

In the Name of God the All Merciful the All Compassionate.

## **THE MUSLIM VIDEO PROJECT**

The Muslim Video Project was conceived as a direct and personal response to the, perceived needs of young muslims growing up in the western world.

It is unfortunately the case that for the vast majority of young Muslims little or no guidance is available to help them establish their muslim identity while remaining part of the culture into which they have been born. All too often they are given the impression that the western way of life is intrinsically incompatible with Islamic value systems, and that the true Islamic way of life is only to be found in the culture and lifestyle of their ethnic origins. Thus the rising generation is often forced into a choice between being Westerners or muslims. In the choice between a system which they know and understand, and a system which relies on faith and the unquestioning acceptance of the traditions of another country, it is hardly surprising that many consider Islam to be irrelevant to their needs.

The Muslim Video Project adopts a multi-faceted approach designed specifically to meet the needs of western educated muslim youth. It is not intended as a replacement for the Quranic schools of the masjid, but to complement them. Nor is it intended to replace any of the various Islamic cultural traditions now transplanted in the west, but to illustrate their place in the full spiritual, intellectual, historical, and geographical sweep of the Islamic civilization, and to examine the roots of that civilization and the wellspring from which it has been nourished and sustained.

The Project is planned as a series of short videos made to broadcast standards with the primary target of suitability for use in the state school system as a two year course of once weekly Islamic studies for older teenagers. With successful completion of the first phase, similar courses for younger age groups will be undertaken. Aimed at encompassing the widest possible range of Islamic thought and culture, the course is not intended to cover all aspects of the subject in great depth and detail, but to inspire and stimulate the students towards further studies of their own, giving them an awareness of directions to explore and the intellectual tools necessary to correlate and evaluate these findings from an Islamic viewpoint.

## **INTRODUCTION TO SYLLABUS STRUCTURE**

### **Introductory Video to Five Sequences**

- 1. Understanding & Experience – Comprehension of Islam**
- 2. Ritual & Practice of Islam**
- 3. Formalisation of Religious Thought**
- 4. Culture & Achievements of the Muslim Peoples**
- 5. Conceptual Foundations of Islamic Life and Thought**

The introductory video is aimed in the first place at those western teachers involved in the education of muslim youth, and possibly even concerned with religious education. A recording of a lecture with an audience largely composed of similar teachers, it can stand alone, needing no more attention to the syllabus from the teacher who has no interest. To the student it can serve as an introduction to the presenter talking about Islam in western terms to western non-muslims, and also as a guide to the use of the remaining videos in the syllabus.

Along with the intro-video go five groups of shorter videos dealing with five different aspects of Islamic education. Each group is written sequentially, though with the intention that individual units are appreciable independently. Thus it is possible for a student interested in a specific topic to cross-reference, between the groups. Each sequence is also written independently, so can be followed until boredom sets in, then left for a refreshed return to some other aspect.

Though the videos contain highly condensed information, hopefully capable of sustaining repeated viewing, the vast scope of muslim civilisation cannot be encompassed in a few hours of TV so each unit will have an accompanying bibliography, cross-references, and a list of suggestions for further avenues of study.

In the following syllabus listings for individual sequences, the listed topics are meant to be the backbone not the parameters of the program.

## **UNDERSTANDING & EXPERIENCE - COMPREHENSION OF ISLAM**

Due to the educational culture surrounding young Muslims, it is hard for them to correlate Islamic concepts and value systems with the subjects that they are taught in school, and their non-muslim teachers, even if willing to find ways of bridging the gap, face the problem that very little of the material available to help them is even comprehensible let alone credible,

In the first part of this sequence, the subjects taught in western education systems are examined in Islamic terms, yet in a language anchored firmly in western conceptual frameworks. Subjects are illustrated by Quranic verses, Commentaries, and Sayings of the Prophet, showing the ways that each can shed a light of understanding on the other.

The young Muslims in multi-cultural education surroundings are also exposed to continuous challenge to their faith in a way never experienced by Muslims growing and living in a demographic majority, or in the minority as a closed society. Thus the theme of Islamic comprehension is developed, trying to deal with the essentials of Muslim faith in intelligible terms, and to suggest ways of approaching an understanding of these essentials.

In this endeavour the primary sources of guidance for Muslims are considered, with an exploration of the meaning of revelation, an examination of the Qur'an, and the way in which this revealed message was delivered to mankind through the life and person of the Prophet Muhammad. As far as possible these topics are dealt with in western terms, encouraging the young muslim's self-assurance in discussion and argument with non-muslim companions.

