

MODULE 3

Class Title: Gender Relations – Part 1 (1st part of a 3 lesson series)

Aim of Lesson: To understand the concept of *mehrams* and *non-mehrams* & learn the attitude requirement in interacting with them

Category: Interpersonal Relations

Class Format: Power point presentation with narration.

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(Ta’awwuz) A’oodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem

(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir RahmaniR Raheem

(Du’a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1:

Today, I’m going to talk about my most favorite subject in the world. It’s probably your most favorite as well, I’m guessing. Can anyone tell me what it is?

Student: Boys?

Teacher: Boys! Yes. Let’s be honest everyone. Don’t tell me nobody here likes to talk about boys?!

Student: No, let’s not talk about them.

Teacher: No? Why not? Why is everyone going giggly just because I said guys? This is exactly why we need to talk about this topic, today. We have a room full of young girls...how old are you guys?

Student: Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen.

Teacher: This is exactly why we should talk about guys. I don’t want a room full of young teenagers, who start giggling just because I say let’s talk about boys. Why is it funny, anyway? I’m sure you must all be wondering why we’re talking about gender relations in an Islamic class. Are you wondering that?

We need to talk about the genders because Allah (swt) has created men **and** women, boys **and** girls. So are we going to pretend that the other gender doesn’t exist? No, not when we’re very clearly aware of their presence. Or are we going to pretend that we don’t ever think about boys? I just sit in the corner and read my Qur’an all day long!

Slide 2:

Can somebody read this nursery rhyme for me please? I want everybody to read this nursery rhyme. Do you all know it?

Students: Yes.

Student and Teacher: "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water

Jack fell down and broke his crown

And Jill came tumbling after."

Slide 3:

Teacher: Everyone knows this famous rhyme, right? Now, who can tell me the relationship between Jack and Jill?

Student: Classmates?

Teacher: Are they class mates? Maybe. Are they friends? Maybe. Are they neighbors? Cousins? Maybe. Somebody said "yes", and somebody said "maybe". Cousins? Brother and sister? Yes, maybe. How do you know? Somebody is saying maybe, somebody is saying yes. How do we know? Do we know for sure? We've known this nursery rhyme since we were toddlers.

Student: Why would neighbors or friends go to fetch a pail of water together? Maybe their mum sent them, so they must be brother and sister.

Teacher: Whatever, but the point is? What I want us all to realize is that we actually don't know the relationship between Jack and Jill for sure, do we? No.

Now this is very problematic. This is problematic, indeed.

Slides 4 & 5:

Why? You see, in reality, there's no such thing as an ambiguous relationship between a boy and girl, according to our *deen*.

Islam is quite clear cut about this. Boy/girl, boy/girl, boy/girl, boy/girl—they each have their own compartments. They have their own distinct status which defines their relationship to one another. There is no blurred vision with regards to relationships between a boy and a girl, in Islam.

We've all heard someone or another say "*wo bilkul maeray bhai jaisa hai*" (he is just like my brother). In fact, *yeh "bhai jaisia"* *koi cheez nahe hoti hai* (being **like** a brother doesn't mean anything); either you have a *bhai* or you don't have a *bhai*, end of story. There is no such thing as having a *bhai jaisa, yaa behn jaisi* (like a brother or like a sister), there is no such thing. It just doesn't exist! I don't have a brother, I have just got one sister in the world and that's that, *Alhumdulillah*. Right? That's it. I can't go around pretending that so and so is my *bhai jaisa*.

In our *deen*, the relationships between a boy and a girl are clear cut, straightforward, and, black and white.

Slide 6:

Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an, "And let them not reveal their beauty except to their fathers, and their husbands, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male servants free of desire, or children who have no sense of the shame of women's nakedness."

(Surah Nur: Verse 31)

Yes, the words "nakedness" and "shame" are also used by Allah (SWT) Himself because they are part of being a human being.

This is the reason that our *deen* is a complete way of life, as it doesn't just talk about praying, fasting in Ramadan, giving alms, and *Hajj*. No. Rather, it includes each and every aspect of our lives. As such, it clearly defines the kind of relationships which can exist between the opposite sexes.

