

HIJAB

الحجاب

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know the categories of Maḥram and Non-Maḥram and the levels in the Maḥram category
- Know the wājib and mustaḥab dress for men
- Know the wājib and mustaḥab dress for women
- Discuss the issue of ornamentation
- Discuss some frequently asked questions in relation to Ḥijāb
- Know the limits and etiquettes of interaction between males and females
- Be able to deal with practical challenges like shaking hands with the opposite gender
- Understand the limits of inter-gender friendships
- Know the limits of online interaction between the genders

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 4

Rules of Ḥijāb

The ḥijāb plays a significant role in maintaining one's respect and protecting one's honour and dignity. It also helps to direct one's desires away from ḥarām and deviation from the path to Allah (SWT). In this lesson, we will learn about the rules relating to the appropriate dress for men and women in order to comply with the commands of Allah (SWT) and protect ourselves.

WĀJIB ATTIRE FOR MEN

The minimum wājib dress for males is that they cover their private partsⁱ in front of maḥram and non-maḥram women and men. However, if leaving the rest of the body uncovered may lead oneself or others to fall into any sin or lust, then he must cover up the rest of his body to the extent that is usually covered by men.ⁱⁱ

FAQS ABOUT THE COVERING FOR MEN

Q: Are men who participate in mourning processions, while walking in the streets, allowed to take off their shirts and leave their chests naked while women are watching them?

A: If one knows that women are looking at him with lust and ill-intentions, he has to cover his body; otherwise, it is no problem. On the other hand, women should not look at non-maḥram men's body parts which they usually cover.ⁱⁱⁱ

A: Similarly, it is ḥarām for a woman to look at the body of non-maḥram man, except places which are customarily not covered, like, his face, hands, head, neck and feet. She can look at these parts of a man without the intention of deriving any pleasure, or if there is no fear of being entrapped in any sinful act.^{iv}

MUSTAḤAB DRESS FOR MEN

It is *mustaḥab* for men to cover from the navel to the knees in normal circumstances. However, as mentioned above, if bearing the rest could lead to any sin from the people or himself, then it becomes *wājib* to cover up more than that.

WĀJIB HIJĀB FOR LADIES

According to all contemporary *marāji'*, it is obligatory upon a woman to conceal her body (and body shape), hair and beauty from non-*maḥram* men. This includes boys who have not yet reached the age of puberty but are *mumayyiz* (able to distinguish between good and evil especially regarding sexuality and may become sexually excited if they see a lady). The parts of a woman which can be left uncovered are:

- hands up to the wrists
- face (if it is unadorned) – the front part of the chin is considered part of the face, however any part beneath the chin is not considered part of the face and must be covered.

Remember that these parts that do not need to be covered, should not be adorned (e.g. with make-up).

Keep in mind that to conceal one's body does not only mean to cover the skin. It also means to **conceal the shape** of the body including the chest^v (as the shape of the body is also part of a woman's beauty and attracts the attention of the opposite gender). Any adornment which she wears must also be covered (types of adornment will be explained shortly).

FAQS ABOUT ḤIJĀB FOR LADIES:

Q: What is the rule concerning women's wearing swimsuit in the swimming pools specified for females? Is there a *shar'i* limit for clothing?

A: In front of other females, a woman is not obliged to cover more than her private areas. Therefore, there is no objection to her wearing swimsuit in the swimming pool which is special for women.

Q: In wedding parties or the like, is it permissible for women to wear transparent or tight clothes that show the contours of their bodies and other types of dresses that show most parts of their bodies?

A: If women are insulated from the gaze of men who are non-*maḥram* to them, and are immune to falling victim to vile deeds, there is no harm in their wearing such clothes. Otherwise, it is not permissible.

Q: What is the ruling in the matter of the sound of tapping produced by a woman's shoes while walking?

A: There is no harm in it in itself provided that it does not draw the attention of other people and lead to vile consequences.^{vi}

Q: Can I remove my *ḥijāb* in time of danger?

