

MODULE 1

Class title: Qur'an and I - part 1 – (1st part of a 2 lesson series)

Aim of lesson: To

Category: Worship

Class Format: Power Point Presentation

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

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min As Shaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

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

Slides 1- 4:

Ok, so are we all Muslims in this room?

Yes. *Alhamdulillah*. We all know what the Qur'an is? It is the last revelation of Allah (swt) to mankind and was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) through Jibril (as) ... we all know this right? So I am not going to talk about that today. No "theory" or "history" or "theology" today.

Today, I want to talk to you about **your** relationship with the Qur'an; **your** relationship, nobody else's. Have you even ever thought about it? I mean whether you have a relationship with the Qur'an or not. And if yes, then what is it?

The Qur'an is a manual; how do you treat manuals? You try to read and understand them. You have to read the Qur'an every day and try to follow it as you would follow a manual. What language is the Qur'an in? Do you understand what it says? Take a look at the screen. How would you place yourself in your relationship with the Qur'an? Be very honest. Would you say that the Qur'an is:

1. Known and familiar to you?
2. Unknown and unfamiliar?
3. Known and unfamiliar?

E.g. these three girls are friends; they know each other and are familiar with each other's likes and dislikes; is your relationship with the Qur'an like that? If not, you would place yourself in known and unfamiliar.

Each one of us must identify our relationship with the Qur'an as it stands today, in order to work towards making it better, *inhsaallah*.

(Note to teacher: Ask students what they think the Qur'an is – if you are taking this class after “Introduction to the Qur'an” classes, the discussion will be very interesting. Take plenty of time to discuss their perception of the Qur'an as well as their relationship with it.)

Slides 5 and 6:

First things first: Must we engage with the Qur'an? Why DO we need to be familiar with the Qur'an? Why do we need to have any kind of engagement at all?

Student: because it is the book of Allah (swt).

Student: it tells us what to do.

Teacher: If you want to go to *Jannah*, you have to follow the Qur'an. That is the map - the guideline for us, it shows us how to live our lives so that we have a fighting chance of being eligible for Paradise. It is basically as simple as that. No rocket science here!

What if *maulvi sahib* (male Qur'an teacher) or *ustani jee* (female Qur'an teacher) was not coming to teach you to read the Qur'an and mum was not saying that you have to read it five days a week; how many of you would still be engaging with the Qur'an?

Be honest. How many of you would open the Qur'an every day when you are on your own, out of your own free choice and with no body forcing you to do so?

Would it be accurate to say that if we take mummy and *maulvi sahib* out of the picture then there would be minimum engagement with the Qur'an?

Students: probably!

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*, for your honesty. The simple answer to the question is. Yes. We must have some relationship with the Qur'an.

Slide 7:

The Qur'an guides us as to how we can get a “pure” heart. That is what will *inshaallah* get us on the way to *Jannah*.

So, have we established that (a) engagement with Qur'an is a must for us and (b) Qur'an is the guide, the map, the manual that will help us navigate our way to the destination we all want to go to – *Jannah*. Great. Now we need to get started. For those of us who feel our relationship with the Qur'an is somewhat lukewarm or downright dodgy, we must have some starting point to get going, right?

Let's just set a starting point for ourselves. Look at a few basic things that relate me to the Qur'an.

Slides 8 and 9:

Firm belief as Muslims that:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

dhalikal kitaabu laa raiba feeh;

“This is the book in which there is no doubt.”

(Surah Al-Baqarah 2: Verse 2).

There is no doubt that this is the word of Allah (swt). If we believe that there is this Supreme Being who we call Allah (swt) who is our Creator, our Sustainer, who’s our Rabb, then we have to connect with the Qur’an; we are sort of compelled to have a bond with the Qur’an. In fact, it becomes a necessity.

If I put a plastic bag on my head, what will happen? I will suffocate and die; so I have this compulsion to take the plastic bag off my head. It should be the same with our relationship with the Qur’an, we have to have some kind of engagement with it.

Slides 10 and 11:

Did you know that the Qur’an is about you and me? I say that because

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Ambiya’ 21: Verse 10,

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

laqad anzalna ilaikum kitaaba fehee dhikrukum afala ta’qiloon; meaning,

“Indeed we have sent down for **you**, a book (the Qur’an) in which there is your *dhikr* (reminder), why don’t you understand? ”

Who is this “you”? You and I are “you”. Human beings are the topic of the Qur’an. You are the hero of the Qur’an! All of us individually; me, you, you, you, you; we are all the heroines of the Qur’an. Allah (swt) has chosen us to be the topic of that one book which has been there for the past fourteen hundred years and will remain till the end of time, *Alhamdulillah*.

