



PERSONAL HYGIENE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Lesson I

IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HYGIENE IN ISLAM

The Holy Prophet (saw) said:

"Try to be clean as much as you are able to. Verily, Allah has based the foundation of Islam on cleanliness; hence, never can a person enter Paradise but the clean ones."¹

The above narration from our beloved Prophet (saw) summarises the immense importance Allah (SWT) has placed on being clean. There are 5 major facets of being clean that we have learnt in previous years:

- 1- **Spiritual Cleanliness-** This is the cleanliness of our soul from any type of dirt of sins
- 2- **Social Cleanliness:** this involves good social manners and justice
- 3- **Jurisprudential cleanliness-** This is following the rules of Ṭahārah and Najāsah.
- 4- **Cleanliness of the body-** we have discussed this type of cleanliness previously and we will elaborate on it in this lesson.
- 5- **Cleanliness of the environment-** this aspect involves ensuring that we do not litter or pollute the environment and protect it for others.



Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded that Islam teaches us to be neat and tidy
- Should know the recommendations of Islam on personal hygiene
- Understand the importance of these rules especially when visiting the mosque
- Discuss the concept of 'dress of piety'
- Know the jurisprudential rules regarding tattoos
- Understand the rules of growing and maintaining a beard
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PERSONAL HYGIENE

We will discuss here in more details some aspects of personal hygiene:

- 1- **Bathing**- It is highly recommended to take a bath (a shower) to remain clean. There are several types of ghusl that are recommended and some that are compulsory for a Muslim to do. Hand washing is also highly emphasised especially before and after meals and after using the washroom.
- 2- **Avoiding body odour**- It is narrated that the Holy Prophet of Islam used to love perfume so much so that he used to spend more on perfume than on food! It is narrated that the Noble Prophet had a container of musk and when he performed ablution he would take it with his wet hands. When he came out everyone knew that it was the Prophet of Allah because of his scent. ⁱⁱ The Holy Prophet (saw) advised Imam Ali (as):

“O Ali! You must apply perfume every Friday as this is from my sunnah. Good deeds will be written for you as long as the scent (of the perfume) is present from you.”ⁱⁱⁱ

There are some important rules we must remember regarding perfume

- a. The intention for wearing perfume should not be to ‘attract’ or seduce the opposite gender. Wearing perfume for such an intention can be a sin.
 - b. Wearing perfume for women that can be smelt by men (non-mahram) is also prohibited.
- 3- **Avoiding mouth odour**- Brushing one’s teeth regularly and avoiding foods that bring out bad odour prior to meeting with others is another major recommendation. In fact, the Prophet (saw) used to discourage eating garlic prior to coming to the mosque. Having mints or mint gum or other mouth fresheners is one way to avoid bad breath.
 - 4- **Personal Grooming**- Cutting nails every Friday and combing hair were the practice of the Prophet (saw). Indeed the Prophet used to comb his hair and beard regularly and used to keep a comb under his pillow too and comb his hair prior to morning prayer! These practices are recommended for women too.

- 5- **Getting rid of excess hair**- Islam encourages both men and women to get rid of excess hair from their bodies. For both men and women, it is recommended to remove excess hair from the pubic area and arm pits. For women it is especially important to remove excess facial hair whereas for men it is recommended to keep a neat and trim beard. To shave the beard off is prohibited by most scholars but trimming it to keep it neat is recommended.



- 6- **Clothing**- Our clothes must be clean and neat. We should change and wash our clothes regularly. Not only is this good for those around us but also makes us feel good and fresh.

We should maintain hygiene so as to:

- 1- Create a pleasant experience for people around us and therefore present a good image of Islam and Muslims.
- 2- Avoid diseases and disorders associated with poor hygiene
- 3- To gain proximity with Allah (SWT) by emulating the Prophet (saw)
- 4- To feel good about ourselves
- 5- At the same time we should not go to the other extreme and become paranoid about hygiene for that is a disease in itself.

Homework

Q1. On what day of the week is it recommended to remove excess body hair and clip one's nails?

- Sunday
- Friday
- Monday
- Every day

Q2. Removal of arm pit hair for men is:

- Permitted
- Highly recommended
- Prohibited
- Compulsory

Lesson II

PREPARING FOR THE MOSQUE

We have now studied the basic requirements of personal hygiene in Islam but Islam places a special emphasis on personal grooming and hygiene when attending a place of prayer. Allah (SWT) tells us in the Holy Qur'an:

To Memorise

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ

“O Children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes), while praying...” (7:31)

The beautiful clothes (or beautification) when going to the mosque especially (but also more generally) has specific rulings and boundaries. A clear example of the boundary would be that which we discussed in the last lesson regarding women not wearing excessive perfume.

The clearest guideline Allah (SWT) has set is the following:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا
ط ۞ وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

“O Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover yourselves (screen your private parts, etc.)

and as an adornment, and the dress of piety, that is better...” (7:26)

DRESS OF PIETY

لِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ

It is very important we understand what ‘dress of piety’ means. Although there are deeper meanings to this term, we confine our discussion to the physical aspects of dressing. Before we can understand this, we have to know why we dress the way we do.

WHAT INFLUENCES OUR DRESS CHOICE

Many studies ^{iv} have shown that the most common influences on what we choose to wear are popular culture, ‘music’, movies, fashion trends etc...The trends chosen as teenagers often stick with people for life.^v. When we go shopping, we often select clothes based on what we have seen on TV or what our friends wear. We may also choose to wear something to stand out in a crowd or to fit in to a certain group.



