



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 wajib 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 5

Rules of Ḥijāb

The Hijāb 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 WOMEN

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.

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 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 DRESS FOR LADIES:

Q: What is the rule concerning women's wearing swimsuit in the swimming pools specified for females? Is there a 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.^{vi}

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.^{vii}

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.^{viii} [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'.]

Lesson 2: Further Rules of *Ḥijāb*

In this lesson, we will continue our discussions on *Hijab*. In this lesson, we will focus on ornamentation, as well as categories of *maḥram* and non-*maḥram*.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED AN 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.^{ix}

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.^x

ORNAMENTS FOR MEN

Q: Can a man wear white gold?

A: Regarding white gold for men: There are two things called white gold: a) Platinum, which is permissible for a man to wear; b) 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.^{xi}

SHAVING ONE'S BEARD (MEN)

A common issue in question is the growing/shaving of the beard. According to the marāji' it is not permissible (i.e. ḥarām) to shave the beard. However trimming it to a maximum length of one's fist and keeping it neat is very much recommended. Let's look at the following questions and answers to define what a beard is.

Q: Some men leave the hair around the chin to grow, i.e. goatee, and shave the rest of the beard. What is the view on such practice?

A: The ruling on shaving a part of the beard is the same as that passed on shaving the entire beard.

Q: Is it ḥarām to shave the hair of the cheeks or remove it in any other way, i.e., by using a string or tweezers?

A: It is not ḥarām to remove the hair growing on the cheeks, even by way of shaving.

Q: What should the minimum and maximum length of a beard be?

A: There is no definite measure. However, the criterion is based on what the common view recognizes as a beard. That said, it is disliked to let it grow longer than one's own grasp.

Q: What is the view on shaving one's moustache? Is it permissible to let it grow long?

A: There is no objection to shaving the moustache, nor is there any objection to leaving it to grow long. However, to let it grow long in such a way that the hair comes into contact with food and drink while one is eating or drinking is disliked.

Q: What is the ruling in the matter of shaving one's beard if growing it would lead to denigration?

A: For a devout Muslim, growing a beard should not be a cause for feeling inferior or lowly. It is not, as a matter of caution, permissible to shave it unless growing it leads to putting oneself in harm or causes unbearable hardship.^{xii}

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

A: Shaving the beard is *ḥarām* 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.^{xiii}

MAḤRAM AND NON-MAḤRAM

As we have learnt in previous years, a *maḥram* is a person whom, between you and them, most of the barriers of *ḥijāb* do not apply. They are also people whom one cannot marry. These people consist of the following:

1. one's own children
2. the children of his/her spouse (if the marriage is consummated)
3. nieces and nephews
4. parents
5. grandparents
6. paternal and maternal aunts and uncles
7. paternal and maternal great aunts and uncles
8. siblings
9. females are *maḥram* to females and males are *maḥram* to males
10. brothers and sisters through breastfeeding (this is rare in today's society)

Any person other than the ones mentioned above are considered non-*maḥram* and hence we must practice the rules of *ḥijāb* in front of them as described in this lesson.

In front of *maḥrams* (with the exception of a husband and wife), the bare minimum that must be covered is the private parts. However it is more respectable and dignified to dress modestly in front of *maḥrams*. Furthermore, if there is any risk of falling into sin or lust or leading the other to take a lustful look then it becomes *wājib* to cover what is usually covered by both men and women^{xiv}.

FURTHER FAQS RELATED TO MAḤRAM

Q: Hand shaking among people in Western countries is considered as a cultural norm. In some instances, it would be insulting and could create discomfort if you refuse to shake hands with the opposite gender. In my profession, I interact with some people of opposite sex that expect me to shake their hands whenever I meet with them. Question: What is my duty in this situation?

A: Shaking hands is forbidden for non-*maḥrams*. However, there is no harm (under obliging situations) in

doing so while having gloves or similar things on, unless it is accompanied by pressing.^{xv}

Q: In some countries it is customary that the person who arrives [at a meeting or an office] will shake hands with all who are present including women, of course, without lustful intention. And if he refuses to shake hands with the women, it would be considered abnormal, and more often than not it would be considered an act of contempt and insult towards the woman. All this would reflect negatively on their view concerning the person. Is it, therefore, permissible to shake hands with women?

A: It is not permissible. And the problem should be tackled by not shaking the hands of anyone or by wearing gloves, for example. If this is not possible for the person and he thinks that refusing to shake hands would cause great and unbearable difficulty for him, then it is permissible at that time. All this is based on the assumption that it is necessary for him to attend such a gathering; otherwise, if it is not possible for him to refrain from *ḥarām*, then it is not permissible for him to attend such a gathering.

Q: I am a married man and live in a joint family system; my father, mother, grandfather, my younger brother and my uncle live in my house; how about my wife's *ḥijāb* in such a situation?

A: Your wife is *maḥram* to your father and grandfather only (and not to your uncle or brother).^{xvi}

PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

- Hoda wants to go to her friend's wedding. She thought that the men and women would be separate so she bought a tight dress. She later found out that the wedding will be mixed (i.e. men and women will both be present). Now she is unsure whether she should wear her dress or not. What should she do? According to Islamic rulings, give the definition of a complete *hijab* for Hoda so that she can shop for new clothes.
- Abbas is a builder. One day while working, the weather was extremely hot and so he wanted to take his shirt off. He realised however that there was a group of non-*maḥram* girls at the café across the road. What should he do?
- It is your graduation day. It is customary to shake the hand of the person presenting the certificates. On the day, you realise that presenter of the certificates is a person of the opposite gender. How would you react to the situation in regards to shaking the person's hand? Also state different options one can take under different situations, such as if we found out beforehand who the presenter was (and if possible to speak to them beforehand) or if it was on the spot.

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} Keep in mind that if one knows that a lady who sees her without her *ĥijāb* will tell men what she looks like without her *ĥijāb*, then she should not remove her *ĥijāb* in front of that lady. This aids to maintain the *ĥijāb* and protect the dignity of the *Mu'ajjabah*.

^{vii} 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.

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

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

^x These 2 were addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^{xi} These last 3 questions were addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^{xii} These 5 questions were addressed by Ayatullah Khamenei. Sayyid Sistani gives the same fatwa:

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

A: 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 is 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).

^{xiii} This was addressed by Ayatullah Sistani

^{xiv} **References:**

The Islamic modern dress, by Sayyid Murtada Mutahhari

A code of ethics for Muslim men and women

Sayyid Sistani's website: www.sistani.org

Sayyid Khamenei's website: www.leader.ir/langs/EN

^{xv} Ayatullah Khamenei

^{xvi} The last 2 questions were addressed by Ayatullah Sistani