

**Introduction:**

'Homo sapiens' means a wise species. It is not the strongest species, the tallest species, or the fastest species but the wisest among all other living creatures. The element of wisdom means this species is adept at deriving conclusions based on evidence and reading the signs. In principle, it does not insist on believing things that the naked eye cannot see.

This coupled with the conscience the human species is endowed with, puts an onus on us. The onus is to develop a conscious relationship with our existence as homo sapiens. Our intellect can decipher between morality and immorality based on the 'inner voice of conscience'. We live in a global village with a very diverse world. It remains appropriate to ponder and reflect on the 'universal aspect' of the moral value practiced by human beings around the world.

The question being addressed in the postmodern age is whether this sense of morality is instilled by God or adopted and adapted by the human race along the way.

It is pertinent to look into this question.

**Foundation of the Course Outline:**

The course outline derives heavily from the Qur'an's context inspired by the Farahi School of Thought. Maulana Hamid ud din Farahi (d. 1938) presented the need to revisit the content of religion primarily in the light of the Qur'an. He presented the Qur'an's emphatic statement of its status as the Furqan (which differentiates between falsehood and truth) and the Meezan (a scale on which one can weigh falsehood and the truth) and Mohaimin (a protector, guardian against all other Scriptures before it as the Bible or following it as the corpus of Hadith).

His student, Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi furthered Maulana Farahi's Qur'an-inspired approach and wrote the monumental exegesis of the Qur'an: Tadabbur e Qur'an. Subsequently, Islahi Sahib's student, Mr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi has the distinction of presenting the 'Farahi School of Thought' in a clear, clinical manner that presents the fine face of God and the pristine content of religion.

The course outline is based on the **ENGLISH PRESENTATION** of this Qur'an-inspired approach.

**Course Content:**

Weekly online sessions via Zoom platform.

Each Module is **Six Weeks in duration**. There are **7 Modules**.

(Each Session: 90 minutes (1 hour followed by 30 minutes of Q/A)

**Module – A: Approach towards Allah’s Expectations**

- 1. Homo sapiens and Know Thy Self**
- 2. Does Being a Muslim Require Blind Faith?**
- 3. Critical Thinking - I: Reference to the Context of the Quran**
- 4. Critical Thinking - II: Reference to the Context of the Quran: Defining a ‘Kafir’ (Infidel), ‘Munafiq’ (Hypocrite), and Qur’an specifying ‘Not Befriending Jews and Christians’**
- 5. The Qur’an’s Core Message**
- 6. Sunnatullah: The Dealings and Practices of Allah**

Details below:

**Details of Module – A****Approach towards Allah’s Expectations**

**Each Session 1 hour followed by 30 minutes of Q/A (total: 90 minutes)**

- 1. Homo sapiens and Know Thy Self**
  - Definition of homo sapiens.
  - What it implies to be a homo sapien?
  - Socrates' famous quote: Know Thyself.
  - Inference derived from our status as the homo sapiens.
  - Two realities of life!
  - How do we relate to these two realities of life?
  - Universal aspects of Morality.
  - Are these Human Development or God-Driven?
  - God’s Recommended Approach for Homo sapiens
- 2. Does Being a Muslim Require Blind Faith?**
  - Socrates' Quotes on the Importance of Thinking.
  - Traditional Scholars discourage the use of intellect.
  - Arguments AGAINST the use of intellect as presented from the Qur’an:

- The Qur'an has desired the God-conscious people to have blind faith (belief in the unseen without questioning).
- The Qur'an allegedly says that good believers are expected not to ask questions.
- A third argument used to negate the role of intellect in religion is the words in verses mentioning God's expectation from the believer that he should listen to the prophet and obey.
- The fourth argument, the prophet, *alaihissalam*, discouraged people from getting involved in the discussion of predestination. What is predestination (taqdeer)? Why cannot we discuss our taqdeer?
- Responses to arguments against the use of intellect.
- The Qur'an urges readers to use their intellect.

