

## **MODULE 1**

**Class Title:** How to have a beautiful mind- part 1 of 2

**Aim of the lesson:** To learn how to purify our thoughts in order to attain spiritual beauty.

**Category:** Personal Development

**Lesson Format:** Power point presentation with activity and discussion

### **Materials needed:**

White board

Board marker

### **What to do during class:**

#### **Step 1:**

Show the presentation to the students and explain the importance of having an unpolluted mind, which can only be achieved by filtering incoming information. Some sources of information are books, television, the internet, movies, music and billboards/advertisements.

#### **Step 2:**

(Slides 21 to 27) Divide the white board into two columns, labeling one side as ‘advantages’ and the other as ‘disadvantages’. Now ask the students to think of the advantages and then the disadvantages of each of the sources of information. Write whatever the students say. Count the number of advantages and disadvantages for each source and ask one of the students to note it down before moving on to the next source. Then do the same for the next source. In this way get the students to evaluate all the sources.

#### **Step 3:**

In the end they will be able to see for themselves that the disadvantages of most sources outweigh the advantages. Conclude the class with the help of slides 28 to 36.

### **Lecture:**

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1:

Today, *inshaAllah*, we will be talking about how to purify our minds and thoughts.

Slide 2:

Teacher: Okay, I'm going to say a word and I want you to tell me what comes to your mind. And that word is: beauty.

Student: Nature.

Student: A good-looking person.

Student: Unity between Muslims

Student: Good looking clothes.

Student: *Salah* {prayer}.

Teacher: Yes, *mashaAllah*. All right we have some very interesting answers. Anything else?

Student: *Qur'an*

Student: Beauty of Allah (swt).

Teacher: Alright, you guys have given me some very interesting answers.

Slide 3:

When I was preparing for this class, I thought of very simple things. I thought of peacock feathers and some very beautiful birds. I thought of beautiful flowers and I also thought of beautiful people. There are many people around us who spend a lot of time on their beauty and want to become more beautiful. I am sure we all know that and at times we also want to look beautiful, don't we? And there is nothing wrong with that, as long as you adhere to the boundaries set by Allah (swt). Allah (swt) loves beauty and He has made everything beautiful.

Slide 4:

With all the modern technology available, you can have your face changed, you can get a nose job and you can get plastic surgery done along with many other things. But these options are available to a very limited number of people as they are very expensive. However, there is something that we all have which we can make as beautiful as we want to. Can anybody guess what that might be?

Student: Soul.

Student: Inner self.

Teacher: Exactly!

Slides 5- 6:

So, just like you said, we can make our inner selves and our minds as beautiful as we want, but how do we this? How can you know that a person has a beautiful mind?

Student: By judging the things they do and what they talk about.

Teacher: Yes, their actions, what they talk about, their qualities and their personality.

Student: The way they carry themselves?

Teacher: Absolutely. All of these things can tell us about the state of a person's mind.

Slide 7:

Two very basic things are required to have a beautiful mind. The first prerequisite to having a beautiful mind is having beautiful and pure thoughts.

Secondly, once someone has beautiful thoughts, it is reflected in the way they communicate with others. The way they interact with other people, the way they talk, and the language they use tell us, to some extent, about the beauty of their mind and inner self. I would like to make something very clear here. Trying to judge another person's character or the purity of their thoughts is not the purpose of this class. The idea is to make ourselves evaluate our own thoughts, and to judge how pure our thoughts are and what things influence our minds.

Today we are going to focus on the thoughts. We are going to talk about how our thoughts can be purified and we will discuss the need to purify them.

Slide 8:

"Change your thoughts and change your world," is the quotation of our class today.

Slides 9-13:

I will give you an analogy; this is a map of Arizona. In Arizona there are lots of snowcapped mountains so, during the winters, there is a lot of snow in the state. Streams and rivers flow from these mountains, providing water to Arizona and Phoenix. The temperature in the mountains is very low. Pure water flows from these mountains, towards Arizona, and is consumed by people and collected in reservoirs as well; from there it is also distributed to other cities.

Slides 14-16:

In Arizona there are some metal mines. A lot of mining is done in the state and this requires water as well. So people take water from the streams and use it for mining purposes and a lot of the waste (from the mining) is thrown back into the streams and the pure streams, which flow from the mountain tops, are polluted by this waste. There is also a lot of rainfall, and when it

rains the soil gets eroded and mixes with the water of the streams. So the water collects a lot of impurities and becomes unfit for drinking; it has to be purified by being passed through huge sieve like fences, which filter the impurities. Firstly, they filter the bigger stuff and then the sieves become finer in order to filter the smaller stuff and that is how the water gets purified.

