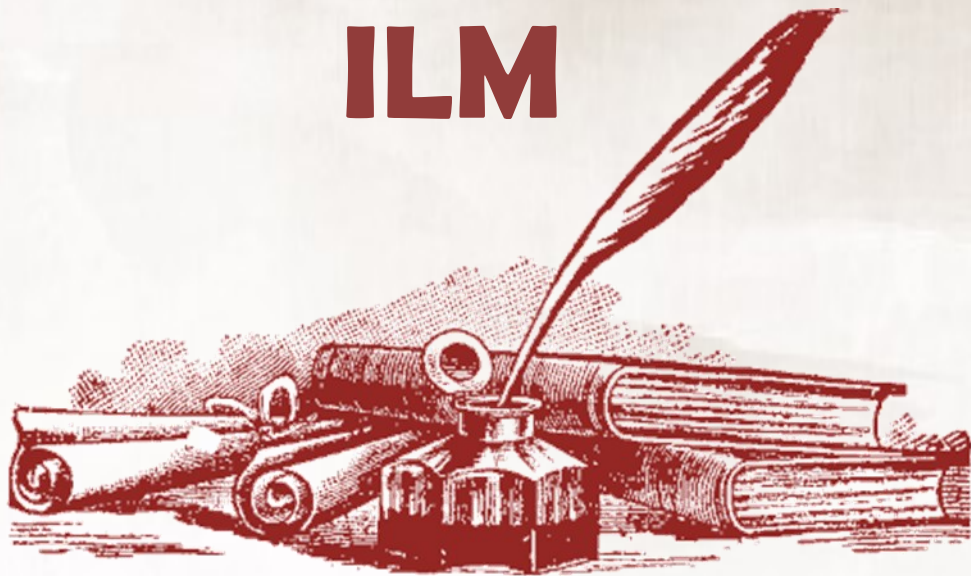


# **GUIDEBOOK FOR SEEKERS OF ILM**



**SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR SEEKERS ON THE PATH OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP**

IN ACCORDANCE WITH EFFORTS  
HEIGHTS CAN BE ATTAINED

WHOEVER SEEKS HEIGHTS  
STAYS AWAKE IN THE NIGHTS

BUT WHOEVER SEEKS HEIGHTS  
WITHOUT TRYING TO STRIVE

ONLY WASTES AWAY HIS LIFE  
CHASING THE IMPOSSIBLE

YOU SEEK TO POSSESS HONOUR  
BUT SLEEP THE NIGHT AWAY

THE ONE WHO SEEKS PEARLS  
MUST DIVE INTO THE OCEAN

بقدر الكدِّ تكتسبُ المعالي

ومن طلب العلا سهر الليالي

ومن رام العلا من غير كد

أضاع العمر في طلب المحال

تروم العز ثم تنام ليلاً

يفوص البحر من طلب اللآلي

## VIRTUES OF ILM

“Welcome to the seeker of knowledge! The angels surround the seeker of knowledge and shade him with their wings then they pile on top of each other until they reach the heaven of the world, out of their love of that which he is seeking.” (Mu'jam-ul-Kabir)

*Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge in high degrees.* (Qur'an 58:11)

*Only those fear Allah from among His servants who are Ulamā (have firm knowledge).* (Qur'an 35:28)

*Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read, and your Lord is Most Honourable, Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not.* (Qur'an 96:1-5)

*Ar-Rahmān! He has taught the Qur'an. He created man. He taught him eloquent speech.* (Qur'an 55:1-4)

## VIRTUES OF ILM : A DUTY

“Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim. And indeed the seeker of knowledge, everything seeks forgiveness for him, even the fishes in the sea.” (Ibn Mājah)

“A man shall be asked concerning five things on the day of resurrection: concerning his life; how he spent it, concerning his youth; how he grew old, concerning his wealth; whence he acquired it, and in what way he spent it, and what he did with the knowledge that he had.” (Tirmidhi)

“A believer is never satiated with gainful knowledge. He goes acquiring it until his death and entry into Paradise.” (Tirmidhi)

“The most upright ones of every successive generation will carry this Ilm. They will purify it from the falsification of the extremists, and the assumptions of the liars, and the misinterpretation of the fools.” (Baihaqi)

## VIRTUES OF ILM : STATUS

“Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise. Verily, the angels lower their wings for the seeker of knowledge out of pleasure of what he is doing. Verily, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, even the fish in the depths of the water, seek forgiveness for the Ālim (scholar). Verily, the virtue of the scholar over the worshiper is as the superiority of the moon over all the other heavenly bodies. Verily, the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets. Verily, the Prophets do not leave behind gold or silver coins, but rather they leave behind knowledge. So whoever has taken hold of it, has been given an abundant share/fortune.” (Abu Dawud)

“And those persons who assemble in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it amongst themselves, there will descend upon them Sakinah (tranquillity) and Rahmah (mercy) will cover them. And the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them in the presence of those near Him.” (Muslim)

“The most superior among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it.” (Bukhari)

“If Allah wants to do good to a person, he grants him Fiqh (comprehension) of the religion.” (Bukhari)

“Do not wish to be like anybody except in two cases: A man whom Allah has given wealth and he guides him to spend it (all) the right way, and a man whom Allah has given Hikmah (religious wisdom) and he gives his verdicts according to it, and teaches it to the people.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

“May Allah cause his face to shine, the man who hears something from us and conveys it as he heard it. For it is sometimes the case that perhaps the one to whom it is conveyed may preserve it better than the one who hears it.” (Ibn Mājah)

“A single scholar of religion is more formidable against Shaitān than a thousand (devout) worshippers.” (Tirmidhi)

## VIRTUES OF ILM : REWARD

“The superiority of a scholar who observes the prescribed prayer and then sits down to teach people goodness, over the worshipper who observes fast during the day and worships during the night, is like my superiority over the lowest in rank amongst you.” (Tirmidhi)

“O Abu Dharr! That you set out in the morning and learn one Ayah from the Book of Allah is better for you than to pray one hundred (optional) Rak’āh. And that you set out in the morning and learn one Bāb (chapter/category) of knowledge, regardless if it is applied or not applied, it is better for you than to pray one thousand Rak’āh.” (Ibn Mājah)

“The noblest charity is that a Muslim acquires some knowledge, then imparts it to a brother Muslim.” (Ibn Mājah)

“When a person dies, his deeds are cut off except for three: Continuing charity, knowledge that others benefited from, and a righteous child who supplicates for him.” (Tirmidhi)

## VIRTUES OF ILM : A RESPONSIBILITY

“He who acquires knowledge by which Allah’s pleasure is sought, he does not acquire it but to gain worldly good, will not sense the odour of the Paradise on the Day Of Resurrection.” (Ibn Mājah)

“The knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the cause of Allah.” (Tirmidhi)

“He who is asked about knowledge and conceals it will be bridled on the Day of Judgment with a bridle of fire.” (Abu Dawud)

“Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swines.” (Ibn Mājah)

“Do not acquire knowledge in order to vie with scholars, and to wrangle with the foolish, and to sit in the best seats. Whoever does that his abode will be the Fire, the Fire.” (Ibn Hibbān)

“Verily, Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the servants. But He takes away knowledge by taking away the Ulamā (i.e. their death). Such that when He leaves no scholar left, the people will take ignorant ones as leaders. Then they are asked, and they will give religious verdicts without any knowledge. Thus they themselves are astray and lead others astray.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Sayyidina Abdullah Ibn Mas’ud said: “Yours is the age in which desires are restrained by knowledge. A time will soon come when knowledge will be subservient to desires.”

“O Allah! I ask you for beneficial knowledge, acceptable action and good provision.” (Tirmidhi)

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM

### REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: ADAB OF ILM

Imam Ibrahim ibn Isma’il said: “We used to memorize the Hadith by practising on it.”

First and foremost, seekers must ensure that they are acquiring knowledge for the pleasure of Allah Ta’ala. By studying the Deen, one learns what pleases and displeases Him. Then they will bring it into correct practice; earning His Pleasure. Then they will preach it through their words and example; pleasing Him further.

-> *Indeed there is for you in the Messenger of Allah, a perfect example.* (Qur’an 33:21)

-> “Whoever acts on what he has learnt, Allah grants him knowledge of what he was unaware of.” (Hilyah Abu Nu’aym)

Seekers must select a good teacher and a pure source of Ilm.

->Imam Abdullah ibn Mubārak said: "The Isnād (chain of transmission) is part of Deen. If it were not for Isnād, anyone would have said what they wished."

Seekers must work on developing a high level of Taqwa (God consciousness, dutifulness to Him and abstention from sin).

->*Fear Allah and Allah will teach you.* (Qur'an 02:282)

->"A person is not an Ālim until he acts on his knowledge." (Ibn Hibbān)

Seekers must not be distracted by excessive comfort. The illustrious scholars of the past underwent great difficulties to acquire the smallest bits of knowledge. Seekers must regard their Ilm as their most valuable possession, and must not regret or feel shame on taking this path.