Interacting with the opposite sex is something we do every day, all the time. Don't we? Has any one of you ever heard of the book "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus"? Yes? It's really not like that in real life. We don't live on two different planets, do we? We interact with boys/men all the time. We all have healthy relationships with people who are of the opposite sex.

Your father is a person who is of the opposite sex, isn't he? Your grandfathers, your uncles, your brother, your cousins, etc. are all of the opposite sex.

You may wish your brother was never born! but the fact is that he is alive and real, and is of the opposite gender.

What's essential for us to understand is that all of our relationships, with whomever of the opposite sex, are clearly defined. Following so far?

Slides 7 - 9:

The relationships that are described in the previously mentioned *surah*, in *Surah Nur* verse number 31, are called *mehrams*.

I'm sure you've all heard this word before—'*mehram*'. *Mehram* basically means a close male relative. Examples of *mehrams* are: your father; your brother; your uncles-- meaning your father's brother or your mother's brother; your grandfathers--meaning your nana or dada. These are all your *mehrams*.

Then, there are some other males in our lives, who are also significant, like our cousins. Everybody has cousins.

Then, there are class mates; those of you who go to coeducational schools have boys for class mates. Some may have been with you since you were in Nursery. You may also have male teachers. Then, there are neighbors, as well as aunty and uncle so and so's sons--your parents' friends' sons. Then of course there are boys and men who work for your parents. Sometimes we try to ignore them even though they are a very significant part of our lives, like drivers. There could be cooks or cleaners or *chowkidaars*. Most of us have male staff in our homes with whom we interact with, throughout the day.

Student: I don't have any male servants.

Teacher: You don't have a driver either? Okay, *Alhumdulillah*. There are some people who don't, but the majority of us have males who work in our homes. They are a significant part of our lives. Then there are other males, they could be much older, such as cousins and friends of your parents, colleagues--people who you may work with, one's doctors, and then finally, the last category would be total strangers, somebody off the street. So these are the some of the people whom we interact with at one time or another.

Slide 10:

Just as our dress requirements are different in front of *mehrams* and *non-mehrams*, same way our attitude requirements are also different in front of *mehrams* and *non-mehrams*.

In the next couple of classes we're going to look at each and every category and how we're supposed to deal with them, in great detail. We're going to look at the distinct attitudes we should have with each, according to Islam.

Slide 11:

By the way, for your information, this is something which is not only particular to Islam. All people everywhere behave differently when they're around different people in different surroundings: you behave differently when you're in school; you behave differently when you are in front of your *dadi* (paternal grandmother) and *nani* (maternal grandmother); and you behave differently hanging out with your friends.

Is this true or not? Or do you have a uniform behavior with everyone, all of the time?

The changes in our attitudes usually come naturally to us, varying with our surroundings. Sometimes we're a bit more relaxed, more casual; sometimes we're a bit formal; and sometimes we're amazingly, outrageously awful! It happens to all of us. This is very natural behavior.

A lot of times, even from outside of the Islamic tradition, you see people are told to behave this way in front of so and so, and behave another way in front of so and so. True or not? So,

attitude requirements and expectations aren't particularly an Islamic thing, are they? No, definitely not. It's just natural human behavior.

And that is the beauty of our *deen* – it is totally based on our “nature” of how we are as human beings. Why? Because, our *deen* was chosen as our *deen* by whom? Yup, our Creator – Allah (swt).

Slide 12:

Moving on, let's categorize the guys in our lives. By the way, who here doesn't have a single guy in her life? It is quite impossible not to. Unless you're in a girl's orphanage with only females taking care of you, which you never leave, there's just no way you aren't in touch with at least one male! Do any one of you here live in a girls' orphanage and has never ever seen a boy in their life?! How many girls on this entire planet come under this category?

Student: Two percent? Zero? Probably zero.

Teacher: Absolutely! 0.000001 probably, seriously! Yes, such an existence is absolutely absurd, next to impossible! So then, let's get back to the guys in our lives.

