



PERSONAL HYGIENE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON I

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ...

“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every mosque...”

In this lesson we will discuss the above *āyah* and the importance of personal cleanliness in Islam.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

This issue is very significant in Islam. Islamic role models have paid great attention to this aspect of life. The way the Ahlul Bayt (as) practised personal hygiene is miraculous considering the time in which they lived and the very limited facilities available to them. This shows us that in our day and age, with so many facilities for staying clean and taking care of ourselves, we have no excuse for being untidy.

We have covered the importance of following the rules of *Ṭahārah* and *Najāsah* in previous lessons, so please refer to those lessons. In addition to these rules, Islam also recommends us to take care of our physical appearance and our image in terms of dressing well and looking presentable, especially when going to places of worship and being clean at all times.

DRESSING WELL & SELF GROOMING

Amongst the most obvious expression of cleanliness and beauty is the way a person dresses and grooms him or herself. In this section we will see the different recommendations Islam gives us to dress modestly and decently, but at the same time smartly, to groom ourselves and to also smell good.

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded that Islam teaches us to be neat and tidy ourselves.
- Know that a Masjid (Islamic centre, place of prayer etc.) is a very special place and must be respected by dressing and grooming appropriately.
- Learn that we should groom ourselves (Smell good, comb hair, dress decently) well before going out or even at home
- Understand the meaning of ‘Dress of Piety’
- Know briefly the rules of tattoos
- Know that keeping their environment and room/house tidy and clean is an obligation

The following hadith from the Prophet (saw) shows this very well:

“The Prophet (saw), when he saw a man whose hair on his head was dishevelled, whose clothes were dirty, and who had a bad appearance, said, ‘It is part of religion to enjoy oneself and to display one’s bounties.’”^{xi}

Imam Kāḍim (as) summarises self-grooming into ten parts:

“There are five sunnah about the head and five others related to the body. The first five concerning the head, are: washing the mouth, trimming the moustache, combing the hair, and drawing up water through the mouth and nostrils.

The second five, concerning the body, are: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair and armpits, clipping the nails, and cleansing the private parts”^{xii}

Some of the recommendations for personal hygiene and dressing well are as follows:

- **Ghusl/Bathing:** Islam obligated six or seven types of Ghusl, in addition to the many recommended ones. At a time when people did not have ready access to running water and would not shower every day, this was a way of encouraging and obligating people to remain clean.
- **Perfume:** the Prophet (saw) was well known for his use of perfume. He never refused a gift of perfume and he encouraged others to use it. It is very recommended to wear perfume before going to prayer.



The importance of using perfume is seen from this narration related from Imam al-Ṣādiq (as):

“Using perfume is a practice of the messengers”^{xiv}

- **Grooming:** Islam encourages us to trim the hair in our under arm and pubic areas, in order to prevent a bad odour to emanate from our body.
- **Hair/Beard:** we should keep our hair tidy and neat.

The Prophet (saw) said, “Whoever keeps his hair long should care for it well, otherwise, he must cut it.”^{xv}

When it comes to our beard, we should make sure it is maintained properly and looks neat, and is not bushy and dishevelled.

The Prophet (saw) said: Each one of you should trim his moustache and the hairs in his nose and he should groom himself for this enhances his beauty.”^{vi}

- **Clothing:** Islam recommends wearing white clothes as it has some psychological benefits. It also has hygienic benefits because any dirt shows up clearly and so one cleans their clothes more often. Clothes should be ironed and kept short. The clothes should also be appropriate and well matched- one should not dress in a ridiculous manner (e.g. sports shoes with a suit).

“The Prophet (saw) prohibited clothes that express notoriety (shubra), both thin and thick, soft and rough, long and short. It should be something appropriate between these two and economical.”^{vii}

- **Oral hygiene:** we should rinse our mouth regularly, especially during the month of Ramaḍāan in order to keep our mouth clean and stop it from having a bad odour.



- **Foot Hygiene:** we should find a solution for the smell of our feet if they smell after we have worn shoes or socks because this can be very unpleasant especially when we go to public places like the Islamic Centres where we have to take off our shoes.

ETIQUETTES OF COUGHING AND SNEEZING

Islam has also given us recommendations on the etiquettes of sneezing or coughing when we are sick or even in general. These recommendations are the same as those that science and medicine in this day and age have encouraged people to follow, since many diseases are spread through uncleanness of the body.

Influenza (flu) and other serious respiratory illnesses like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are spread by coughing, sneezing, or unclean hands^{viii}.

TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- You may be asked to put on a facemask to protect others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Review Questions:

Q1. In Islam, it is recommended:

- To wear black as much as possible
- To wear white
- To wear red

Q2. A Muslim man's beard:

- Can be messy and extra long
- Should be neat and well-kempt, not longer than a fist length
- Should be shaved

Q3. Islam:

- Recommends shaving or removing the pubic hair
- Recommends leaving pubic hair to grow
- Neither of the above

LESSON II

^{ix}In the previous lesson, we learnt the importance of dressing well and grooming ourselves when we go out, especially to places of worship. However, we must know that dressing well does not mean dressing in an un-Islamic fashion outside the rules of *Hijāb*. We must observe modesty and decency in our dressing.

Allah (SWT) explains this beautifully in the Holy Qur'ān:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيثًا
وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَذَكَّرُونَ

"O Children of Adam! We have bestowed clothing upon you to cover yourselves and as an adornment, and the dress of righteousness, that is better. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may remember" (7:26)

THE DRESS OF PIETY

In the verse of Holy Qur'ān we discussed above, Allah (SWT) mentions that the dress of piety is better than all other types of clothing. This means that we have to be careful of our Islamic obligations and duties at all times and with everything we do, including dressing. We cannot dress to attract people's attention especially between opposite genders, for this is sinful. Also, our dressing should be to please Allah (SWT) and to give Islam a good image, not to show-off and be proud of our wealth and status.



Imam 'Ali (as) said, 'No one can adorn himself with a better adornment than the obedience of Allah.'^x

Let us look some of the narrations which condemn dressing for the sake of other than Allah (SWT) or dressing for the purpose of attracting people's attention or to show pride.

The Prophet (saw) said: "Whoever wears clothes to show off so other people will look at him, Allah will not look at him until he takes it off."^{xi}

Imam 'Ali said that the Prophet (saw) prohibited the ornamentation of a woman for someone else other than her husband, and said: "Thus, if she does so, it is the right of Allah, Almighty and Glorious, to burn her in Hell."^{xii}

SOME RULES ON TATTOOS

It is quite common in our day and age and the environment we live in to see people getting tattoos on themselves for different reasons. It is important again for us to know what the limits and rules are on this too, because each area of our lives, be it dressing, eating or appearance and grooming has to be according to piety and the Law of Allah (SWT).

Putting a tattoo on the body by itself is not Haram. It becomes Haram if we put the Holy Names of Allah (SWT) or the Ahlul-Bayt (as) on the body or things that are morally and Islamically inappropriate. Tattooing is something that is generally discouraged, because it resembles the lifestyles and practice of disbelieving or ignorant people.

CLEANLINESS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSE

It is very important for Muslims not only to keep themselves clean and pure, but also their environment and houses. Unfortunately, non-Muslim houses and suburbs are usually far more neat and tidy than our houses and suburbs –which gives a bad image to Islam. We must make sure that we follow our religion properly and keep our houses and neighbourhoods clean.

The Prophet (saw) said: “Do not leave garbage overnight in your houses, and take it out in the daytime, for it is the dwelling place of the devil.”^{xiii}

Our duty also means to keep our own rooms clean and tidy, including our working tables and wardrobes etc. As a Muslim, our lifestyles should be organized, neat and tidy, as this helps us be more efficient in our work and also keeps us safe from many disadvantages of dirty and untidy living.

Review Questions:

Q1. The best way of dressing is:

- a) The Dress of Fashion
- b) The Dress of Poverty
- c) The Dress of Piety

Q2. Tattoos in general:

- a) Are highly discouraged in Islam
- b) Are encouraged in Islam
- c) Are *ḥarām*

Q3. Dressing to show off:

- a) Is forbidden in Islam
- b) Are discouraged in Islam
- c) Is recommended in Islam

ⁱ References

Social Rules in Islam: Personal Hygiene – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
A Bundle of Flowers –www.al-islam.org
Dar-al- Hadith, Cultural Scientific Institute -
<http://www.darolhadith.com/index.php>
Holy Qur'an

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

ⁱⁱ [Al-Kafi, v. 6, p. 439, no. 5]

ⁱⁱⁱ *Khisal by Saduq*, p. 125

^{iv} [al-Kafi, v. 6, p. 510, no. 2]

^v [Wasael al-Shi'aah, v. 1, p. 432, no. 1]

^{vi} [Qurb al-Isnad, p. 67, no. 215]

^{vii} [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 41172]

^{viii} Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

^{ix} References

Social Rules in Islam: Personal Hygiene – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
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<http://www.darolhadith.com/index.php>
Holy Qur'an

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

^x [Ghurur al-Hikam, no. 9489]

^{xi} [Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 41203]

^{xii} *Man La Yahduruḥul Faqih*, vol. 4, p. 6

^{xiii} [al-Faqih, v. 4, p. 5, no. 4968]