->Imam Ibrahim ibn Adham said: "If the kings of the world and their sons knew what we have, of blessings and happiness, they would fight us for it with their swords."

-Imam Yahya ibn Kathir said: "Ilm cannot be gained whilst the body is in its comfort zone."

Seekers must have a high level of respect for the sources of knowledge. This includes their books, their teachers and the scholars of the former generations.

->Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmiri was asked how he became such a great scholar. He replied: "I never touched any Islamic book without Wudhu. When I placed the books on each other, I used to take care of their ranks. I never put a book of Hadith over the Qur'an. I never put a book of Fiqh over Hadith. I never put a book of History over a book of Fiqh. Even on placing the books, I used to take care of their ranks."

->Imam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Assuming all the Hadith were gathered in compilations, no Ālim will know all that is contained in the books. Some person may have many books, but he is not aware of its contents. However, those who lived before these compilations were gathered were much more knowledgeable in the Sunnah. Their chests were their compilations and it contained much more than these books."

Seekers must inculcate within themselves the readiness to admit if they are wrong or do not know something. A seeker does not justify their wrongs, but attempt to correct them; thus growing in their learning. In short, a seeker never jeopardises their relationship with Allah Ta'ala in order to impress people, defend their ego, or assert their dominance.

->Sayyidina Abdullah ibn Mas'ud would say: "If it (what I say) is correct, then it is from Allah. If it is incorrect, then it is from myself and (the whisperings of) Shaitān."

Seekers must be willing to gradually progress in their knowledge, rather than jumping on to more difficult concepts beyond their level of grasp. A seeker must never consider themselves as having reached a stage where they cannot learn something new.

->*It is not for a human that Allah should give him the Scripture and authority and prophethood and then he says to the people: "Be servants to me rather than Allah" but (instead they say): "Be Rabbāniyyeen (pious scholars of the Lord) because of what you have taught of the Scripture and because of what you have studied."* (Qur'an:3:79) Imam Bukhari explains 'Rabbāni' as one who trains with basic Ilm before more complex matters.

->Imam Sa'eed ibn Jubayr said: "A person is a scholar as long as he continues to learn. No sooner does he abandon knowledge, thinking that he is not in need and he is content with what he has, then he is the most ignorant."

A seekers does not jeopardise their studies over friendships, distractions and addictions. A seeker does not study for the sake of examinations but for the sake of personal growth. A seeker has polite manners, a forgiving heart and an accommodating attitude. They are not party to any activity that seeks to exclude others or make anyone feel uncomfortable.

->*So by the Mercy of Allah, you (O Muhammad) were gentle with them. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you.* (Qur'an 3:159)

->*And verily, you (O Muhammad) are on an exalted character.* (Qur'an 68:4)

->"Verily Allah is Gentle. He loves gentleness. He gives with gentleness what He does not give with harshness and nor anything besides it." (Muslim)

In a couplet, Imam Juwayni says:

"Knowledge will not be achieved except through six things:

Intelligence, Eagerness, Effort, Competence, Company of a teacher, A long time."

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: ADAB OF THE TEACHER

*Thus it is. And he who honours the Symbols of Allah, it is truly from Taqwa of the hearts.* (Qur'an 22:32)

"I am for you on the status of a father, I teach you." (Nasa'i)

"I have only been sent as a teacher." (Ibn Mājah)

"Part of glorifying Allah is honouring the grey haired Muslim, the one who has learnt the Qur'an by heart without exaggerating it or ignoring its teachings, and honouring the just ruler." (Abu Dawud)

*You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in (any) order.* (Qur'an 18:69)

When Prophet Musa went to seek Ilm from Prophet Khadir (peace be upon them both), he said the above. The seeker should feel fully at ease placing themselves in the trust of their teacher; deferring to their judgement and teachings of the teacher. It is the responsibility of the seeker to search for a teacher who is worthy of this trust; one with correct Aqeedah, adherence to Sunnah, good intelligence and manners. If the seeker is enrolled in an institute, it is the responsibility of the institute to provide such teachers.

A few rights of the teacher:

- The teacher should be accepted as the leader of the classroom
- The teacher should be given the right to make decisions and correct the students
- The teacher should not be spoken over, interrupted or ignored when speaking
- The teacher should be greeted with Salām and referred to with respect
- The teachers should be responded to when asking a question or requesting something
- The teacher's flaws should be overlooked in favour of the benefit they give
- The teacher should not be backbitten or treated with suspicion or anger
- The teacher's advice should be sought and not ignored when given
- The teacher should not be mocked, humiliated or argued with
- The teacher's personal life should be treated without nosiness or speculation
- The teacher's personal rules should be respected
- The teacher should not be compared to other teachers
- The teacher should themselves be approached for concerns before going to someone else
- Every teacher should be respected even though some may be more beloved
- Every teacher's lesson deserves participation, homework completion, and effort
- A teacher of the opposite gender should never be informal with or alone with any seeker
- If a seeker is not compatible with a teacher or institute, or vice versa, then without any hard feelings and with full respect, they can move on to one where they are

Sayyidina Ali said: "Of the rights of the scholars is that:

- You greet people generally and greet him with a special greeting
- Sit in front of him
- Do not point with your hand in his presence, nor wink with your eye
- Do not quote someone else who said opposite of what he said
- Do not backbite anyone in his presence
- Do not grasp him by garment
- Do not insist for answers when he becomes tired
- Do not ever feel you have accomplished him enough because (the teacher) is like a palm tree from which people wait for fruits to (continue to) drop."

->Sayyidina Umar said: "Acquire knowledge and teach people. Learn with Waqār (dignity) and Sakinah (tranquillity). Humble yourselves before those teach you knowledge. Humble yourselves before those whom you teach knowledge. Do not be tyrannical scholars and thus base your knowledge upon your ignorance."

->Imam Abu Hanifah said: "Since my teacher Imam Hammād has passed away, I have made Du'a for him and for my parents after every Salah. I have never ever stretched my legs in the direction of his house despite his house located seven streets away from mine."

->Shaykh Hadhrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi said: "Two practices are extremely poisonous and fatal for a student; first, reinterpreting one's mistake when admonished by a teacher. Second, to raise objections on one's teacher."

->Shaykh-ul-Hadith Hadhrat Maulana Zakariyyah Kandhalwi said: "The Sunnah and known practice of Allah is that whoever does not respect his teachers will never ever (be given the Tawfiq to) benefit from the knowledge they are acquiring."

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: ADAB OF THE LESSON

Shaykh-ul-Hadith Hadhrat Maulana Zakariyyah Kandhalwi gave 10 classroom rules to the seekers of Ilm. The detailed version can be found in his book *Āp Biti*.

1. Unauthorised absence is unacceptable. If you are ill or need leave, you must inform and have it authorised.
2. You must sit in an orderly manner similar to how the Saff (rows) are straightened in Salah.
3. Your appearance must be proper in that it must not conflict against the Salaf (pious predecessors) and Ulamā. The beard should be appropriate length.
4. When a narration comes with words relating to certain matters which require modesty in approaching, the teacher will translate it accurately and unambiguously. You are not to laugh at hearing it, as it is a sign of disrespect.
5. Do not lean your elbow on the book.
6. Do not sleep in class.
7. Sit properly; do not sit cross legged or leaning on the wall especially in the lessons of Hadith. Have respect for the book externally and internally.\*
8. Wear clothing which conforms to the Shari'ah and is loose fitted. Your clothing should be dignified and resemble that worn by the Ulamā.
9. Show the utmost respects to the Imams of Hadith and Fiqh regardless of their school. Do not think or speak ill of them as a result of your bias towards your own school.
10. If you wish to query based on something which you have learned from another teacher, do so but do not mention their name (to not create conflict between teachers or undermine a teacher).