I personally find that very exciting – that I am the topic of a Divine revelation. We just love to be the centre of attention, don’t we – well, here is our Creator and the Creator of all there is in the Heavens and the Earth - who has given me this tremendous honour of making me – puny insignificant me – the topic of His revelation. How cool is that!

Slides 12 and 13:

The main message of the Qur'an is urgent as well as relevant for me.

What is there in the Qur'an that is relevant and urgent for me?

Every statement, every piece of knowledge, every dialogue and every story is relevant and urgent for me. Every character; whether it is Musa (as) or Harun (as), whether it is Shaytan, whether it is Jibril or *Rasool Allah* (pbuh), every character in the Qur'an is relevant for my life.

Every promise, every warning that Allah (swt) has given, every commandment, every prohibition that He has written, all of this is of the utmost importance; you all are wondering, is this all in the Qur'an? Yes it is; all of this, and more.

Right, after sorting these 3 important things:

- 1) firm belief that this is from Allah (swt) and there is no doubt in it whatsoever,
- 2) it is about me and
- 3) the message it contains is absolutely urgent and relevant for me

Come back to the question - how do I engage with the Qur'an after mummy and *maulvi sahib* are out of the picture?

Slide 14:

How do I, myself, me, how do I engage with the Qur'an?

When we normally offer our *salah*, we say *Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Aalameen*, we recite Surah *Al-Fatihah*, we are connecting with the Qur'an at one level, but how many of us can claim that after *Alhamdulillah Rabbil 'Aalameen*, I read *Qul Hu Aallahu Ahad*, *Qul Aa'uzubi Rabbil Falaq*, *Qul Aa'uzubi Rabbin Naas*, *Qul Ya Ayyuhal Kaafiroon*, *Inna Aa'taina kal Kauthar*, and then what?

Is there more to the Qur'an than the thirtieth *para* (juz)? *Alhamdulillah*, it's wonderful that you have that connection, but it is just one part of the Qur'an that we are connecting with and we are forgetting about the rest, we think there is nothing beyond the thirtieth *para* or the few little *surahs* that we recite in our *salah*.

Slide 15:

None of you would actually recite the longer *surahs*, because you have other things to do; you don't have time and also because you don't know what you'll find in it.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

Wa laqad yassarnal Qur'ana lidhdhikhri fa hal mim muddakir.

(Surah Al-Qamar 54: Verse 17)

That means, "And indeed we have made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there anyone who will remember? (or receive admonition)"

Allah (swt) has made the Qur'an a manual for us, so if a manual is written in a difficult to understand style, you wouldn't know what to do with it.

I have this laptop in front of me right, we've got all these gizmos. If the laptop's manual was difficult to understand and we couldn't figure out which cable goes where, then we wouldn't know how to work it, would we? Thus, Allah (swt) is saying that He has - by "We" Allah (swt) means Himself - that Allah (swt) has made it easy for just regular people like us to understand, so is there anybody who would take out that time?

Like somebody just said, they don't have the time. The whole problem is that one has to take out some time to be able to understand it; we have to give it some importance, like you give to the subjects you study in school. If you don't give it time, what happens? You flunk. If you don't sit and understand that math problem, you will not get it; it will go over your head. So what do you do, you take some time out from your day and you sit and understand and do it; or if you don't understand it, you ask somebody.

Slides 16 - 18:

When you do sit down to read the Qur'an, how do you connect with it?

The first step is by reading. *Rasool Allah* (pbuh) was an Arab and the language of the Qur'an is Arabic, but the majority of Muslims today are not Arabs and Allah (swt) knew that the majority of Muslims in future would not be Arab, but still the language of the Qur'an is Arabic.

So in the days of *Rasool Allah* (pbuh), when people read the Qur'an, it meant that they read it with understanding. E.g. if I ask you to read what is written on that bag, you guys would understand what it means. That is a part of reading; comprehending the matter.

Allah (swt) says in His book,

"So recite of the Qur'an as much as is easy for you."

[Surah Al-Muzammil 73: Verse 20]

That tells us how often to read it. All of you said, *maulvi sahib* comes five days a week or whatever. Consider a day incomplete without spending some time with the Qur'an. Read regularly, even if it's a very small portion.

Slide 19:

Rasool Allah (saw) said that,

'Allah (swt) likes things which are done regularly, even if they are little.

[Bukhari and Muslim]

So even the days when *maulvi sahib* is not coming, pick up the Qur'an and read a little.

He (pbuh) also warned especially that you must attend to the Qur'an regularly, otherwise you may easily lose your gains.

The parable of the companion of the Qur'an is like a tethered camel; a man holds on to it so long as he attends to it, and it escapes if he lets it loose [Bukhari, Muslim]

Slide 20:

Some people have made this calculation that if you read just 2 pages after every salah – you can complete reading the entire Qur'an in 2 months! Or if you read 4.5 pages after each salah - you can complete it in a month.