THE BEST DRESS

Having understood the influences on dressing, Allah (SWT) tells us that the best of dress for us is that which is:

- Worn for the pleasure of Allah (SWT):** that means one that is not worn to blend into a group or to show off or boast (stand out of a group) or to show rank in society.
- Influenced by those who are pious-** Dressing like disbelievers, sinful entertainers etc...is therefore highly discouraged in Islam.
- Not against the commands of Allah-** this includes observing the rules of Hijab. It also involves things like tattoos (for both males and females) and keeping beards (for males).

RULES OF TATTOOS

Jurisprudentially, according to most major scholars, tattooing is permissible in Islam. Having said that, we must be guided by the instructions of Allah (SWT) regarding ‘pious dressing’. Therefore we must consider the following:

- 1- **Resemblance to disbelievers/criminals**- If by tattooing we resemble disbelievers, criminals or we are associated with a negative personality then it can be problematic
- 2- **Tattoos signify negative characteristics**- In many studies done around the world, tattoos signify negative characteristics such as promiscuity, drinking, crime and gangs^{vi}. We have to be careful not to attract such labels to ourselves.
- 3- **For women**- if it is done to beautify oneself for a non-maḥram, then it is prohibited. This rule includes temporary tattoos such as henna.
- 4- **Tattooing obscenities** – or blasphemous images or images of ḥarām actions would make tattooing a sin
- 5- **To show off**- If the intention to get a tattoo is to show off (riyā’) then getting a tattoo is a sin.

RULES REGARDING THE BEARD

As we have discussed previously, most scholars agree that men *must* keep a beard based on obligatory precaution. This means it is prohibited to shave off one’s beard (to be clean shaven). It also means a ‘goatee’-style beard is not sufficient according to most scholars, and the beard must cover some of the sides of the face.

The gravity of this sin is often overlooked, Prophet (saw) states:

“The shaving of the beard is indeed considered an unjust action, may the curse of Allah befall those who are unjust”.

Keeping an over grown beard or shabby beard is also disliked in Islam. Indeed as we discussed in the previous lesson, the Prophet used to regularly comb his beard and trim it to make it neat and perfume it too!

We will end this discussion with some FAQs answered by Āyatullah Sistani:

Question: At times the big companies in Europe discriminate —among those who come to them seeking jobs— between those who shave their beards and those

who don’t shave them. If this is true, then is it permissible to be clean shaven in order to get the job?

Answer: Shaving the beard —whose prohibition is based on obligatory precaution— would not become permissible just by the desire to get a job with these companies.

Question: Is it permissible to shave the two sides of the face and leave the hair on the chin?

Answer: Shaving the beard is haram based on obligatory precaution, and this includes the hair that grows on the sides of the face. However, there is no problem in shaving the hair that grows on the cheeks.

Question: If a person commits haram by shaving his beard by razor baled on day one, is it permissible for him to do the same on the second, the third, the fourth day and so on?

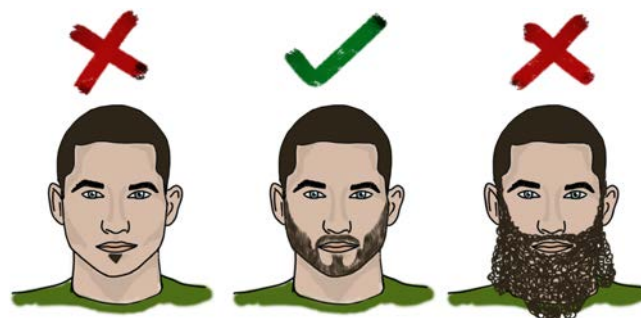
Answer: It is compulsory to refrain from it as a measure of precaution.

Question: Is it permissible to shave beard, if one is faced with an unavoidable or a difficult situation?

Answer: A Muslim is allowed to shave his beard, if he is compelled to do so or if he is forced to shave it for medical reasons, etc. It also allowed if he fears harm to his life by not shaving or if growing the beard would put him in difficulty (for example, if it becomes a cause of ridicule and humiliation that is not normally tolerable by a Muslim).

Question: Is it permissible to have a long beard?

Answer: It is better that the length of beard does not exceed the width of a fist.



Homework

Q1. The dress of piety referred to in the Holy Qur'an is only referring to:

- a. Keeping away from sins by our physical clothes
- b. Only covering our private parts
- c. All our actions including our clothing to be 'dressed' in piety
- d. All of the above

Q2. Shaving the beard completely is:

- a. Makrūh
- b. Not permissible
- c. Permissible
- d. Mustaḥab

ⁱ Kanz-ul-'Ummal, Tradition 26002

ⁱⁱ al-Kafi 6:515, Makarim al-Akhlaq: 42

ⁱⁱⁱ Makarim al-Akhlaq:43

^{iv} Introduction to Demographic and Social Influences, Phyllis Tortora, in the Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion, Volume 3 – The United States and Canada on The Berg Fashion Library online.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/BEWDF/EDch3028a>

^v Lynch, Annette; Changing Fashion: A Critical Introduction to Trend Analysis and Meaning, Dress, Body, Culture series (Joanne B. Eicher, ed.), Berg 2007.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9781847883766>

^{vi} Swami V and Furnham A. (2004) "Unattractive, promiscuous and heavy drinkers: perceptions of women with tattoos." *Body Image*; 4(4): 343-52