Firstly, let's look at the *mehram* category-- your father, brother, your grandfathers, and, your maternal and paternal uncles. Then there are those that don't apply to you just yet, such as husband, father-in-law, and nephews (though some of you may have nephews already). Even though you may not have these relationships in your lives just yet, you should still know that these are all your *mehrams*, and more importantly, just how you're expected to behave towards them. By the way, are cousins our *mehrams*?

Student: No.

Teacher: No, they aren't. Are your father's cousins your *mehrams*?

Students: No.

Teacher: No, they're not either. What about the category of total strangers? We don't even know their names-- XYZ whoever. Right? They're total strangers, somebody walking on the street, the shopkeepers, the waiters, whoever. They're total strangers.

Then we have significant others, as we've discussed earlier, cousins, classmates, teachers, friends—one's own and one's brother's, sister's or girlfriend's friend. Then, we have our neighbors, aunties' sons, colleagues, servants, and even fiancé. I hope you're all aware that a fiancé is not a *mehram*, either?!

Student: How about after having done *nikah*?

Teacher: After having one's *nikah*, a guy is no longer a fiancé, but rather, he becomes one's husband. If you get your *nikah* done, then that'll mean you're married! The engagement business is nothing but having an understanding that two people will eventually get married *inshaAllah*. However, the guy and the girl have no legally recognized relationship in Islam yet; they're still non-*mehram* to one another. Once the two have their *nikah* done, that means they're legally married. Then the girl's the guy's wife, and he's her husband. Now, this relationship comes under the *mehram* category. But remember, before the "I do" business happens, there's no relationship. There is no legally recognized relationship, at all.

Slide 13:

In Islam, relationships don't hang by mere threads; they're in fact formed through strong and solid blood or legal relations with another.

As we've discussed before, you just can't say so and so is my *moon bolaa bhai*. Or put a thread on a guy's hand and say *achaa jee woh toe mayra bhai ban gayaa* (now he has become my brother). No, just by saying so, it's not going to happen! Allah (SWT) has not left any relationship hanging by a thread, somewhere. Relationships are very, very clearly defined.

You may be fond of someone or care about someone like you do for your brother – perhaps because you have known the family for yonks, grown up together or been neighbours forever, even then that person doesn't become your brother and you cannot have the same behavior with him like you would with your brother.

Slides 14 &15:

How about total strangers?

Alhumdulillah, this group is very easy to deal with. We have to leave them alone; you can't touch them even with a barge pole! I'm sure your mum must have told you not to talk to strangers. Remember little red riding hood? "Don't talk to strangers." We have to absolutely stay away from total strangers.

In fact, in today's day and age the situation is such that we really have to consciously stay away from total strangers. It's not even funny. The kinds of creepy people that are out there today are just so scary! Actually, it's been like that for a long time now. With total strangers, we should always be on our guard. You wouldn't just go and start talking to a total stranger, would you? Generally, you wouldn't, would you? Most probably not. Absolutely not. So we see that total strangers are generally easier to deal with than people we know. You just need to make sure that in case you ever feel threatened by a stranger, then you need to do something about it. *InshAllah*, we'll talk about this in detail later.

And please note, that this means total strangers online as well. Chat rooms and internet

associations with just random people is a terrible idea. You have no idea who is behind that profile.

Slide 16:

As far as the *mehrams* are concerned, there are absolutely no worries. We can be at complete ease around them; we can just be ourselves, as we are in our homes. There isn't a specific dress code, or a specific attitude code, except for the essential fact that we should be decent in front of **everybody**. I mean, you wouldn't want to go around wearing, for example, a halter top or a bikini in front of your father now, would you? No, surely not! Basic decency is required in front of everybody, for that matter, whether it is a man **or** even another woman. Actually, our relations with a *mehram* can be pretty cool!

Slide 17:

Next, let's look at the significant others. These are trickier, and this is where we often get stuck. These are a bit of a dilemma for us often times. They're definitely a bit of a dilemma because it's hard to identify just where we should draw the line?

What is the relationship that you have with a classmate, with a cousin, with a friend, or with a neighbor, or somebody you've grown up with since you were toddlers. You know, your mother's best friend's son whom you've known since you were this high, and you used to wear pampers together. No seriously, just how should you behave with such a familiar guy? Someone whom you know really, really well; who's an essential part of your life?