Shaykh Mufti Muzhaffar Husain, a principle of Jami'ah Mazhahir-ul-Uloom, mentioned:

- Wait for the lesson to start inside the class; do not loiter outside
- Attend class and consistently so
- Do not leave the classroom unnecessarily
- Focus! Do not doodle, text or distract others during lesson
- Do not do anything which is unrelated to the current lesson during lesson time such as grooming or reading a novel
- Come prepared; do not leave your books at home

Shaykh Hadhrat Maulana Muhammad Maseehullah Khan advised students (as abridged below):

- Pray Salah with Jamā'ah (congregation)
- Adopt Taqwa
- Adopt humility
- Do not Interfere with Madrasah (institutional) affairs
- Lower the gaze, and do not look at what is forbidden
- Have polite speech
- Avoid too much mixing with friends, so as not to be distracted
- Respect the books, the teachers and the classroom
- Make Tilāwah of the Holy Qur'an
- Make Mutāli'ah, I'ādah and have regular attendance to class
- The purpose of study should be to practice then later on to teach others.
- Do not enter the private room of others or let them enter your private room
- Spend holidays under the guidance of your Shaykh (spiritual mentor)
- Always think that 'Allah is watching me'

Shaykh Hadhrat Maulana Adam ibn Yusuf Lunat gives 8 advices to seekers of knowledge:

1. Recite abundant Salawāt on the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)
2. Make abundant Istighfār
3. Make abundant Dua
4. Stay away from Laghwiyyāt (futilities)
5. Have Adab (outward respect) and Ihtirām (respect in the heart)
6. Be punctual and regular in lessons
7. Concern yourself with your Islāh (self-rectification)
8. Complete the necessary task for your lessons

\* Sayyidina Umar reported in the famous Hadith known as Hadith Jibril: "We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) one day when a man appeared with very white clothes and very black hair. There were no signs of travel on him and we did not recognize him. He sat down in front of the Prophet and rested his knees by his knees and placed his hands on his thighs." The ending of the Hadith is: "The Prophet said: "Verily, he was Jibril who came to teach you your Deen." This Hadith shows us the best way for a seeker to sit in front of their teacher.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: MUTĀLI'AH

Imam Abu Hanifah was told about a group in the Masjid discussing Fiqh. He asked: "Do they have a leader?" They replied: "No". He said: "These people will never gain true Fiqh (understanding)."

What is Mutāli'ah?

Mutāli'ah means to look over, pre-read or pre-study the material or topic to be covered in the coming lesson(s). This should take far less time than revision or homework; both of which come after the lesson is taught. If a teacher expects you to decipher the subject material for yourself, then for Arabic language subjects you will need to use the dictionary and look up vocabulary. If the teacher does not expect you to do so, then just pre-reading should be sufficient. If you find this difficult to do everyday, then read the next few chapters that will be covered in the coming week on a day where you have less homework and more available time. Making Mutāli'ah will allow you to:

- Get you acquainted with key words and definitions
- Identify main themes that will be the focus of the lesson
- Develop your ability to work through, translate and read texts independently
- Pick up on your mistakes when the teacher explains something you misunderstood or could not figure out when making Mutāli'ah
- Make note of what confused you so that you can ask the teacher to clear your confusion
- Develop your confidence and grasp in lesson as everything will not be totally new for you
- Understand and retain the lesson better; cutting down on revision time
- For Arabic language subjects it is essential to do Mutāli'ah so that you can build your Ibārah (text reading) ability with fluency. This only comes through practice.

Should you read books not in the syllabus?

The strong seeker is one who learns the core of their knowledge through their teachers and textbooks but at the same time continues reading to gain breadth of knowledge. Read only authentic books at your current level, with the recommendation of your teacher. Do not study texts of Hadith or Qur'an by translation alone. It is more dangerous to misunderstand something than to be unaware. Develop a rapport with a scholar who you can refer to when you have questions regarding anything that may play on your mind. Always prioritise your textbooks, and ensure you are making even a little Tilāwah (recitation of Qur'an) every day. This will add blessings to everything else.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: I'ĀDAH

"There are two blessings which many people lose: health and free time." (Bukhari)

"Oh Allah! Bless my Ummah in their (work done) in the mornings." (Ibn Mājah)

It is written in the wisdom passed down from Prophet Dawud: "A sane person, unless he is mindless, should have four hours: an hour to invoke to his Lord, an hour to count his own deeds, an hour to contemplate about the creation of Allah and an hour for his worldly needs."

What is I'ādah?

I'ādah, also called Murāji'ah, means to repeat and revise the material covered during lesson. Study requires consistency. Consistency requires a routine. A seeker should make a daily timetable with apportioned times for family, chores, worship and study. Everybody has different abilities as well as methods of processing, reviewing and memorising information. Some lessons require self-study whilst it is more beneficial in others to revise with class fellows. This is known as Mudhākarah or Tadārus. A study group should contain a mixture of students with different abilities so that they can help one another. Every member must participate, regardless of ability. If they are side tracked often, then they should revise with someone else. A true seeker does not revise just before examinations but regularly goes over the material covered throughout the year(s).

With recommendations from your teacher, listen to audio lectures on the subject you are studying while you complete daily activities. You will not need to take out extra time but will pick up weeks worth of knowledge in days. Always remember that self-study is not sufficient. Without a teacher, exams may be passed but blessings cannot be fully attained. The heart to heart knowledge passed on to your teacher which they will be imparting during lessons is a valuable treasure that should not be thought of as insignificant.

"Have regularity with (recitation and study of) the Qur'an. For, by Him in Whose Hand my life is, the Qur'an runs away (is forgotten) faster than camels released from their tying ropes." (Bukhāri)



## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: PUNCTUALITY

*O you who believe! Fulfil promises.* (Qur'an 5:part of Ayah 1)

Someone who is constantly late and misses lessons without a valid reason indicates their lack of dedication towards studies and little respect for others. These acts rob people of their time and create unnecessary difficulties in record keeping. Often the teacher is unable to teach if many students are absent, as the lesson requires explanation which will need to be repeated again. Difficulty then arises in completing the syllabus. Do not miss lessons unless you have a valid reason. Guests, celebrations, vacations, extra curricular activities, and not wanting to account for uncompleted homework are not valid reasons. If you miss a lesson, it is your duty to seek out what was covered. 'I was absent' is not a reason to not have studied that particular chapter. Always inform the relevant person if you are going to be absent or late. Record what time you arrived so that your records are kept accurately by the institute. If you arrive late, do not distract others.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: PARTICIPATION

"Indeed knowledge is (gained) through learning." (Dār-ul-Qutni)

"The cure for confusion is but to ask." (Ibn Mājah)

Imam Mujahid said: "Two types of people do not learn; one too arrogant and one too shy."

There are two types of seekers: those that are active in their studies and those that are passive. Although active students put in more work, they are less stressed and enjoy their studies more. They make the classroom enjoyable and encourage other classmates with their enthusiasm. Participation in lesson is indicated by:

- Eager, open and respectful body language, as opposed to irreverent and bored
- Engagement with the teacher, as opposed to refusing to answer questions or take notes
- Study of the material taught, as opposed to merely being physically present in the class

Build a comfortable relationship with the teacher. Don't think: 'I'll just ask my classmate later or copy their notes'. The teacher will be able to explain to you fully and correctly. By refusing their help, you are denying their role. It is also important to know when, how and what to ask. Unnecessary questions leave less time for the lesson objectives to be completed. Knowledge is providing the right answer. Intelligence is asking the right question.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: COMPLETING SET TASKS

Sayyidina Ali said: "When you are studying Ilm, protect your studies. Do not mix laughter and futility with your studies, or the Ilm will leave your hearts."

Some lessons require homework that must be memorised; others, homework that must be written out; others, the deciphering of text; others, research. Completing set tasks is part of two of the two part process of learning a topic. The first step is understanding it, and the second is applying and identifying it. Homework and tests allows the teacher to know the where the gaps in understanding are. If you do not complete them or you copy off somewhere or someone, you are creating more problems for yourself and the class as a whole. How can the teacher help you if they cannot gauge your ability? How can you master knowledge if you cannot be relied upon?

What does one who feels burdened with their studies do?

If you are unable to comprehend the basics of each lesson, you may have been enrolled into a division of the curriculum which is above your current level of grasp. It is important to not jump ahead when you have gaps in your knowledge. If you are unable to make time to study due to distractions, then you must change your lifestyle. If you are unable to make time to study due to other responsibilities, then only take on what you are able to fulfil. This course has rights. If scholars with weak understanding are graduated, the level of Ilm within the Ummah falls. Therefore, think carefully whether you are able to give the time and energy that this path requires before embarking on it. If you truly want this, ask aid from Allah Almighty and He will open up the gates of ease for you. A seeker who approaches their teacher for help and advice when they are struggling has more success than one who struggles alone, fails and then approaches the teacher to excuse their failure.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: NOTE MAKING

“Verily, Allah loves it when one of you does an action, he does it with Itqān (meticulously).” (Tabarāni)

### KEEP NOTES NEAT

- Messy writing causes unnecessary problems for the reader, and a Believer does not like to burden or stress anyone. The only cure to messy writing is to practice handwriting in your spare time. The two most common handwriting styles are similar to calligraphic fonts ‘Naskh’ (more rounded) and ‘Ruq’ah’ (more angular).
- Do not cramp your writing up. You may reuse your notes in the future and if you have properly spaced them out, you will be able to add more information to previously made notes.
- Some seekers struggle to keep up with writing as the teacher continues to deliver the lesson. Do not give up writing. Keep practicing writing quickly but neatly. A little bit of effort in building this skill will save you from falling behind in the later years which are mostly lecture based.
- Write Islamic and Gregorian dates. This later on helps delineate time needed to study the text.
- Title all your work clearly and number your pages. If your papers become loose, you will struggle to rearrange them in the correct order if they are not numbered.
- When writing commentary, write the title of the chapter in larger font in a different colour. Write the Taraf (referencing text) of the Hadith and its number in a different colour, then write the commentary under it in black or blue ink.
- Write Arabic words and sayings in Arabic, not in another language. Ask the teacher to spell words out for you if you do not know how to write the word correctly. Students who fail to do this have problems with basic Arabic spelling and in recognising the root letters of words.
- Use a colour-coded key: One colour for the text being discussed and black or blue for the commentary. Write Āyat and Ahādith in different colours, or at least apply some markings on them in a different colour so that they are automatically distinguished from the rest of the text.
- Use a writing pad instead of an exercise book. It is easier to remove mistakes, add more pages later, and change over for the next subject. Using smaller books means going through many. Ultimately, use what is most comfortable and convenient for you.