Keep in mind that right now we are just talking about reading without understanding.

The quantity of reading will very much depend on the purpose of reading.

If you just want to spend time with the Qur'an, or get a quick overview, you may read much faster and, therefore, more. If you want to ponder and reflect, you may read much slower and, therefore, less.

Imam Ghazzali was a learned scholar and has done great work for our *deen* - he quotes someone as saying: 'I complete the reading of the Qur'an sometimes on every Friday, sometimes every month, sometimes every year. And (in one type of reading) I have been trying to complete it for the last thirty years but have not yet done so' (*Ihya' Uloom Ud Din*).

Imagine, this person was “reading” the Qur'an for 30 years and wasn't done yet! Intense degree of contemplation and pondering over the rich meanings of the Qur'an must have been his target in this type of “reading.”

Slides 21-22:

No time of the day or night is unsuitable;

Remember the name of your Lord at morning and in the evening and part of the night (al-Dahr 76:25).

Those who remember God when they are standing, and when they are sitting and when they are lying (Al 'Imran 3:191).

However, we do find in the Qur'an as well as in various *ahadith* that there are some ideal times to read.

In your salah at night:

The most excellent time to read is at night, and the most desirable posture is to stand in Prayer. In One of the earliest Surahs, al-Muzzammil, as in numerous other places, the Qur'an tells us so (Al 'Imran 3: 113; al-Isra' 17: 79; al-Zumar 39: 9).

It also explains why.

Reading the Qur'an during night-Prayers enables your heart to remain with your reading and strengthens your will in surrendering yourself to Allah's guidance and fulfilling the mission He has entrusted to you.

To do so, however, requires that you should (a) memorize some portions of the Qur'an, and (b) remain awake for some time during the night.

All of you may not therefore be able to do so all the time for various reasons; the Qur'an recognizes such limitations. It, therefore, permits you to read 'whatever you can do with ease' which means 'whatever portion', at 'whatever time', and in 'whatever position'.

The great need and immense benefits of reading the Qur'an in Prayer during the night however remain. Hence you should assign at least some time, however little, even a few minutes with some regular frequency, however long, say weekly or even monthly, for this purpose.

Just before or after *Fajr*. Before *Fajr* could even be ten minutes before the *adhan* or after *Fajr* in summer when *Fajr* is early. In winter you have to rush for school straight after *salah*, but in summer there is plenty of time if you don't go back to sleep.

The prerequisite of this however, is that you have to get up for *Fajr*. So before and after *Fajr*; at dawn is the ideal time for reciting the Qur'an.

To keep as near as possible to the ideal way, it may be desirable if you read the Qur'an after or before Fajr and 'Isha' Prayers, or at dawn, or before going to bed. Reading the Qur'an at dawn is especially commended in the Qur'an (al Isra' 17: 78).

Another ideal time to just read a few verses or small *surahs* is before going to bed, even if you know it by heart.

To read the Qur'an while sitting on a chair, resting against a pillow, lying in bed or on a couch is not desirable, but is not prohibited. But never do so without excuse, nor make it a habit.

Slides 23 -24:

It is important to read the Qur'an correctly; to follow the rules of *Tajweed*.

At least vowels and letters should be pronounced correctly, even if you are unable to learn the whole art of *tajweed*. The Arabic language is such that very slight mistakes in pronouncing vowels while reading may drastically alter the meaning, sometimes totally distorting it. On some occasions, you may be saying things which could amount to *Kufr*!

If somebody says "*Kulu Allau ahad*", will anyone laugh? It is just the same as saying, "Vaat arre you doing". Because the correct pronunciation is *Qaaf, Qul Hu Allahu ahad, Allahus samad, lam ya lid, wa lam yu lad, wa, lam ya kullahu kufuwan ahad*.

If somebody says *Alhamdulillah rabbil aalameen* (teacher pronounces it deliberately wrong in a strange manner), they are like what is the matter with you. Is it pronounced like this?

The poor angels they must be in fits or probably cringing when they hear us read the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is not in Urdu, not in Sindhi, not in French, not in Spanish, it is in Arabic and there is a certain way that Arabic is spoken, just as there is a certain way English is spoken. Do I say, "Vaatterr", or do I say "Water"? Why? Because that's the correct pronunciation.

So why is it that we are so complacent about the incorrect pronunciation of the Qur'an? The correct pronunciation of the Qur'an is not "*Alamdolila*" it is "*Alhamdulillah*". Try to read it correctly in the beginning, even if you don't understand what you're saying.

You must read the Qur'an correctly. At least vowels and letters should be pronounced correctly, even if you are unable to learn the whole art of *tajwid*. The Arabic language is such that very slight mistakes in pronouncing vowels while reading may drastically alter the meaning, sometimes totally distorting it. On some occasions, you may be saying things which could amount to *Kufr*.

