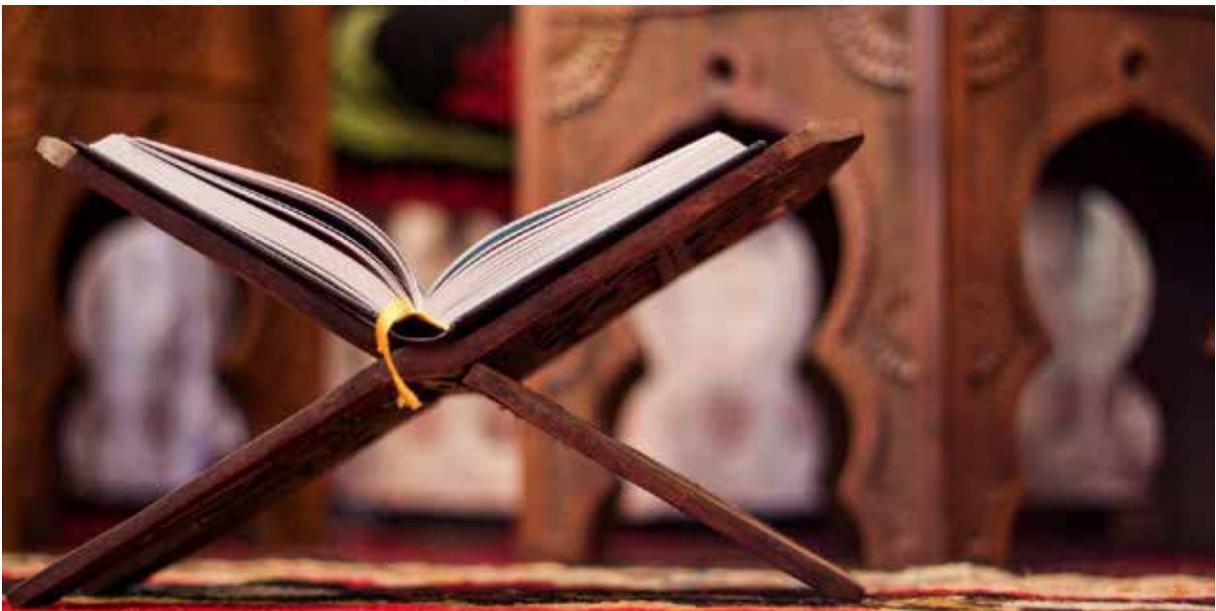


## READING AND REFLECTING UPON THE QUR'AN



“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an?”

AL QUR'AN 28:77



Allah (swt) Himself commands in the Qur'an that people should reflect and focus upon the meanings and explanation of the Qur'an because if one does not understand the meanings, it will not have a lasting effect on him/her.





When one has made the Qur'an a part of their daily life, reading it daily, feeling the effect of the Qur'an upon themselves and understanding the meanings of what they read, and then stopping it midway gives the body a sense of missing something and lacking from the system. You need to put it back into your daily routine to restore order and normal life back.

Also, more importantly people need to make the right balance between reading from the authentic sources of information (especially in the fields of religion and science). These are vital issues that effect a person's daily life and therefore following information from unconfirmed sources would lead to negative impacts.





Islam encourages one to reflect upon the message of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) and try to make connections be the new discoveries and the message of the Qur'an so that you can share the message with others too guiding them towards reading and understanding it too.