### DO NOT WASTE TIME

- Some seekers make rough/messy notes in lesson then go home and rewrite them. This doubles the workload, increasing stress. Almost all of these type of seekers then treat actual homework as a burden because they have created another responsibility upon themselves unnecessarily.
- Save time by making notes; not a commentary on the subject. Use diagrams, tables and bullet points to summarise full sentences.
- Stories and advices given by the teacher that are not directly related to the subject material can be written in another colour or in a separate notebook (to avoid confusion when revising).

### REVERE AND HONOUR THE KNOWLEDGE

- Write Salawāt (salutations on the Prophet peace be upon him) out properly without abbreviating it. As long as the salutation is on paper, you will be rewarded for it.
- Write the relevant words of respect before and after the names of the pious predecessors. They are not ordinary individuals and deserve respect when referenced.
- Value your notes and take pride in them. It is advised not to sit above pages which contain Allah’s Almighty Name. It is advised to sit in a humble position when making notes and when sitting with one’s book. It is advised to carry one’s notes at one’s front, not in a backpack or below the hip. If writing directly in the textbook, do not ruin it by making careless and messy notes.

### DO NOT BE LETHARGIC

- A real seeker never relies on their class fellows to make notes. You will only damage your own learning experience. Allowing someone else to do the work for you will be defeating the purpose you signed up for. Make your own notes, and then borrow someone else’s notes to check and correct yours if need be.
- When making notes, remember to still listen and participate in class. Be present. Re-read your notes daily or weekly to ensure you understand and to clarify missed or difficult points.
- Don’t take note making as a burden. Knowledge is an honour. Ask the class who studied the subject the previous year if you can see their books for presentation ideas.
- A seeker does not rely only on the textbook alone. The teacher has much knowledge that extends beyond the textbook, which will benefit and may come up in examinations.
- Try to be as accurate as possible in your notes; teachers may not check them. Don’t assume that your notes accurately represent what the teacher has taught. You may have made a mistake in understanding or in writing. Therefore, revision of notes is necessary.

## REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: MEMORISATION AND RETENTION

*So High is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And (oh Muhammad) do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say: "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (Qur'an 20:114) And remember your Lord when you forget. (Qur'an 18:24)*

"Jibril would come to me to revise the Qur'an once every year. This year he revised with me twice. I do not think it means anything but that my term (life) will come to an end." (Bukhari)

When it comes to translation and explanation, a seeker must not learn like a parrot, regurgitating information without understanding it. They should instead be able to analyse, rephrase and expand on the subject matter. When it comes to learning wording of Qur'an, Hadith, sayings of the scholars and vocabulary, there is no choice but to memorise. Memorisation by heart requires time, effort, sacrifice and mental exertion. A teacher can only explain the lesson. They are not responsible for you remembering the lesson. In the spiritual sciences, unlike worldly sciences, there is clear link between piety and success. Therefore, it is imperative to live a lifestyle that allows you to utilise your memorising skills to the best of your ability. Scholars recommend consuming memory boosting foods such as Zamzam, honey, water, milk, walnuts, almonds, dates, raisins, ginger, berries, greens, blackseed oil, olive oil and coffee. They recommend avoiding acidic and processed food, and overeating. Make sure you are not lacking in vital vitamins and minerals, otherwise brain and body function will decline. Ensure that you use the Siwak, as it brings benefit not only to one's spirituality but also one's mind and body. Use visual prompts; keep a planner, or tie a string around your finger to remind you that you have an important task to complete. You must have a healthy sleep schedule: Wake up before Fajr, take a siesta before or after Dhuhr, go to sleep not long after Isha. If you have energy, wake up for in night to pray before going back to sleep again. Monitor your time when you are using your phone, as it easy to get distracted. If you spend three to four hours every day wasting time, that's a whole day you have lost in the week!

Imam Yahya ibn Yahya said: "A man asked Imam Malik ibn Anas: Oh Abu Abdullah! Is there anything that will improve my memory? He said: If anything will improve it, it is giving up sin."

One day, Imam Ghazālī was returning home with his precious notes. They were looted by robbers. When he pleaded with tearful eyes to the leader of the robbers to return his knowledge, the robbers laughed and said: "What knowledge have you acquired when on the toss of a mere piece of paper you find yourself blank?" These remarks forced Imam Ghazālī to ponder and he started learning all of his vast notes by memory. He completed this in three years.

Imam Abu Ja'far Warrāq narrated: "I asked Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Isma'il Bukhari: "How old were you when you began seeking knowledge of Hadith?" He replied: "I was inspired to study Hadith while I was still memorizing the Qur'an." I asked him: "How old were you at the time?" He replied: "Ten years or younger. I finished memorizing it at ten. Then I went to Imam Dākhili and others to study Hadith. One day, he said when he was teaching: "Sufyan narrated to us on the authority of Abu Zubayr, who narrated to us on the authority of Ibrahim..." I said: "Abu Zubayr did not narrate on the authority of Ibrahim." He looked at me and I said to him: "You may refer to your books and verify this for yourself." So, he went and looked, then he came out and said: "So what is the correct chain, boy?" I said: "It is Zubayr bin Udayy who narrated from Ibrahim." He took a pen, corrected his (present) notes and told me: "You are correct." Some of those listening to this story asked Imam Bukhari: "How old were you when you corrected him like this?" He answered: "Eleven. When I reached the age of sixteen, I had memorized all of the books of Ibn Mubārak and Waki'. Afterwards, I went out with my mother and brother to Makkah. When I performed the Hajj, my brother returned, and I stayed with my mother studying Hadith. When I was eighteen, I began to write a book of the narrations of the Sahabah and Tābi'in". (Sifat as-Safwah)

Imam Tirmidhi had lost his sight towards the latter portion of his life (some say it was due to his excessive weeping out of fear of Allah Ta'ala). Once whilst on a journey, at a certain point he bowed his head. When asked why he did this, he replied: "Is there not a tree here whose branches hang over in such a manner that it harms those who are passing by?" They answered in the negative. He became worried as to whether his memory had failed him. He stopped the caravan immediately and asked his companions to enquire from the locals whether a tree had existed there or not. "If it is established that no tree existed then I will stop narrating the Hadith due to my weak memory." On inquiry it was shown to them that a tree had previously existed over there but due to it being a hindrance to travellers, it was removed. (al-Misk-uz-Zaki)