### **3. Critical Thinking - I: Reference to the Context of the Quran**

- What does the expression 'Reference to the Context' mean?
- Basis of Reference to the Context. Why is context important when we discuss a subject or topic?
- God's email to every one of us! What is God's email for us?
- The Background of the Quraish – the Tribal Leaders of Makkah.
- Pre Islamic Arabian tribes era is the era of 'jahilliyah'. Why is it important to know the events and culture of the era before the advent of Islam?
- The importance of Camels – especially a ten-month pregnant she-camel. Why does the Qur'an specifically mention this?
- The Tribal leaders wore long robes. What is the significance of wearing long robes? Why does the Queen of England (or King of England) wear a long robe while sitting on her or his throne?
- Hard solid rocky hills surround the town of Makkah. Why is this of significance? Why does God mention that the mountains shall fly around like wool during the advent of the Hereafter?
- The luxury of Persian carpets. Why does God mention that the people of Jannah shall be sitting on carpets with cushions in the Qur'an? Why doesn't God mention sofas and sitting on dining tables?
- Oasis in the middle of the desert! What is its significance?
- The Quraish relied heavily on trade and used to commute up north and down south - Trade routes of Quraish. Why has God mentioned this fact to the Quraish – the first Addressees?
- Muhammad (sws) entered the city of Madina not only as the Messenger of God but as the ruler of the City of Madina. What significance does this fact point to?

- The Jews of Madina. God speaks about these particular Jews living around the city of Madina. Why? The lengthiest two surahs of the Qur'an, Surah al-Baqara and Surah al-Imran address these Jews and Christians. It is critical to know the context of why God does so.
- Why was it that the Ansar took the lead in accepting Muhammad as the prophet of God? At that time the prophet was around 300 miles away in Makkah. There was no internet or mobile services then. How did the people of Madina learn about Muhammad as God's messenger?
- The Present Predicament in the Qur'an Understanding is we read the Qur'an without its reference to the context:
  - Either understood as a metaphor.
  - Or in the literal sense.
  - How do we learn to apply the 'Reference to the Context' in understanding the verses of the Qur'an?
  - Responses to the above-mentioned aspects of the Arab culture that the Qur'an mentions to the addressees.
  - Some critical aspects and the understanding through the application of the reference to context:
    - Being harsh on kafirs and munafiqs.
    - Kafirs are worse than beasts.
    - Invite others towards your faith wisely.
    - Do not make non-Muslims your friends.
  - Factors that discourage the approach to Reference to the Context:
    - Confined environment.
    - One-sided information.
    - Questions not encouraged.
    - Blind following of scholars.
    - Social pressure.
    - What is the way out?

#### **4. Critical Thinking - II: Reference to the Context of the Quran: Defining a 'Kafir' (Infidel), 'Munafiq' (Hypocrite), and Qur'an specifying 'Not Befriending Jews and Christians'**

- Understanding the Application of the Reference to Context
- Being Harsh on Kafirs and Munafiqs
- God bears witness that these Hypocrites are absolute liars: What does this statement mean?
- Why does God ask the believers not to make friends with Jews and Christians?

- God asks not to make friends of Jews & Christians yet allows believers to marry their chaste women and has made food of the people of the Book Lawful! Is this a contradictory statement in the Qur'an?
- No human has the right to punish another human on the issue of polytheism, disbelief, or apostasy, whereas the Qur'an asks the believers to kill the polytheists wherever they find them.
- What is the responsibility of believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### **5. The Qur'an's Core Message**

- God has spoken to us!
- The core message of the Qur'an.
- Qur'an's distinct Status – Reminder!
- Qur'an "reminds" us of what?
- How does the Qur'an present itself? (Messenger's Narrative)!
- Two Fundamental Verses of the Qur'an.
- 'First Addressees' of the Qur'an. What is the importance of knowing who the first addressees were?
- The Reason for the Qur'an's division into Makki and Madni Surahs.
- The significance of understanding the mention of the trading routes of the Tribal Leaders of Makkah.
- How does God generate & create a 'Mini Day of Judgement' on Earth?
- The Five Stages of the Messengers (Rasul) Mission.
- Why did God create a 'Mini Day of Judgement' on Earth?
- The Short & Brilliant Surah of the Qur'an: Surah Qamar!

### **6. Sunnatullah: The Dealings and Practices of Allah**

- What does the word 'Sunnah' mean?
- How do we define the Sunnah of the Prophet?
- God says He too has His Sunnah called 'sunnatullah'. What is God's Sunnah?
- The Seven Sunnah's of Allah:
  - Tests and Trials.
  - Beyond Capacity Directives.
  - Remorse and Repentance.
  - Guidance and Error.
  - Rise and Fall of Nations.
  - Divine Help.
  - Reward and Punishment