LESSON 7

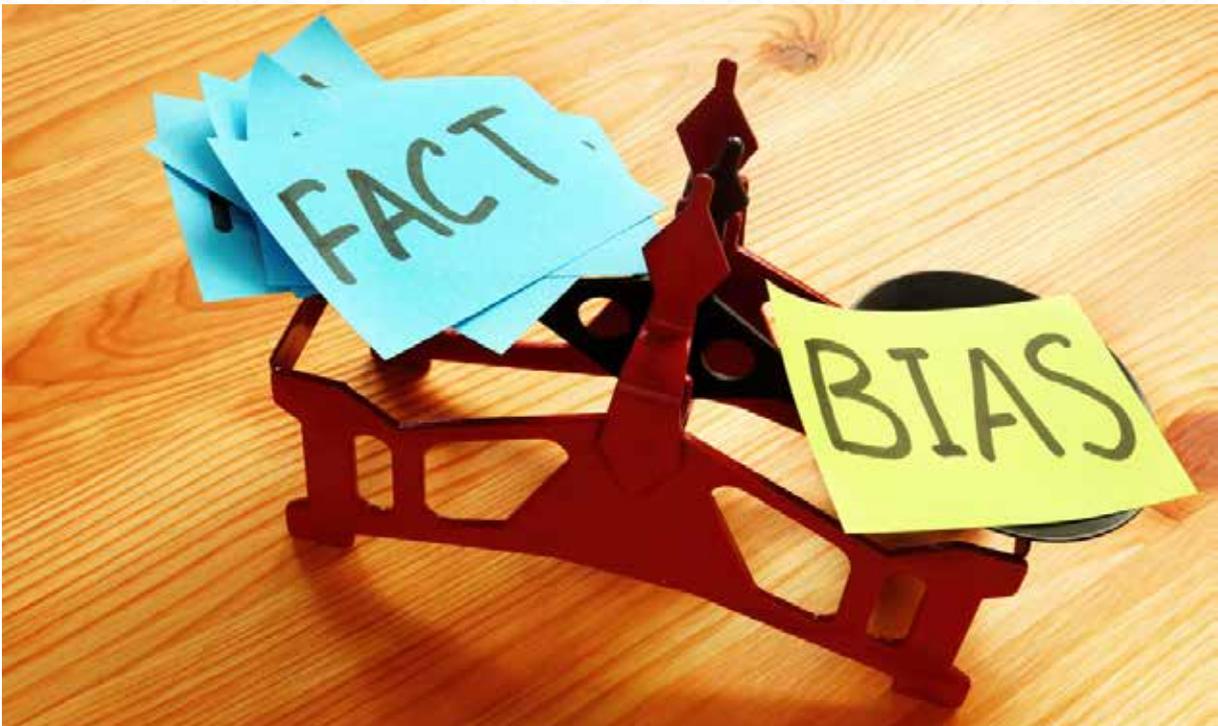
# BEING BIASED





13

## THE OBSTACLE OF BEING BIASED



The society, the community, the people around a person play a role in developing some common biases against each other.

Not every action can be considered as a bias, like the love of the people for the country they live in are considered normal and natural. But it becomes a bias if you compare your country to another country and try proving yourself as better than others.



“And let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.”

AL QUR’AN 5:8



**The Prophet (pbuh) said:**

“There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except by Taqwa.”

**The Prophet (pbuh) said:**

“A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. So he should not oppress him nor should he hand him over (to his Satan or to his self which is inclined to evil).”





Islam made it a point to be clear from the very beginning that all humans are equal in the sight of Allah (swt) because all of them are the children of Adam (pbuh) and Adam (pbuh) was created from dust and earth, and the only criteria by which one may gain an advantage over another person is their Taqwa (love and fear) of Allah (swt).

When you are a judge between two people, no matter what reason or even if you may hate someone, you are not allowed to take sides unjustly or deal unfairly.

In fact, it even teaches us to not be biased and deal justly with wife/wives and children.





14



## MAJOR REASON FOR BEING BAISED



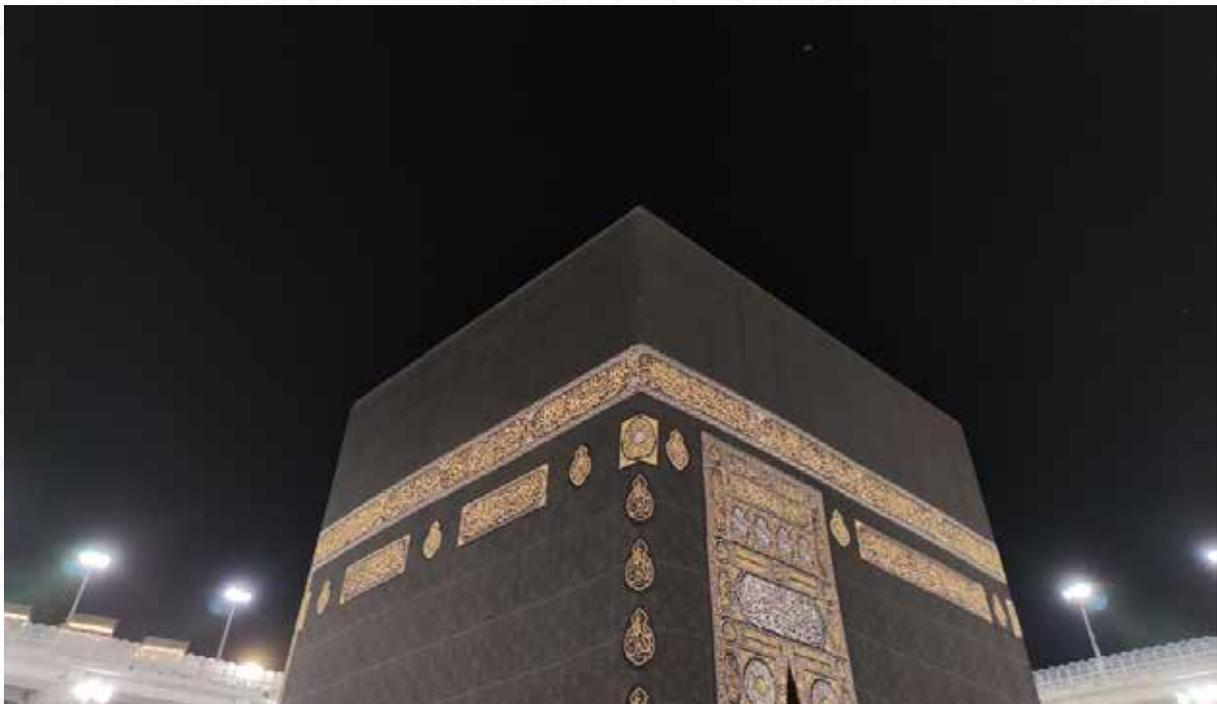
One of the major reasons for people being biased towards certain race or colour or community is due to the reading material that the people of a country produce.