*AND THOSE WHO STRIVE FOR US*

*WE WILL SURELY GUIDE THEM*

*TO OUR PATHS.*

*AND INDEED ALLAH IS WITH*

*THE DOERS OF GOOD.*

*(QUR'AN 29:69)*

**REQUIREMENTS OF ILM: AWARENESS OF TEXTS AND SCHOLARS**  
**NAMES OF AUTHORS AND APPROXIMATE DATES OF THEIR DEMISE**

**MU'ATTA IMAM MALIK**  
IMAM MALIK IBN ANAS  
APPROX. DEMISE: 179A.H./795A.D.

**MU'ATTA IMAM MUHAMMAD**  
IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN HASAN SHAIBĀNI  
189/805

**SAHIH BUKHARI**  
IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN ISMA'IL BUKHARI  
256/870

**SAHIH MUSLIM**  
IMAM MUSLIM IBN HAJJĀJ  
261/875

**SUNAN IBN MĀJAH**  
IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN YAZEED  
273/887

**SUNAN ABU DAWUD**  
IMAM SULAYMAN IBN ASH'ATH  
275/889

**SUNAN TIRMIDHI**  
IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN EESA  
279/892

**SUNAN NASA'I**  
IMAM AHMED IBN SHU'AYB  
300/913

**SHARH MĀ'NI-UL-ĀTHĀR**  
**AQEEDAT-UT-TAHĀWIYAH**  
IMAM ABU JA'FAR AHMED TAHĀWI  
321/933

**MUKHTASAR-UL-QUDURI**  
IMAM ABUL HASAN AHMED QUDURI  
428/1037

**MASĀBIH-US-SUNNAH**  
IMAM ABU MUHAMMAD HUSAIN BAGHAWI  
516/1122

**AQEEDAT-UN-NASAFIYAH**  
IMAM NAJMUDDIN UMAR NASAFI  
536/1142

**AL-HIDĀYAH**  
IMAM BURHANUDDIN ALI MURGHINĀNI  
593/1197

**SIRAJI FIL MIRĀTH**  
IMAM SIRAJUDDIN MUHAMMAD SIJAWANDI  
600/1204

**RIYADH-US-SĀLIHEEN**  
IMAM ABU ZAKARIYYAH YAHYA NAWAWI  
676/1277

**TAFSEER BAIDHĀWI**  
IMAM NASRUDDIN ABDULLAH BAIDHĀWI  
685/1286

**KANZ-UD-DAQĀ'IO**  
IMAM ABDULLAH BIN AHMED NASAFI  
710/1310

**MISHKĀT-UL-MASĀBIH**  
IMAM MUHAMMAD KHATIB TABRIZI  
741/1340

**SHARH-UL-WIQĀYAH**  
IMAM UBAYDULLAH MAHBUBI  
747/1346

**HIDAYAT-UN-NAHW**  
IMAM SIRAJUDDIN ABU HAYYAN UTHMAN  
758/1357

**TAFSEER IBN KATHIR**  
IMAM ISMA'IL IBN UMAR IBN KATHIR  
774/1373

**USOOL-USH-SHĀSHI**  
IMAM SHĀSHI  
800S/1300S

**FATH-UL-BĀRI FI SHARH-IL-BUKHARI**  
**NUKHBAT-UL-FIKAR**  
IMAM AHMED IBN HAJAR ASQALĀNI  
852/1449

**JALĀLAIN**  
IMAM JALALUDDIN MAHALLI  
863/1459

**JALĀLAIN**  
**AL-ITOQĀN FI ULUM-IL-QUR'AN**  
IMAM JALALUDDIN ABDURRAHMAN SUYUTI  
911/1505

**MIROQĀT-UL-MAFĀTIH**  
IMAM MULLA ALI AL-QĀRI  
1014/1605

**NUR-UL-IDĀH**  
**MARĀ'QI-US-SA'ĀDAH (ASCENT TO FELICITY)**  
IMAM ABUL KHAIR HASAN SHURUNBULALI  
1069/1659

**AL-HUSĀMI**  
SHAYKH ABDULHAQ MUHADDITH DEHLAWI  
1052/1642

**NUR-UL-ANWĀR**  
SHAYKH AHMED MULLA JIWAN  
1130/1718

**AL-FAWZ-UL-KABEER**  
SHAH WALIUULLAH MUHADDITH DEHLWI  
1175/1762

**THE ESSENTIAL HANAFI HANDBOOK OF FIQH**  
QADI THANAUULLAH PANIPATI  
1225/1810

**HEAVENLY ORNAMENTS**  
SHAYKH ASHRAF ALI THANWI  
1362/1943

**NAFHAT-UL-ARAB**  
SHAYKH MUHAMMAD IZAZ ALI  
1374/1955

**MA'ĀRIF-UL-QUR'AN**  
SHAYKH MUFTI MUHAMMAD SHAFEE USMANI  
1396/1976

**QASAS-UN-NABIYYEEN + AL-QIRĀ'AT-UR-**  
**RĀSHIDAH + MUKHTARĀT MIN ĀDAB-IL-ARAB**  
SHAYKH ABUL HASAN ALI NADWI  
1420/1999

**ZĀD-UT-TĀLIBEEN**  
SHAYKH ĀSHIQ ILAHI BARNI BULANDSHEHRI  
1422/2001

**AL-FIQH-UL-MUYASSAR**  
SHAYKH SHAFIQ-UR-RAHMAN NADWI

**DUROOS-UL-LUGHAT-AL-ARABIYYA**  
DOCTOR VANIYA ABDUR RAHIM

# SKILLS OF A SEEKER

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: RECOGNISING YOUR LEARNING TYPE

The first step to remembering something is encoding it in your memory. There are three main learning types based on how a person's mind prefers to encode information: 1. Auditory (through hearing it) 2. Kinaesthetic (through trying it) 3. Visual (through seeing it). The quiz below can help you identify yours. Once you have done so, you may research which study techniques you can apply based on your learning type. Scoring: Count the number of responses for each letter:

a. Auditory b. Visual c. Kinaesthetic

You usually remember more of a meeting or session when:

- a. You do not take notes, but listen very carefully
- b. You sit near the front of the room and watch the speaker
- c. You take notes

You remember most clearly from a day out:

- a. What people said to you
- b. The places you visited
- c. The feelings you experienced

You usually solve problems by:

- a. Talking to yourself, spouse or friend
- b. Use an organized, systematic approach with lists, schedules
- c. Walk, pace or do some other physical activity

You find it easiest to learn something new by:

- a. Listening to someone explain how to do it
- b. Watching a demonstration of how to do it
- c. Trying it yourself

You are trying to remember something and so you:

- a. Try to see it happen in your mind
- b. Learn in your mind what was said or the noises that occurred
- c. Feel the way it reacted with your emotions

You learn a foreign language best by:

- a. Listening to record or tapes
- b. Writing and using workbooks
- c. Attending a class in which you read and write

You are confused about the correct spelling of a word and so you:

- a. Sound it out
- b. Try to see the word in your mind
- c. Write the word several ways and choose the one that looks right

You enjoy reading most when you can read:

- a. Dialogue between characters
- b. Descriptive passages that allow you to create mental pictures
- c. Stories with a lot of action at the beginning

You usually remember people you have met by their:

- a. Names
- b. Faces
- c. Mannerisms, motions

You are distracted most by:

- a. Noises
- b. People
- c. Environment (temperature, comfort of seating)

You are driving to a new location, you get directions by:

- a. Asking for them over the phone and remembering them
- b. Get a map out and examine the route, taking the map with you
- c. Get a vague understanding and drive around until you find it

You get your news and current events by:

- a. Listening to the radio on the way to work or other places
- b. Reading a newspaper or watching a video
- c. Don't follow news or current events

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: 13 MEMORISATION METHODS

### LOCI

This method requires associating each item you're trying to remember with a specific image and place. This method is mostly useful for remembering information that does not need to be processed, only recalled, such as dates and lists. *Example: To remember that the word 'ahmar' means the colour red in Arabic, one can remember a relative called Ahmed wearing a red garment.*

### ACRONYM

This method requires abbreviating the information in such a way where one letter represents the whole word. By stringing together letters, one can recall many words in one go. *Example: To remember the names of the Prophet peace be upon him's parents, one can remember the letters AA which represent 'Abdullah and Aminah.'*

### STORYTELLING

This method requires including items you need to memorise and connecting them in a sequence, so that you create a story your brain can follow. *Example: If you are trying to memorise the sequence of the first 6 Surah of the Qur'an you can make a little story in your mind. Fātiha, who owned a Baqarah, was part of Al-e-Imran which mainly consisted of Nisā. They all sat by the Mā'idah to eat An'am.*

### CHUNKING

The chunking method is all about grouping items of information together, in order to make the recollection process easier. *Example: When memorising the date of birth and demise of Imam Bukhari, a student can chunk together the information: 194-60-256. The illustrious Imam was born 194 years after Hijrah and passed away at the age of 60, 256 years after Hijrah.*

### REPETITION

Repetition is the best method for memorisation. Repeating out aloud has added benefits as the mind will process the information further by hearing it. If a student is struggling to memorise vocabulary or sentences, it is most probably because they are refusing to repeat it again and again. Reciting it once or twice is not going to make them achieve their goal. Again and again, day in and day out, and you will prosper. There is no greater method than this simple, age-old method.

### MIND MAPS

Mind maps are visual representations of ideas where the title or theme is written in the middle and information is written around it. They increase creative thinking and benefit in breaking down longer texts or documents. *Example: When revising the rulings of the four schools of Fiqh regarding the Farā'idh of Wudhu. write the title in the middle. Then write which Farā'idh are shared in all four schools; namely, the four of the Hanafi school. Then add extra arrows out for the additional ones in each of the other schools. Use different colours for each.*

### LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENTS

The lifestyle improvements that might have a positive effect on your memory can largely be split into four: sleep, diet, spiritual and mental satisfaction, and exercise.

Imam Shafi'ee says: "I complained to Waki' (my teacher) about my poor memory: "Give up your sins!" was his advice to me; For knowledge is a light from Divinity, and the Light of God is veiled by iniquity."

### MNEMONIC

This method requires replacing the first letter of each word to be memorised with the first letter of another word in a sentence that it is easy to remember. *Example: When memorising the 6 Farā'idh of Salah which are 1. Takbeer Tahreemah 2. Qiyām 3. Qirā'ah 4. Ruku' 5. Sajdah 6. Qāi'dah Akheerah, one can make a silly sentence like The Queen Quickly Ran Seeking Questions. The first letter of each word represents the first letter of each Fardh.*

### RHYME

This is a favoured method amongst our Muslim predecessors. In fact, many books (like the grammar books Al-fiyyah and Ajurrumiyyah) have been written in rhyme to ease in memorisation. *Example: When memorising the criteria of a Jāmi' book of Hadith, learn the following rhyming couplet: Fitan, Ashrāt, Ahkām, Aqā'id - Siyar, Adab, Tafseer, Manāqib*

### SINGLE LINING AND LEARN BY CORRECTION

If you have a paragraph to learn, learn line one. Repeat it. Learn line two. Repeat it. Then test yourself or get someone else to test you. If you have made a mistake, your brain will automatically attempt to memorise the correction even harder. Then keep moving across the text.