The first sequence of videos concludes by confronting the difficulties faced by young Muslims when attempting to find a way of life consistent with Islamic traditions, yet in harmony with their western surroundings. The principles involved in formulating a code of right action and good behaviour are of course the same for all times and cultures, but in dealing with the similarities and differences in personal morals and social ethics, the qualities particularly emphasised in the Islamic way of life are explored.

Approaching behavioral ideals from first principles simplifies their application to modern life situations, yet for the Muslim the perfect example of the way to live is to be found in the life of the Prophet. The use of examples from the life of Muhammad to clarify present day moral quandaries, demonstrates the timelessness of his behaviour pattern, and shows how he can be understood as a mercy to all peoples.

# **SET ONE**

## **UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE - COMPREHENSION OF ISLAM**

### **THE FACE OF GOD**

- 1.1 Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy.
- 1.2 Geography, Botany, Biology, Sociology.
- 1.3 History, Language, Literal Forms, Linguistics.
- 1.4 Art, Design, Psychology, Philosophy.
- 1.5 Music, Dance, Sport, War.

### **UNDERSTANDING FAITH**

- 1.6 God, Angels.
- 1.7 Books, Messengers, The Last Day.

### **ISLAMIC REVELATION**

- 1.8 Qur'an, Muhammad.

### **PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT ACTION**

- 1.9 Mercy, Compassion, Justice, Tolerance, Forgiveness, Love.
- 1.10 Humour, Patience, Humility, Piety, Generosity, Contentment.
- 1.11 Truth, Cleanliness, Courage, Repentance, Obedience, Gratitude.

## **RITUAL & PRACTICE OF ISLAM**

Perhaps the greatest problem facing muslims attempting to establish any cohesive educational policy is the proliferation of different viewpoints and understandings dividing the Muslim community itself. There are certain aspects of the religion which all parties agree are the essential and distinguishing features of Islam, however, and central to these unifying aspects are those manifestations of worship known as the five pillars of Islam.

This sequence of videos examines the five pillars in depth, showing how variety of viewpoint and difference of emphasis, when drawn from the great wealth of Islamic traditions, can complement each other in the illumination of the great themes of Islamic worship. From a detailed examination of the external forms, to a consideration of the underlying spiritual subtleties, the great Muslim scholars of history have applied their pens to these topics, and their work can be used to instruct and inspire the young muslims of today.

In this way it is possible not only to impart a broad-based knowledge and understanding of the five pillars themselves, but by the use of classical and modern commentaries introduce young muslims to the vast library of Islamic history. Consideration of the ritual forms of worship not just in terms of duty and inspiration but also, for example, in terms of personal and social practicality, will hopefully provide useful tools for spiritual survival amidst the mindsets of the secular education system.

Finally, the lesser forms of ritual and worship are explored, from those spiritual practices which are virtually universal amongst muslims, to those of much more limited acceptance. The Muslim living in the west must be particularly aware of the need for freedom of expression of minority beliefs, and although it is a fine line to be walked, the attempt must be made to portray the variant views and practices of fringe groups within the Islamic tradition while simultaneously trying to establish their relationship to the main body of Muslim opinion.

# **SET TWO**

## **RITUAL, AND PRACTICE OF ISLAM**

### **SHAHADA**

2.1 Commentary & Explanation.

### **SALAT**

2.2 Historical Foundation, Wudu, Ghuzl, Tayyamum, Intention, Takbir, Fatiha, Qur'an.

2.3 Ruku, Sajda, Shahada, Taslim, Additions & Variations, Fard & Sunnah prayers, The Sunnah of the Prophet, Attitudes & Understandings.

### **RAMADAN**

2.4 Historical Roots, The Sunnah of the Prophet, The Night of Power.

**2.5** Eid-al-Fitr, Comments & Understandings, Introduction of Tarwih.

### **ZAKAT**

2.6 History of Introduction, Understanding & Purpose, Formal Details, Abu Bakr's opinion, Historical Realities, Modern Approaches.

### **HAJJ**

2.7 Kaaba, Haggar & Ismail, Safar & Marwah, Zam Zam, The Black Stone, The Station of Abraham, Formal Details of Ritual.

2.8 Mina, Arafat, Stoning the Devils, Sacrifice, The Final Pilgrimage, Omar's pilgrimage, Eid-al-Adha, Opinions & Understandings, Umrah Variations.

### **REMEMBRANCE**

2.9 Prayers of the Prophet, Du'a for Specific Occasions, Birth Ceremonies, Circumcision Rituals, Marriage Ceremonies, Death Rites.