An hour a day of sustained learning for a month or so should be enough for an educated adult to acquire the minimum essential rudimentary skills in this respect.

No one can be absolved of trying sincerely to learn to read the Qur'an correctly. But while you are learning, the fact that you cannot do so should not be a reason to forsake your reading. A non-Arab may never master the art of correct reading. Or, you may have no opportunity to learn. The Prophet was aware of such difficulties when he told Jibra'il, 'I have been sent, Jibra'il, to a people who are unlettered, among whom are old women and old men, boys and girls, and men who have never read a book' [Tirmidhi].

You should, therefore, remember his reassuring words in this respect, though do not make them an excuse to shun or slacken your efforts to learn.

Rasool Allah (saw) said,

“One who is skilled in reading the Qur'an is with the noble virtuous angels who bring down the revelation. One who falters while reading it and finds it hard to read correctly will have a double reward.”

[Bukhari and Muslim]

Can you imagine!! Allah (swt) knows that Arabic is not our language and that we get stuck and can't say *haa* and sometimes we find it hard to say *ghain* etc. So the person who reads with difficulty has to put in more of an effort to pronounce all the letters correctly. From that point of exit, he gets a double reward. That is the *rahmah* of Allah (swt).

That is why we read the *Qaidah* first; so we know how each letter is pronounced. Just like in English, when you go to school you learn ABCD first, don't you? And then you're told what the sounds are, aa ba caa, etc. When you form sentences somebody corrects you. This is not how you say it; this is not the correct pronunciation. That is something one has to be very careful about when one is reading or trying to learn to read the Qur'an; but remember, if you're getting stuck and putting in more effort, you're getting more reward for it.

Slide 25:

It is also important to seek Allah's (swt) protection before beginning to read. *Aa'uzubillahi minash Shaitanir rajeem*, “I seek refuge with Allah (swt), from Shaytan the accursed.”

Why should we do this? Because Allah (swt) Himself has said so in the Qur'an:

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

When you read the Qur'an, you shall seek refuge in Allah from Satan the rejected. (Surah An Nahl16: Verse 98).

Slide 26:

Begin with Allah's (swt) name, *Bismillahir Rahmaanir Rahim*, "With the name of Allah (swt) The Most Merciful, the Always Merciful."

Slides 27 – 32:

Another very important way of engaging with the Qur'an is by understanding it.

We can't imagine our dear friends speaking a language we don't understand.

Like you two friends, if one of you was French and could only speak French, how long would your friendship last? Would it last long if you didn't understand each other's language? Let's try it: somebody read this for me.

Student: Bonjour. Si'l vous plait Mademoiselle, C'est pour vous

Teacher: What does it mean? (students do not know)

Teacher: Hello, please miss. This is for you.

How about this one, try this one...

Student: C'est mon amie

Teacher: Do you speak English? That's what it means. Now try this, it's a language you all know...

(Students read with great difficulty – this is a verse of Urdu poetry by famous poet Mirza Ghalib)

نقش فریادی ہے کس کی شوخیِ تحریر کا

کاغذی ہے پیرہن ہر پیکرِ تصویر کا

Teacher: Poor *Ghalib* is turning in his grave at this moment. Did it totally go over your heads?

If your friend was speaking this language would you be friends for very long? Not likely. How long would your relationship last with a language barrier? Let's get a translation book for this and you try to explain what it means. By the time you look into the book and say, let's go out for pizza, you'll think, forget it, it's dinner time already! That would be a ridiculously pathetic kind of relationship. A language barrier is a painful thing; if you do not understand the other person's language, you might have some sort of a formal relationship and it might develop and go slightly deeper than formal, but it won't be a close relationship.

Slide 33:

To sum up, the levels of understanding of the Qur'an: Read the translation, study the explanation and understand the Qur'an in Arabic.

There are various different levels, just as there are various different levels of understanding anything. Right now most of us read without understanding at all. So start with reading the translation. Read with meaning, read with understanding.

Begin with tiny baby steps, a couple of verses at a time and try to remember what they mean. Then when you are reading it in Arabic, try to recall what it means. If you remember that *bismillahir rahmaanir raheem*, means Allah is All Merciful, Always Merciful, is that the meaning, or is that the incomplete meaning? It's the incomplete meaning because it means,

“with the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Always Merciful.”

We will continue next week *inshaAllah*.

Meanwhile, read the meaning of a verse or a part of a verse or all of Surah Al Fatihah before you offer your *salah* and see how it makes a difference in your *salah*. Please do this exercise and share the results with me. I hope you all are regular with your *salah*. Share your experiences with the class next week *inshaAllah*.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulIzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun 'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*