### EXPLAIN

Try to teach, explain, visualise, dramatize or write out the information. *Example: If you have to memorise the rulings of the four schools of Fiqh on a particular topic, four friends can represent one school each and explain its ruling. Sometimes two Imams may agree on a ruling but have come to it through different derivation methods. Each friend can question the other from the perspective of the school assigned to them. This will build their skills.*

### USE VISUAL REMINDERS

Depending on your preferred way of taking in information, frame the information in a format that you can keep referencing it again and again. This could be making flashcards, highlighting text, making summaries, charts, lists, posters, reading past exam papers etc.

## PRAYERS FOR STUDIES

### BEFORE STARTING SOMETHING

And say: My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority.  
(Qur'an 17:80)

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

### BEFORE STUDYING

My Lord, increase me in knowledge.  
(Qur'an 20: end of 114)

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

O Allah! Make useful for me what You have taught me and teach me that which will be useful to me, and increase me in knowledge.  
(Tirmidhi)

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْفَعْنِي بِمَا عَلَّمْتَنِي وَعَلِّمْنِي مَا يَنْفَعُنِي وَزِدْنِي عِلْمًا

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily You are the All Knowing, All Wise.  
(Qur'an 2:32)

سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

O my lord! Expand my breast for me, and make my affair easy to me. And untie the knot from my tongue so that they understand my speech.  
(Qur'an 20:25-28)

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي (25) وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي (26) وَاخْلُفْ عَقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي (27) بِفَقْهُوا قَوْلِي (28)

### AFTER STUDYING

O Allah! I entrust you with what I have read and I have studied. So bring it back to me when I am in need of it. You are Powerful over whatever you wish. And You are Sufficient for me and the best One to trust.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَوْدِعُكَ مَا قَرَأْتُ وَمَا حَفِظْتُ فَرُدَّهُ عَلَيَّ عِنْدَ حَاجَتِي إِلَيْهِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى مَا تَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنْتَ حَسْبِي وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe. And peace upon the Messengers. And praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds.  
(Qur'an:37:180-182)

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (180) وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (181) وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (182)

### AFTER GATHERINGS

Glory be to Allah and praise to Him. Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise to You. I testify that there is no God but You. I seek your forgiveness and repent to you.  
(Targheeb wat-Tarheeb lil Mundhiri)

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

### DURING DIFFICULTY

O Allah! Nothing is easy except what You have made easy. If You wish, You can make the difficult, easy.  
(Ibn Hibban)

اللَّهُمَّ لَا سَهْلَ إِلَّا مَا جَعَلْتَهُ سَهْلًا وَأَنْتَ تَجْعَلُ الْحَزْنَ إِذَا شِئْتَ سَهْلًا رَبِّ يَسِّرْ وَلَا تُعَسِّرْ وَتَمِّمْ بِالْخَيْرِ

O my Lord! Make things easy and not difficult and let (them) end with ease.

### WHEN FORGETTING SOMETHING

Recite Salawāt on the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. (Imam Ibn Qayyim's Jalā'ul-afhām fi fadhli-salāt was-salām 'ala Muhammad khairil anām)

### WHEN ENTERING MASJID

In the name of Allah, peace and salutations on the Messenger of Allah. (Abu Dawud)  
I seek refuge with Allah the Great and His Noble Countenance and His Eternal Kingdom from Shaitan the cursed.  
(Abu Dawud)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ وَبِوَجْهِهِ الْكَرِيمِ وَسُلْطَانِهِ الْقَدِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ  
اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ

O Allah! Open for me the doors of Your Mercy. (Muslim)

### WHEN LEAVING MASJID

O Allah! I seek from You, Your Bounty.  
(Muslim)

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ

### WHEN MAKING MASHWARAH

O Allah! Inspire us to the best guidance in our matters and save us from the evil of our own selves.  
(Tirmidhi)

اللَّهُمَّ أَهْمِنِي رُشْدِي وَأَعِزِّنِي مِنْ شَرِّ نَفْسِي

### TO REMOVE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

And say: My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the incitements of the devils. And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they be present with me.  
(Qur'an 23:97-98)

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ (97) وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ (98)

### WHEN ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING

All praise be to Allah, through whose blessings good deeds are completed.  
(Ibn Mājah)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي بِنِعْمَتِهِ تَتِمُّ الصَّالِحَاتُ



## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: 13 TECHNIQUES TO AVOID PROCRASTINATION

“O Allah! I seek your refuge from incapacity, laziness, cowardice, miserliness, decrepit old age, and punishment of the grave. O Allah! Grant my soul its Taqwā, and purify it, You are the One to purify it: You are its Guardian and its Lord. O Allah! I seek Your refuge from knowledge that does not benefit, and from a heart that is not humble, and from a soul that is never satisfied, and from a supplication that is not answered.” <sup>(Muslim)</sup>

### GET ORGANIZED

Invest in a planner or calendar to keep track of assignments and tasks.

### SET SIMPLE, ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Vague plans are not clear enough to carry out. Big plans are too daunting. So break down tasks into specific ones.

### CREATE A TIME TABLE

Break your times into smaller chunks that are accounted for with different tasks that are manageable in those time chunks. Without a schedule, time is unaccounted for. Unaccounted for time is easily wasted.

### SET A DEADLINE

It's important to set a specific date for when you want your goals to be accomplished. If you have an assignment due, aim to have it completed one or two days in advance. If something unexpected happens, you still have time.

### GET RID OF DISTRACTIONS

It's important to rid yourself of all potential disruptions before you begin working so that you don't get needlessly side tracked halfway through your task. Study in a quiet room where you are able to give your full focus to your studies without being pulled in other directions and conversations.

### IDENTIFY YOUR ADDICTIONS

Some people are addicted to social media. Others to socialising. Others to eating or sleeping. Others to their hobbies. Others to watching things or reading things of their interest. Once you are able to identify what you spend most of your time doing when bored or procrastinating, you will be able to reprimand yourself if you slip up.

### TAKE BREAKS

It's important to take mental breathers from work every now and then. Do something that takes your mind off work and allows you to relax. When you are feeling relaxed, you will enjoy returning to your studies more. If you take a break and do something sinful, you will feel even more drained when you return to your studies.

### USE INCENTIVES

Everyone loves being rewarded. It's important to give yourself incentives, no matter how small. Take a moment to feel good when you have successfully completed a task. The mind will yearn for this positive feeling again, thus you are less likely to procrastinate in future.

### GET THE HARD THINGS DONE FIRST

It's hard to do something that you don't want to do. But once you do it, it's over. It is best to complete your most challenging assignments first. That way everything after it seems easier and takes a shorter amount of time.

### APPOINT SOMEONE TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR GOALS

It's easy to forget about assignments or put them off if you're the only person holding yourself accountable. If you really want to get something done, tell a friend or family member. Now there is someone holding you responsible for your goals, you will feel guilty about letting them down.

### MAKE YOUR TASK SIMPLER

If the task seems too long, challenging or tedious then start out by doing the bare minimum. Take out your books and pens. Make ablution. The mind will then be more inclined to begin or finish the rest.

### MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS AND UNDERSTAND YOUR TRIGGERS

Procrastination is a response to an emotional trigger. It is the brain's way of putting off difficult emotions that one does not want to confront. This is done by seeking a distraction or seeking pleasure in something familiar. If you have had a hard day of study, recognise that you may be more likely to procrastinate because you want to put off being challenged or feeling frustrated. By recognising it, you are able to work through it.

### CHALLENGE YOUR OUTLOOK

If you have an hour and have already wasted most of it, you may feel like you have failed. Instead of punishing yourself or excusing yourself, be pro-active and spend the rest of your time studying. If may only be a few minutes of studying. But a few minutes is better than absolutely nothing.

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: COMMUNICATING CORRECTLY

*And (there is a share for) those who came after them, saying, "Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts any resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful." (Qur'an 59:10)*

When we are in constant proximity and interaction with others, disagreements may arise, which we may want to address. Unfortunately, the study environment can be ruined for everyone due to a volatile argument or hurt feelings between two individuals or cliques. We may differ with one another in matters where difference is permissible but we must never become disunited. When communicating, we should be sensitive to the feelings of others and express ourselves in an assertive, fair, honest and non-self serving manner. If those who study the Book of Allah cannot get along in the Houses of Allah, then what can we offer the rest of the Ummah?