Slides 17-18:

Let's apply this analogy to ourselves: when we are babies we are very pure; we are not exposed to a lot of things but then, as time passes, our minds, which are also like reservoirs, absorb a lot of information. All kinds of information, good and bad, is stored in our minds.

Slide 19:

So tell me, what are the sources of information around us?

Student: Television.

Teacher: Television is a source of information and so is the internet. Anything else?

Student: Books.

Teacher: Right. So the sources of information around us are books, television, the internet as well as billboards and advertisements; these things are around us and throw all kinds of information at us.

Today we are going to evaluate each of these informational mediums by listing their negative and positive points. I am just going to write the name of the medium on the board and you are going to tell me what you think are the good and bad qualities of that particular medium. I am going to make a column for the good points and another one for the bad points.

Slide 20:

Let's first talk about books. Give me some good points about books.

Student: They give us general knowledge.

Student: Books teach us about culture, geography and history.

Student: They also teach us about good morals and science.

Student: Books help develop our language skills.

(Teacher writes on board)

Teacher: What about the bad points? Do books have bad points?

Student: Bad pictures

Student: Sometimes they contain wrong information

Teacher: Right. Does somebody have a paper and a pencil? Please note down the points I've written on the board; we have nine good points and three bad points about books.

Slide 21:

Let's talk about television. What useful information do we get from television?

Student: Entertainment, variety of news, knowledge, discoveries.

Student: Latest fashion, culture, religion.

Teacher: What are its bad points?

Student: Harmful, waste of time.

Student: Misguiding

Student: Unhealthy, addictive

Student: An unnecessary expense.

Teacher: So television is about two things: entertainment and information, right? Mostly, it is used for entertainment; does entertainment give us purity of thought? It depends on the nature of the entertainment. We do need to relax our minds but not all entertainment helps us achieve this. Some entertainment stimulates the mind in negative ways as well. So, the entertainment provided by television in the form of dramas and soap operas is not a positive stimulant. Most of the time, it pollutes our minds instead of purifying them.

Slide 22:

Okay now let's talk about computers and the internet.

Like television, it provides entertainment and information. Anything else that you can add?

Student: It helps with communication.

Teacher: Anything else? What are its bad effects?

Student: We can upload and download songs very easily.

Students: People can misuse the internet by, for example, hacking, and there is also a lot of information on the net that can be misguiding.

Teacher: Okay so we have four good points and nine bad points about the internet. We need to weigh the pros and cons of each source and evaluate it accordingly.

Slide 23:

Now, what are the good points about movies? Anything other than entertainment?

Student: Movies give us knowledge about history.

Student: A wide variety of entertainment.

Student: They give us general knowledge.

Student: Movies tell us about current affairs, discoveries, latest fashions, different cultures and religions.

Student: Again, they give us entertainment and information

Teacher: Right. What about the bad points?

Student: Harmful.

Student: Waste of time and can be misleading.

Student: It can be an unhealthy addiction.

Teacher: Okay so eight bad points and two or three good points.

Slide 24:

How about music, what are the good points about music?

Student: Entertaining.

Student: It can be soothing.

Teacher: Okay, any bad points?

Student: Music is not allowed in Islam.

Teacher: Yes, very good.

Student: Music can be a waste of time.

Teacher: Who thinks music can be unhealthy?

Student: Music is unhealthy if one becomes addicted to it.

Teacher: If you're not addicted to it, it's fine to listen to music?

Student: It's okay if it's not bad music.

Teacher: How would you define bad music?

Student: Songs that are provocative and contain bad language.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*, at least we realize this. Let's analyze what all of you have just said about music; we have three good points and seven bad points about music. It's important to remember that, sometimes, some points have more weightage. You may have a hundred positive points about music, but the one fact that music is *haram* {prohibited} in Islam has more weightage than all of them. This is something we should really look into and think about. This one point has the power to cancel all the good points about music. It is the same with alcohol. Allah (swt) has given alcohol some good qualities, but its advantages mean nothing because it is forbidden for us; Allah (swt) has made it *haram* for us. So who are we to question His authority?