For example, a common thing in most of the textbooks that are used in most of the countries to teach children and grownups is that it's trying to inculcate in them the need to praise the nation or the country that you live in. My country, my flag, my land, my people. When you are taught that your country is the best with reference to the neighbouring country, and you are raised to some sort of racism, directly or indirectly, this builds up this feeling of superiority which turns to be superiority complex that led to many wars in the world.



If we look at examples from the life of the Prophet (pbuh), we find examples that the Prophet (pbuh) never discriminated between any of his companions.

Bilal (ra) who was a black slave from Africa before he accepted Islam, the Prophet (pbuh) gave him the responsibility of climbing the Ka'bah (the holiest place that the Muslims have) and to call out the Adhaan (call for prayer).



Salmaan (ra), who was a Persian, was considered by the Prophet (pbuh) as a member of his family. He said, "Salman is one of us Ahlal-Bait (the Prophet's family)."



The Prophet (pbuh) when he migrated from Makkah to Madinah, he turned this fraternity feeling or this brotherhood into an action. He asked everyone in Madinah to host one from Makkah, and in this way solved the problems of approximately more than 300 people who migrated with him from Makkah to Madinah.





# **QUESTION & ANSWER BUCKET**





Q1

Explain the importance of reading and seeking knowledge in Islam.

Ans

When the Muslims were the leaders and rulers of the world, they were the readers and seekers of knowledge in the world. They used to read a lot of different literature, memorise the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh).

In fact, they were so deeply indulged in the learning process that they used to travel distances to seek knowledge. Long before people knew about universities, Muslims travelled to the scholars wherever they lived, in order to seek knowledge from them, to learn from them and come back to teach others.

Though all ideologies and religions encourage people to read, but no other ideology or religion focuses on the importance of reading as much as Islam.

Every Muslim is proud to say that the first word that was revealed to the beloved Messenger of Allah (swt), is 'Iqra - read, recite'.



Q2

What are the Islamic criteria regarding clothing?

Ans

Though the clothing one may wear would differ from a country to another, a culture to another, it is permissible to wear anything as long as it adheres to the Islamic criteria.

- i They should not have pictures of living things on them.
- ii They should be loose and not revealing the figure of an individual's body.
- iii They should not resemble to that of the opposite gender.
- iv They should not be transparent.



Q3

Give an example of the traditions that are forbidden to be followed.

Ans

An example of traditions that are forbidden to be followed is that in the prayer in some countries, people don't exactly follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh), but rather they make slight changes to it.

For example, when they rise from Ruku', instead of saying 'Rabbana Walakal Hamd', they say, 'Rabbana Walakal Hamdu Wa Shukr. They add the word 'Wa Shukr'.

There is no evidence in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) for adding the word 'Ash Shukr' in this context, and therefore considered as a slight change in the religion. Such changes, though maybe traditions, they are forbidden to be followed. However, people still find it difficult for them to resist the culture they live in. And this is, of course, considered slight change in the religion.

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