### PASSIVE

- Not expressing honest feelings, thoughts and beliefs
- Avoiding or postponing genuine issues that to be addressed, Showing a subtle lack of respect for the others' ability to take on disappointment or responsibility
- Allowing others to violate your rights and make unreasonable demands
- Praised for being selfless, rarely blamed if things go wrong due to not showing initiative
- Body language: averting gaze, posture slouched, wringing hands, winking or laughing when expressing anger, covering mouth with hand, crossing arms for protection, ghost smiles when expressing anger or being criticised, lip biting
- Thinking style: "I don't count", "My feelings, needs and thoughts are less important than yours", "People will think badly of me or not like me", "If I say no then I will be responsible for upsetting them"
- Speaking style: Long rambling sentences, hesitant, apologises unnecessary in a soft voice, expresses thoughts in an apologetic way so that others disregard them
- Using phrases such as: "maybe", "sort of", "It's only my opinion", "It doesn't really matter, "I'm hopeless".

In short term, this approach can lead to reduction of tension and anxiety. This is unhealthy because such a person is prone to build up of stress and anger that can explode in a really aggressive manner. When repressing anger and frustration, this diminishes other more positive feelings in you and reduces your self esteem as you don't speak up.

### AGGRESSIVE

- Stands up for their rights and expresses thoughts, feelings and beliefs by releasing the tension within themselves
- Feels the need to speak up as their view is correct
- When threatened, they attack (verbally or physically)
- Opinions expressed as fact
- Body language: Staring the other person out, gestures such as pointing, fist clenching, leaning forward or over, smiling may become sneering, scowling when angry, jaws set firm
- Thinking style: "I'll get you before you get me", "I'm not going to allow anyone to tell me how to be"
- Speaking style: Strident, sarcastic or condescending voice, fluent, few hesitations, often abrupt, clipped, often fast, firm voice which can get loud at the end. Can come across as insulting, challenging or dismissive (sometimes even without realising it)
- Using phrases such as: "If you don't...", "Haven't you finished that yet?", "You're joking right?", "Don't be silly"

This approach is usually inappropriate and violates the rights of others. Aggressive people tend to feel a need to prove themselves deep down and try to compensate by putting others down and appearing superior. Needing to control the situation leads to more tension and negative feelings.

### PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE

- Acts out in subtle, indirect or secret ways
- Most likely to communicate with body language or a lack of open communication, such as giving someone the silent treatment, spreading rumours behind their back or sabotaging their efforts.
- May appear cooperative, but may silently be doing the opposite
- Uses phrases such as: "That's fine with me, but don't be surprised if someone else gets mad.", "Sure, we can do things your way...like always"

In cases where the passive-aggressive person is angry, they might repeatedly claim that they are not mad or that they are fine – even when they are apparently furious and not okay. Denying what they are feeling and refusing to be emotionally open, they are shutting down further communication and refusing to discuss the issue.

### ASSERTIVE

The more you stand up for yourself and act in a manner you respect, the higher your self esteem is. Expressing yourself directly at the time means that resentment doesn't build up. If you are less driven by the needs of self-protection and less preoccupied with self-consciousness then you can see, hear and love others more easily. Although there is no guarantee or outcome, you know you have acted appropriately.

- Body language: Direct eye contact without staring, smiling when pleased, frowning when angry, features steady
- Thinking style: "I won't allow you to take advantage of me and I won't attack you for being you". Distinction between fact and opinion, "My experience is different"
- Speaking style: Firm, relaxed voice, fluent, few hesitations, steady even pace, tone is middle range, rich and warm, sincere and clear, voice not over-loud or quiet, appropriately loud for the situation
- "I" statements ("I like", "I want", "I don't like") that are brief and to the point
- Cooperative phrases and seeking opinions, "What are your thoughts on this".
- Emphatic statements of interest, "I would like to". Suggestions without "shoulds" or "oughts"
- Constructive criticism without blame, e.g., "I feel irritated when you interrupt me"
- Willingness to explore other solutions, e.g., "How can we get around this problem?"

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: RECOGNISING YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE (ANCIENT)

“Listen! The best of men are those who are slow to anger and swift to cool down.” (Al-Mustadrak ala-Sahihain)

“Listen! Verily, anger is a live coal ignited in the heart of the descendant of Adam.” (Al-Mustadrak ala-Sahihain)

A very important aspect of a seeker’s life is the classroom environment. If it is not pleasant, then the experience is ruined for all. Sometimes due to personality clashes and misjudging others, all the rewards of one’s efforts can be lost. There are four main temperaments/humors (expanded on in the works of both Ulamā and Hukamā): 1. Phlegmatic 2. Choleric 3. Melancholy and 4. Sanguine. Analyse their traits below, and ponder on which one you are. Ponder about what positive skills you can share with others and what traits you need to be watchful of and reign in. The more one adheres to the Sunnah, the more their personality extremes balance out.

### THE FOUR HUMORS (POSITIVE + AND NEGATIVE - ASPECTS OF EACH)

#### PHLEGMATIC +

The Introvert | The Watcher | The Pessimist

Low-key personality  
Easy-going and relaxed  
Calm, cool and collected  
Patient well balanced  
Consistent life  
Quiet but witty  
Sympathetic and kind  
Keeps emotions hidden  
Happily reconciled to life

#### PHLEGMATIC -

The Introvert | The Watcher | The Pessimist

Unenthusiastic  
Fearful and worried  
Indecisive  
Avoids responsibility  
Quiet will of iron  
Selfish  
Too shy and reticent  
Too compromising  
Self-righteous

#### CHOLERIC +

The Extrovert | The Doer | The Optimist

Born leader  
Dynamic and active  
Compulsive need for change  
Must correct wrongs  
Strong-willed and decisive  
Unemotional  
Not easily discouraged  
Independent  
Exudes confidence  
Can run anything

#### CHOLERIC -

The Extrovert | The Doer | The Optimist

Bossy and impatient  
Quick-tempered  
Can't Relax  
Enjoys arguments  
Won't give up when losing  
Comes on too strong  
Inflexible  
Not complimentary  
Dislikes tears emotions  
Is unsympathetic

#### MELANCHOLY +

The Introvert | The Thinker | The Pessimist

Deep and thoughtful  
Analytical  
Serious and purposeful  
Talented and creative  
Philosophical and poetic  
Appreciative of beauty  
Sensitive to others  
Self-sacrificing  
Conscientious  
Idealistic

#### MELANCHOLY -

The Introvert | The Thinker | The Pessimist

Remembers negatives  
Moody  
Enjoys being hurt  
Off in another world  
Low self-image  
Has selective hearing  
Self-centred  
Guilt feelings  
Persecution complex  
Sceptical of Compliment

#### SANGUINE +

The Extrovert | The Talker | The Optimist

Appealing personality  
Talkative, Storyteller  
Good sense of humour  
Physically holds on to listener  
Emotional demonstrative  
Cheerful bubbly  
Curious  
Good on stage  
Lives in the present  
Changeable disposition

#### SANGUINE -

The Extrovert | The Talker | The Optimist

Compulsive talker  
Exaggerates  
Scares others off  
Has restless energy  
Egotistical  
Loud voice and laugh  
Controlled by circumstances  
Gets angry easily  
Seems phony to some  
Never Grows Up

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: RECOGNISING YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE (MODERN)

According to psychological trait theory there are five main personality traits, which we all fall somewhere on the spectrum:

1. openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious)
2. conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. extravagant/careless)
3. extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved)
4. agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/callous)
5. neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. resilient/confident)

According to the Myers–Briggs Personality type Indicator, there are 16 main personality types that each individual can fall into. This test is can also help one look into a career path best suited to their skillset. In order to find out yours, you can complete a self-report (available on the internet) about how you perceive the world and make decisions. The test assigns four categories:

1. introversion or extraversion
2. sensing or intuition
3. thinking or feeling
4. judging or perceiving

### **INFP**

#### **The Healer**

INFPs are imaginative idealists, guided by their own core values and beliefs. To a Healer, possibilities are paramount; the reality of the moment is only of passing concern. They see potential for a better future, and pursue truth and meaning with their own flair.

### **INTJ**

#### **The Mastermind**

INTJs are analytical problem-solvers, eager to improve systems and processes with their innovative ideas. They have a talent for seeing possibilities for improvement, whether at work, at home, or in themselves.

### **INFJ**

#### **The Counsellor**

INFJs are creative nurturers with a strong sense of personal integrity and a drive to help others realize their potential. Creative and dedicated, they have a talent for helping others with original solutions to their personal challenges.

### **INTP**

#### **The Architect**

INTPs are philosophical innovators, fascinated by logical analysis, systems, and design. They are preoccupied with theory, and search for the universal law behind everything they see. They want to understand the unifying themes of life, in all their complexity.

### **ENFP**

#### **The Champion**

ENFPs are people-centred creators with a focus on possibilities and a contagious enthusiasm for new ideas, people and activities. Energetic, warm, and passionate, ENFPs love to help other people explore their creative potential.