A: If there is a real danger threatening you because of your Islamic dress, you can remove it only to the necessary extent.

Q: Can a woman appear in public with the top of her feet exposed?

A: No, she is not permitted to do that.

* What about while she is in prayer?

- It is permitted; the entire woman's foot, top and sole, can be exposed in prayer.^{vii} [Note: this is on the basis that no non-*maḥram* men are around to see her as is indicated in the previous question about showing her feet in 'public'.]

WHAT IS CONSIDERED ADORNMENT FOR LADIES?

According to all *marāji'*, anything which is considered to be beautifying a lady or brings unnecessary attention to a lady is considered an adornment. Let's look at the following questions and answers to define this.

FAQS REGARDING THE ADORNMENTS OF LADIES

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to wear a kind of *ḥijāb* or dress objects that could trigger the attention of other people or unleash their desire, e.g., to wear a chador in an unconventional way or choose socks with colour or material which unleash the desire?

A: It is not permissible for women to wear anything, whose colour, design, or manner of wearing may be attractive to non-*maḥram*'s attention or could eventually lead to bad effects or committing that which is *ḥarām*.

Q: If a woman shapes her eyebrows by plucking, should she cover them according to shar‘?

A: If this is considered in the common view as adorning, she should cover it in front of a non-maḥram.^{viii}

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to go out of her house for some errands perfumed, with the fragrance of her perfume reaching non-maḥram men?

A: She ought not do that. It is not permissible if it tempts a non-maḥram man or normally causes him excitement.

Q: Is a lady allowed to wear foundation in front of non-maḥram men? What about if it is used to cover scars, pimples, blemishes, etc.?

A: It is not permissible.

Q: It is normal these days for a woman to put on mascara and make-up, wear rings, necklaces and bracelets for beauty and then go out in front of people in the markets and streets.

A: This is not permissible for her except for mascara and rings provided that she is safe from falling into forbidden activities and does not intend by it to excite non-maḥram men.^{ix}

ORNAMENTS FOR MEN

Q: Can a man wear white gold?

A: Regarding white gold for men: There are two things called white gold:

- Platinum, which is permissible for a man to wear;
- Regular gold alloyed with nickel, etc. which is impermissible for a man to wear and invalidates the prayers, unless the regular gold used in it is so little that it is not called gold (as per common view) anymore.

Q: Is it admissible using of gold and silver cuff-links, pins and tie pins?

A: It is forbidden for man to use gold ornaments.

Q: On men wearing earrings in one or both of the ears.

A: It is not permissible if it is made of gold; rather not at all, based on obligatory precaution.

Q: Is it permissible to wear clothes that have pictures of intoxicating drinks as a promotion for drinking them? Is it permissible to sell such items?

A: It is forbidden to wear and sell them.^x

Review Questions

Q1. A woman is:

- Allowed to wear make-up at all times
- Is allowed to wear make-up, but only if there are no strange men around
- Is never allowed to wear make-up

Q2. A man:

- Can dress however he likes as long as his private parts are covered
- Should not dress in a way that may cause lust in the opposite gender
- Should always cover his whole body except hands, feet and face

Q3. A woman can:

- Always wear strong perfume
- Use strong perfume if there are no men around
- Use strong perfume only if she is sure it would cause a strange man to get excited or pay attention to her

Lesson 2: Social Ḥijāb

In our previous lesson, we discussed some aspects of ḥijāb, focusing on the rules of clothing and dressing. In this lesson, we will focus on the rules of socialisation between men and women.

KNOWING THE LIMITS

Human beings are naturally social creatures and there is no absolute restriction on interaction between men and women – because this is not practical. It must however be understood that because men and women are different and there is a natural attraction between the two, there are rules regulating the limits and nature of social interaction. This is to avoid people falling into sins in the future.

WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

From our previous lessons, we know the main difference between maḥram and non-maḥram and from there we know that certain rules and regulations apply to interactions between non-maḥrams. Examples of situations where there is interaction with non-maḥrams include:

- Extended family gatherings – where cousins and relatives are present
- At school: interacting with students, teachers etc...of the opposite gender
- At work: interacting with colleagues, bosses etc...of the opposite gender
- At mosques and Islamic centres

Whenever we are in such situations, it is important to remember that it is very easy for Satan to distract us from the right path and make us behave inappropriately. Examples of inappropriate behaviour include:

- Looking at the opposite gender with lust
- ‘Flirting’
- Making jokes and being over-familiar

Some tips to remember:

- Beware of your intentions – make sure your interaction is for a good and justified, such as doing a project at school or necessary voluntary work at the mosque
- Stick to what is necessary: limit the conversation to the task at hand and don’t go beyond that
- Be professional in your behaviour
- Don’t joke or flirt – it is very easy to get comfortable speaking to a person of the opposite gender, and sometimes, joking or flirting can create improper feelings in either of the two people – even if one person’s intentions are not wrong, they can easily become wrong.
- Dress properly and speak respectfully.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

One of the practical challenges we face as Muslims living in the West, when it comes to *ḥijāb*, is the culture of hand-shaking between men and women.

In Islam, the stand on this issue is clear – the shaking of hands between non-*maḥram*s of the opposite gender is not permitted.



A man must not shake the hands with a woman who is non-*maḥram* unless his or her hand is covered and even then, pressure should not be applied^{xi}.

Therefore, whenever a non-*maḥram* offers their hand to you whether in a professional or casual context, one must politely decline the offer and simply try and explain that our religion does not permit this form of greeting.

FRIENDSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE GENDER

Muslims should have good relations with all people, both males and females, at school, at work, with neighbours and so on. We should be kind and courteous to everyone. However, it is not allowed to take members of the opposite gender as friends. The reason is that the attraction between males and females can never be switched off, and so any friendship between two of opposite genders can end up in sinful acts.

It is common knowledge that in Islam, fornication and adultery are grave sins and committing either bears serious consequences in this world and the Hereafter. However, what is not so well known is that while declaring fornication and adultery as *ḥarām*, Islam does not merely forbid the actual acts, but it also declares as forbidden each and every circumstance or way that leads to fornication and adultery. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an:

“Do not come near fornication, for it is indeed lewdness and an evil life-style.” (17: 32)^{xii}

The laws of Islam are from Allah, our Creator, who knows our weaknesses as well as our strengths better than we can ever do. Women, by nature, desire to be looked at, adored and cherished, while man is inclined to look at women. Allah, the Almighty therefore, warns us against our own natures, which may lead us astray if we do not exercise caution and take the necessary safeguards.

Thus, Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an:

“Say to the believing men to lower their gazes and guard their chastity... And say to the believing women to lower their gazes and guard their chastity and not to display their charms in public.” (24: 30-31)

Having close casual friendships with members of the opposite gender may lead to staring, lustful thoughts, flirtatious behaviour and seduction. Although it may not always be the case, there is no way to tell when it could happen and when it would not happen. That is why it is forbidden to mingle and mix freely with members of the opposite gender and to develop friendships with them.^{xiii}

ONLINE HIJĀB – SOCIAL NETWORKING

The principles for maintaining our modesty are very broad and the beauty of them is that they can be applied in any given situation.

In the above sections we have covered the main principles behind hijāb and the manner of interaction in practical situations. The same rules will apply for any other situation including social interaction online.

Keeping friends on Facebook, MSN, Twitter and any other social networking website is not completely a bad thing. These sites are a good way to keep in touch with family and friends who may live far away. It is a great way to know what events are going on in the community.

However, we have to also be aware of the dangers of such sites and the dangers of adding anyone and everyone as friends!