Slide 25:

Now let's talk about billboards and advertisements

Student: Entertainment and information.

Student: Can be very tempting

Student: Misguiding, inappropriate.

Teacher: Basically, billboards are just advertisements that are projecting the same things we see in television advertisements. So they are also meant to sell products; they make sure you buy what they want to sell. Sometimes you go and buy products just because of the advertisements and end up getting something you really don't want or need.

So that's also a bad point. Now we have four good points and seven bad points about billboards.

Slide 26:

Now let's go over the statistics we got from our discussion. Can you please read how many good and bad points each medium has?

Student: For books there are nine good points and three bad points. For television there are two good points and eight bad points. There are four good points and nine bad points for computers. For movies there are two good points and eight bad points. There are three good points and seven bad points about music. And for billboards and advertisements we came up with four good points and seven bad points.

Teacher: Okay, so these are all the points that you guys said. I wrote down most of what you were saying and all of you just heard the statistics; how many good points were you able to come with and how many bad points? This is your analysis of these sources of information.

I am going to let you choose what conclusion you draw from this analysis, and I am going to ask you another question and would like you to really think about this.

Slide 27:

Let's suppose that I invite you to my house and offer you yummy brownies. How would you feel?

Student: Excited. I would love it.

Teacher: Yes, you'll love it. How many of you really like brownies?

(Most of the students raise their hands)

Teacher: Most of you. Those of you who don't like brownies, can imagine that I serve something else which is also very yummy, and when you eat it, you absolutely love it and then I tell you that I added a very special ingredient to the dish.

When you ask me what the ingredient is, I tell you it's just a little bit of cow dung. What will you do? What will be your reaction?

Student: We'd vomit.

Teacher: Yes, you would throw up in the middle of eating this brownie. Isn't it simple and easy to understand? We cannot even bear having a little bit of impure dirt inside our system, our body. We know that such dirty, impure substances will make us sick. However, we find it hard to understand that our minds also need the same kind of purity; our minds also need to be clean and healthy so that they don't vomit.

Slide 28:

A famous spiritual leader once said, "So it is well that we silence the chattering of our mind that we could truly hear what is in our heart so we can find the still, clear purity that lies within the soul."

We really need to think about all the information we are getting from around us and what we are putting in our minds. Is it just a spoonful of cow dung? At times, when we are listening to music or watching movies or shows on television, we don't even realize that it contains just a little bit of cow dung which we are putting in our minds. How can we remain pure and clean?

Slide 29:

Allah (swt) says in Surah Fatir, "And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And if a heavily laden soul calls [another] to [carry some of] its load, nothing of it will be carried, even if he should be a close relative. You can only warn those who fear their Lord unseen and



have established prayer. And whoever purifies himself only purifies himself for [the benefit of] his soul. And to Allah is the [final] destination.” (Surah Fatir 35: Verse 18)

This *ayat* {verse} is about the Day of Judgment; on the Day of Judgment no one will be able to help anyone else or carry other people’s burdens. Such help will just not be possible, and Allah (swt) is telling us that, on the Day of Judgment, only the people who were able to purify themselves will not need anybody else’s help. Allah (swt) will help such people Himself because they will be the successful ones and will be going to *jannah* {heaven}. So we need to purify ourselves and carefully monitor what we put in our minds and our hearts.

Slides 30-31:

Most of the sources of information we discussed were either audio or visual, right? Either you use your eyes to read the information or you hear it. These are the two receptors that Allah (swt) has given to us for the absorption of information, so just like in the reservoirs I told you about in the analogy of the mountain rivers, we need to put filters on our eyes and ears and protect them from negative exposure. We need to make sure that the information we are receiving is correct because our thoughts will eventually become our actions. This is a universal fact which is recognized by everyone.

Slide 32:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a famous American essayist and one of America's most influential thinkers and writers, once said, “Sow a thought and reap an action, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap character, sow character reap a destiny.”

Slide 33:

Allah (swt) says in the *Qur’an*, “[Eden] Paradise [everlasting Gardens], under which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever: such is the reward of those who purify themselves.” (Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verse 76)

When you purify yourself, you also become a very attractive personality. So there are benefits of purifying ourselves in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. So, it’s definitely worth the effort, right?

*InshaAllah*, in the next class we will talk about how our thoughts are reflected in our communication with others.

(Du’a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati ‘amma yasifun wa salamun ‘alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil ‘alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*