2.10 Dzikr Repetitions, Words & Phrases, The Sibhah & the Breath, Lines & Circles, Movement.

2.11 The Prophet's Birthday, Other Feast Days, Shi'a Events, Shrine Activities.

## **FORMALISATION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT**

The exercise of power in muslim history has always been integral with religion. With the Islamic concept of worship spreading from Morocco to China, the teachings of the unlettered prophet were transformed through the minds of those that followed into the complex academic disciplines needed to unify these diverse peoples.

These formalised intellectual structures were based in the first instance on the original sources of revelation, the Qur'an and the Life of Muhammad. The third sequence of videos begins by examining these foundations of Islamic thought in detail, and exploring the specialised disciplines that arose in the study of these two themes.

The link between spiritual and temporal power throughout muslim history was achieved by means of Law, one of the great glories of Islamic civilization. For young muslims to live within the parameters of Islam it is important for them to have a good understanding of the main legal principles, as well as the techniques by which they can extrapolate from these principles to deal with everyday situations. These topics are dealt with through the history of Islamic jurisprudence from its inception to the present day.

The ability of Islamic understandings and value systems to embrace the full range of sciences and knowledge was made possible by the work of philosophers and theologians, and the sequential theme dealing with the formalisation of thought ends with a survey of the great thinkers and the dominant schools of thought in muslim history.

# **SET THREE**

## **FORMALISATION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT**

### **THE QURAN**

- 3.1 History of Revelation, Collection & Collation, Themes & Stories.
- 3.2 Commentators & Commentaries, Literary Style, Styles of Recitation, Calligraphy.

### **THE SUNNAH**

- 3.3 Definition & Purpose, Early Hadith transmission, Collectors & Collections, Hadith Classification, Schools of Interpretation.

### **THE SHARIA**

- 3.4 Definition & Principles, Early Jurisprudence, History of Jurisprudence.
- 3.5 The Major Schools of Law, The Law & Social Conformity, The Law & Personal Freedom.
- 3.6 Modern Schools of Law, International Law, The Law for Muslim minorities.

### **THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY**

- 3.7 Early Schools of Thought, Influence of Other Cultures.
- 3.8 Historical Schools of Thought, The Kharijites, The Mu'tazilites, Al-Ashari.
- 3.9 Shi'ism, Sunnism.
- 3.10 Sufism, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiya.
- 3.11 Modern Schools of Thought.

## **CULTURE & ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MUSLIM PEOPLES**

Young muslims have another serious problem inherent in their situation of trying to discover themselves, their roots, and their place on the stage of world history. In the context of a western education system, which tends to notice the historical and geographical presence of the muslim peoples only when fighting wars against them, the muslims are unlikely to be given a very sympathetic picture of their cultural heritage.

The fourth videotape sequence is largely devoted to correcting this imbalance by giving a muslim view of history, as well as role models and cultural viewpoints by means of which young muslims can gain an awareness of their roots, an understanding of the broad sweep of the development of their traditions, and a sense of pride in their contributions to world history.

After establishing the historical setting prior to the time of Muhammad, the Life of the Prophet is considered in detail. The spread of Islam throughout the world is then charted, and the impact and influence of distant cultures on the Islamic heartlands assessed. Successive changes in the extent and geographical seat of muslim power are traced up to the present, to give insight into the formative influence of Islam on the modern world situation.

Yet history is more than political power, and to furnish young muslims with role models and examples, famous muslims from the past are introduced and their contributions to world civilization examined. Thus young muslims with a particular interest in a specific field of study such as medicine or mathematics can draw inspiration from the great doctors and mathematicians of the Islamic tradition, and not feel the need to identify only with the scholars of the western world.

Finally consideration is given to individual themes likely to be of pressing concern to young muslims trying to find a satisfactory way of life in their present day global society. The ways in which muslim societies have dealt with similar themes are used to illustrate both the desired unity and the acceptable diversity of approach and understanding to be found within the Islamic civilizational framework.