^{xiv}Social networking sites are designed to let people express themselves more freely online than they would in person. This is where the danger lies. Some examples of inappropriate online behaviour include:

- Posting of improper photos so everyone who is a 'friend' and has access to that person's page can see all their photos. With non-Muslims, this becomes even more dangerous because photos can be very lewd
- Posting improper comments about another person – this is an example of online gossiping and backbiting which is ḥarām.

- Online chatting – sometimes when people are online at the same time, they will speak or chat for no real or proper purpose – just casually. This is very dangerous in the case of non-maḥrams because just like speaking, chatting can become flirting, and this means we are then approaching the conditions that could lead to ḥarām actions.

LIMITS TO ONLINE INTERACTION

Below are some tips to regulate and limit our interaction with the opposite gender online:

- Keep to what is only good and necessary – if it is not necessary, avoid it
- Write clearly, respectfully and modestly
- Do not joke, flirt or make improper comments
- Spend minimal time in such interactions – once your work is done, don't continue chatting
- Don't keep friends of the opposite gender on your social sites for the sake of 'fun' and for casual reasons – this is unnecessary
- Don't give out too much information or ask too many questions that could be personal or irrelevant
- Don't post any improper pictures, comments or statements

Review Questions

Q1. Men and women can:

- a. Interact with each other for fun
- b. Interact with each other for any kind of work
- c. Interact with each other only for work that has a good or necessary purpose

Q2. Practising hijāb online means:

- a. We should only post or share pictures with friends
- b. We must not post or share any improper pictures and chat with anyone of the opposite gender without a good and lawful reason
- c. We can chat with anyone if we don't know who they are

Q3. Social hijāb means:

- a. Only wearing loose clothes and a scarf
- b. Only being careful of how we speak and act but not how we dress
- c. Dressing properly and behaving respectfully in both actions and speech when interacting with non-maḥrams

ⁱ These include the anus, penis and testicles. (A code of ethics for Muslim men and women)

ⁱⁱ A code of ethics for Muslim men and women

ⁱⁱⁱ Ayatullah Khamenei

^{iv} Ayatullah Sistani

^v She is exempt from this in uncontrollable circumstances only, such as if the wind blows her clothes (Sistani).

^{vi} These first 3 Q&A were addressed to Ayatullah Khamenei. Other questions and answers include:

Q: What is the criterion for what are called “conspicuous (eye-catching) clothes”?

A: They are the types of clothes that are not suitable for wearing, be it for their colour, design, being worn, or any other reason. The yardstick is that when the person wears such clothes they would definitely attract the attention of other people, so much so that their look would be conspicuous.

Q: Is it permissible for a devout woman to wear glittering black shoes?

A: There is no harm in wearing any type/colour of shoes unless the colour or the design attracts the attention of other people, or makes her conspicuous.

^{vii} These last 2 questions are addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^{viii} These first 2 questions were addressed by Ayatullah Khamenei

^{ix} These 2 were addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^x These last 3 questions were addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^{xi} Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Tabatabaie Yazdi, *Urwatul Wusqa*, Section on Marriage, Chapter One, Issue 39.

^{xii} Explaining this, the Prophet said, “The fornication of the eyes is staring, the fornication of the ears is listening, the fornication of the tongue is talking, the fornication of the hands is holding, the fornication of the feet is walking, the fornication of the heart/mind is craving and lusting, and finally, the private parts confirm or negate it.” He also said, “Staring is one of the arrows of Satan.” In another report, he said, “You are allowed to have the first accidental look (which is unintentional), but do not continue to stare.”

^{xiii} Many studies conducted about male-female interaction in the workplace concluded that one in every three women had been sexually involved with a co-worker or boss. If this is the case in a professional, business-like environment, then the potential for illicit relations in more casual circumstances has much greater potential.

^{xiv} REFERENCES

- The Islamic Modest Dress, by Muradha Mutaahhari – Shaking hands - <http://www.al-islam.org/modestdress/>
- Holy Qur'an
- Why a Close Friendship between non-Mahrams Is Un-Islamic - http://www.islamawareness.net/Marriage/fatwa_03.html