### **ENTJ**

#### **The Commander**

ENTJs are strategic leaders, motivated to organize change. They are quick to see inefficiency and conceptualize new solutions, and enjoy developing long-range plans for their vision. They excel at logical reasoning and are usually articulate.

### **ENTP**

#### **The Visionary**

ENTPs are inspired innovators, motivated to find new solutions to intellectually challenging problems. They are curious and clever, and seek to comprehend the people, systems, and principles that surround them.

### **ENFJ**

#### **The Teacher**

ENFJs are idealist organizers, driven to implement their vision of what is best for humanity. They often act as catalysts for human growth because of their ability to see potential in other people and their charisma in persuading others to their ideas.

### **ISFJ**

#### **The Protector**

ISFJs are industrious caretakers, loyal to traditions and organizations. They are practical, compassionate, and caring, and are motivated to provide for others and protect them from the perils of life.

### **ISFP**

#### **The Composer**

ISFPs are gentle caretakers who live in the present moment and enjoy their surroundings with cheerful, low-key enthusiasm. They are flexible and spontaneous, and like to go with the flow to enjoy what life has to offer.

### **ISTJ**

#### **The Inspector**

ISTJs are responsible organizers, driven to create and enforce order within systems and institutions. They are neat and orderly, inside and out, and tend to have a procedure for everything they do.

### **ISTP**

#### **The Craftsperson**

ISTPs are observant artisans with an understanding of mechanics and an interest in troubleshooting. They approach their environments with a flexible logic, looking for practical solutions to the problems at hand.

### **ESFJ**

#### **The Provider**

ESFJs are helpers, sensitive to the needs of others and energetically dedicated to their responsibilities. They are attuned to their emotional environment and attentive to the feelings of others and the perception others have of them.

### **ESFP**

#### **The Performer**

ESFPs are vivacious entertainers who charm and engage those around them. They are spontaneous, energetic, and fun-loving, and take pleasure in the things around them: food, clothes, nature, animals, and especially people.

### **ESTJ**

#### **The Supervisor**

ESTJs are hardworking traditionalists, eager to take charge in organizing projects and people. Orderly, rule-abiding, and conscientious, ESTJs like to get things done, and tend to go about projects in a systematic, methodical way.

### **ESTP**

#### **The Dynamo**

ESTPs are energetic thrill seekers who are at their best when putting out fires, whether literal or metaphorical. They bring a sense of dynamic energy to their interactions with others and the world around them.

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: WORKING ON THE SELF

*The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.* (Qur'an 62:5)

The purpose of Ilm is Amal (practice). Seekers must adhere to the commands of Allah Almighty by working on their inner and outer adherence to them. This is a lifelong struggle. What use is Ilm if a person's heart is diseased?

*The Day when there will not benefit wealth or children.  
But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.* (Qur'an 26:88-89)

Below is a list of negative traits one must rid themselves of. Taken from the book 'Purification of the heart' by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson.

- Miserliness
- Wantonness
- Hatred
- Iniquity
- Love of the world
- Envy
- Blameworthy shyness
- Fantasising
- Fear of poverty
- Ostentation
- Relying on other than Allah Ta'ala
- Displeasure with the Divine Decree
- Seeking reputation
- False hope
- Negative thoughts
- Vanity
- Fraud
- Anger
- Heedlessness
- Rancour
- Arrogance and boasting
- Displeasure with blame
- Antipathy towards death i.e. the afterlife
- Obliviousness to blessings
- Derision

Below is a list of positive traits one must inculcate within themselves. Taken from the book 'Reformation of character' by Shaykh Hadhrat Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar Saheb.

- Repentance
- Fear
- Hope
- Modesty
- Gratitude
- Obedience to Allah Ta'ala
- Fulfilling promises
- Patience
- Sincerity
- Thinking of Allah Ta'ala
- Respect and compassion for others
- Submitting to and turning to Allah
- Reliance on Allah Ta'ala

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to the people of Madinah: "Whoever worships without knowledge will cause more harm than good. Whoever considers his words part of his deeds will speak little unless it concerns him. Whoever makes the purpose of his religion to indulge in arguments, he will frequently change his position."

## SKILLS OF A SEEKER: WORKING ON YOUR PIETY

Many seekers become overwhelmed and confused trying to balance studies and performing optional deeds. Prioritise your Fardh and Sunnah deeds over everything. Then prioritise your studies, as this is of the greatest optional deeds. Some seekers think that they have earned a lot of rewards by doing extra curriculums to help out or teach others yet they neglect their studies. This is wrong. Once you are able to fully dedicate time to your studies, start building up on your optional deeds. Build up from the basics. Only once you are habituated to them, start adding more. It is better to do a little with your whole heart than to rush through a lot. Below are a list of 25 basics every seeker can bring into their life:

1. Pray your five daily Salah: on time, in congregation, with concentration
2. If one Salah becomes Qadhā, make up for it before praying the next one
3. Recite Dhikr of 'Tasbeeh, Tahmeed, Takbeer' after every Salaah 33 (or at least 10) times
4. Make Dua, no matter how short, before you start your day
5. Give some Saqadah, no matter how less, before you leave the house
6. Recite at least a few pages or 1/4 Juz of Qur'an every day
7. Recite Surah Yāsin in the morning
8. Recite Surah Mulk in the night
9. Recite Surah Kahf on Jumu'ah
10. Recite Salawāt, no matter how short, 300 times a day
11. Recite a daily chapter from a Dua book. Recommended books:
  - Hizb-ul-A'zham by Imam Mulla Ali Al-Qāri
  - Al-Munājāt al-Maqboul by Shaykh Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi
  - Dalā'il-ul-Khairāt by Imam Muhammad al-Jazuli
12. Recite a short book of morning and evening prayers (including the 99 Asmāullah al-Husna)
  - Wird-al-Imam an-Nawawi
  - Daily morning and evening prayers compiled Shaykh Maulana Adam ibn Yusuf Lunat
  - Jāmi'-ud-Duā compiled by Shaykh Maulana Muhammad Saleem Dhorat
13. Take time out to talk to your parents/spouse/children
14. Make Istighfār before sleep
15. Pray two Rak'āh with intention of Tahajjud before sleep
16. Recite Ayat-ul-Kursi, Fātiha, four 'Qul' Suwar and last 2 Āyāt of Surah Baqarah before sleep
17. Wear clothing befitting a seeker: according to the Sunnah, covering and loose fitted
18. Groom your appearance befitting a seeker: according to the Sunnah, clean and approachable\*
19. Do not waste time doing useless or sinful things
20. Do not stare at, be fixated on, or aim to impress, members of the opposite gender
21. Do not yearn for or seek out, prestige, position and fame
22. Do not inconvenience anyone on your behalf, and don't make things unnecessarily tough for others just to convenience yourself. Hold your tongue back from saying something that can hurt someone, whether you intended it to be interpreted in that way or not.
23. Avoid the three poisons: backbiting, jealousy and pride
24. Read the biography of one of the pious predecessors every week
25. If you sin, do not become despondent and do not withdraw away from the scholars. Make Taubah and try again. Keep trying to become a better person, seeking help from Allah Ta'ala, and He will guide you to overcome your vices. Your heart is in His control and He is fully capable of removing the rust from your heart and polishing your being, until you shine.

\* both male and female seekers should be aware of the rulings regarding Ghusl, 'Awrah (parts of the body that need to be concealed), and shaping the eyebrows and beard etc.

“VERILY, THE PARABLE OF THE GUIDANCE AND KNOWLEDGE WITH WHICH ALLAH

THE EXALTED HAS SENT ME IS THAT OF RAIN FALLING ON THE EARTH.

THERE IS A GOOD PIECE OF LAND WHICH  
RECEIVES THE RAINFALL, AND AS A RESULT  
THERE IS ABUNDANT GROWTH OF PLANTS.



THEN THERE IS A HARD AND BARREN LAND WHICH RETAINS THE WATER, AND



PEOPLE BENEFIT FROM IT. THEY AND THEIR  
ANIMALS DRINK FROM IT.

THEN THERE

IS ANOTHER LAND WHICH IS BARREN  
AND NEITHER IS WATER RETAINED  
NOR DOES ANY GRASS GROW.



THE LIKENESS OF THE FIRST ONE IS HE WHO DEVELOPS UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
RELIGION OF ALLAH AND HE BENEFITS FROM THAT WITH WHICH ALLAH SENT ME  
WITH. THE SECOND IS ONE WHO ACQUIRES KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION AND  
TEACHES OTHERS. THE THIRD IS ONE WHO DOES NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THE  
MESSAGE AND DOES NOT ACCEPT THE GUIDANCE WITH WHICH

ALLAH HAS SENT ME WITH.” (MUSLIM)



**EVERY TREASURE QUEST REQUIRES A MAP  
I PRAY YOU HAVE BEEN HANDED YOURS  
EVERY QUEST CARRIES WITH IT OBSTACLES  
I PRAY YOU OVERCOME ALL OF YOURS  
ALL THE BEST, O SEEKER, ON YOUR QUEST**