# **SET FOUR**

## **CULTURE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MUSLIM PEOPLES**

### **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

- 4.1 Before Muhammad, The World Situation, Arabia, The Seerah, Makkah, Madina.
- 4.2 The first four Caliphs, The Ummayyads, The Shi'a of Ali.
- 4.3 The Abbasids, Spain & North Africa, Egypt, Syria & Iraq, Iran.
- 4.4 Turkey & the Seljuqs, Northern India, The Crusades, The Loss of Andalusia, The Mongols & Ghengis Khan, Tamerlaine & Samarkand, The spread of Sufi Orders, Al-Ghazali.
- 4.5 West of Sudan, Mali & Timbuktu, Gujurat Bengal & Burma, The Malays, Sumatra & Java, Muslim China, The travels of Ibn Battuta, The Ottoman Turks, The Taking of Constantinople.
- 4.6 The Safavids, The Mughals, The Ottoman Empire, South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Bukhara, The Decline of Muslim Power.
- 4.7 Reform & Revival, The Wahhabis, The Naqshbandiya, The Khalwatiya & Tijaniya, The Sammaniya & the Mahdi, Subjugation by Europe, Decolonisation, Secular Nationalism, Recent History, Islam in the West.

### **FAMOUS MUSLIMS**

- 4.8 Heroes & Heroines, Thinkers & Scientists, Saints & Scholars, Women & Warriors, Artists & Travellers.

### **ISLAMIC VIEWPOINTS**

- 4.9 Political Systems, Class structures & Slavery, Individuality & the Family, Money & Economics, War.
- 4.10 Science & Technology, Health & Medicine, Education, Ecology & Agriculture, Architecture, The Mosque.
- 4.11 Change & the Western World, Sports & Games, Imagery & Media, Art & Music, Other Religions.

## **CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC LIFE AND THOUGHT**

In these present times, as the pace of technological change threatens to overwhelm societal structures that have stood for centuries, and the volume of available information swells awesomely beyond our capacity to encompass it, the younger generation adapt themselves to assume the reins of power in a world of which their elders have little comprehension. What aspects of Islam are flexible enough to adapt to such rapid and extreme change, comprehensive and subtle enough to embrace the widest parameters of future knowledge, yet still central to the fundamental issues of Islamic thought?

The final sequence of videos is meant to provide young muslims with a conceptual toolkit, enabling them to carry their essential traditions into the future. They comprise the basic language needed to approach the unexpected and deal with it from an Islamic point of view. With an understanding of these conceptual foundations, young muslims should be able to live in the world that surrounds them without jettisoning their Islamic heritage.

There is no need for any particular sequence to the terms being discussed, though for convenience of grouping and ease of presentation they have been collated in the order of a specific conceptual theme. At the conclusion of this thematic exposition, however, it is shown how the terms used can be selectively recombined in alternative groupings, or realigned in new orders and patterns, and subsequently applied to topics of a completely different nature.

## **CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC LIFE AND THOUGHT**

- 5.1 Allah, Ghaib, Iman, Tawhid, Kitab, Qalam, Mala'ik, Jinn, Akhirah, Jahannum, Jannat, Yaqin.
- 5.2 Insan, Nafs, Jihad Akhlaq, Niyah, Ibada, Islah, Hijrah, Ihsan, Adab, Thawab.
- 5.3 Dunya, Khalq, Ard, Samawat, 'Alam, Hayy, Maut, Haqiqat.
- 5.4 Hikmah, Ilm. Usul, Risalah, 'Aql, Ijtihad, Qiyas, Ijmal, Istihbab.
- 5.5 Dar al Islam, Aman, Ummah, Madrasah, Qibla, Sunnah, Fard, Salat, Saum, Hajj, Dzikir, Du'a.
- 5.6 Tazkiyah, Zakat, Bait al Mal, Diwan, Waqf, Infaq, Hukm, Amir, Riba, Zulm, Shura, Khilafah, Istiqlal.
- 5.7 Din, Bai'ah, Hidayah, Amanah, Imam, Tafsir, Da'wah.
- 5.8 Ijma, Istislah, Fiqh, Urf, Bidah, Istihsan, Sharia, Halal.
- 5.9 Dar al Harb, Shirk, Kufr, Jahiliyah, Israf, Ajar.
- 5.10 Remixes & Illustrations
- 5.11 Remixes & Illustrations.

## **CONCLUSION**

No video course, for all its advantages of economy and ease of informational communication, can replace education by personal example and individual attention. As stated at the outset, this video course is not intended as an alternative to teachers but as an aid and an educational tool for their use.

Many subjects important for a deeper study of Islam are given only passing reference, the Arabic language being a case in point. Such subjects, requiring a more in-depth treatment and which, along with Quranic recitation, need personal supervision, are outside the scope of this course and will remain the province of mosque schools for the immediate future. It is to be hoped, however, that the scope of the syllabus and the manner of its presentation will prove a source of inspiration sufficient to encourage young muslims towards these more rigorous studies.