The very real dilemma is that he doesn't fall into either the *mehram* category or the total stranger category. I think you all agree this is a real dilemma? In much the same way as with your classmates whom you've been seeing almost every day of your life, in school and maybe even outside of school. As for cousins, you might even be living with your cousins in the same house. Does anybody here live in a joint family? How many of you live with your cousins? Raise your hands. This means you must be interacting with your cousins very frequently. How many of you meet your cousins frequently?

Student: I don't meet my cousins very frequently, as they live in another city.

Teacher: Okay, so they live in another city. But you do get to meet them on and off. That's when we get stuck. So this is the category that stumps us most often. What should we do? How should we behave? How should we act? Are there certain rules or regulations that we need to follow? Are there any precautions that we need to take? Is there something different that we need to do? Is it absolutely the same case as with our *mehrams*? No, it most certainly isn't. They're a separate category all together. *Mehrams* are easy, *Alhumdulillah*. With them, it's all chill. We can be ourselves, joke and talk naturally, whatever. But the former is a very different and totally separate category. That's why we'll be talking about these significant others first.

Slides 18 - 24:

Cousins. There's a huge stress in the Qur'an and a huge stress in the Sunnah of *Rasoolullah* (SAW) to be kind to relatives. Cousins are our relatives.

Rasoolullah (SAW) said, "One who cuts blood ties will not enter paradise." (Bukhari and Muslim)

There's such a huge stress on being kind and generous towards our relatives, of not breaking ties with them. Sometimes, some family member may not want to meet another family member. You must all have come across such stupidity at sometime, or at the very least heard of it. Sometimes a brother might declare that "I'm never going to see my sister ever again". Or, a cousin might say that "I'm never going to go to so and so's house ever again". Quite sadly, it's so common to see these rifts happening in families, sometimes amongst adults, and sometimes amongst children. Sometimes, family members refuse to talk to each other; they don't want to go to each other's houses anymore. What *Rasoolullah* (SAW) has told us is that a truly righteous deed, a real *naiki*, is to meet someone who doesn't want to meet you (gist). We usually like to meet people who want to meet us because we enjoy ourselves with them. We love to hang out with our friends? Why?

Student: Because they're our type.

Teacher: Yes, they're our type, and so we enjoy ourselves with them. That's obvious. But what if there is somebody you don't particularly like or who doesn't like you? You know that so and so doesn't really like you, but she happens to be your *chachi*, or your *phophi*, or your *dadi*, or your *khala* or even your cousin? In such a case, the true *naiki* would be that you make an effort to go and meet her, and be extra kind to her, even if she's not usually kind to you. You see, being kind to someone who is kind to you is a simple tit for tat situation. *Alhumdulillah*, that's a good thing, but what's better? The real *naiki* is when someone is mean to you, but instead, you're kind to them. Can you all see why this is the true *naiki*?

So this is precisely why the cousins' category needs to be dealt with very, very carefully. On the one hand they're not our *mehram*, but on the other, we have to maintain good relations with them for the sake of pleasing Allah (SWT). Thus, it's an extremely tough nut to crack! How many of you have grown up with your cousins? I'll raise my hand, too. It's very common for cousins to grow up together. We do lots of stuff with them, just as we would with our brothers.

I remember my nephew, my sister's son and my own daughter, who're exactly the same age--only five days apart, we used to bathe them together as toddlers. Really! So that's how cousins grow up together. So now what? My nephew and my daughter are sixteen years old. The dynamics have changed. My nephew is my *mehram*, but he's not my daughter's *mehram*. He's my *mehram* because he's my sister's son. So I can be all cool and calm and chill in front of him, but my daughter needs to be more careful, even though they grew up together. Such is the

situation with cousins. In fact, sometimes a girl may feel closer to a male cousin than her very own brother. Is that the case with anybody here? Yes? Tell me why?

Student: Well, I'm much closer to my little two year old cousin than my older brother. But he's only two, so it doesn't really matter, does it?

Teacher: Ah ha, yes it doesn't yet as your two year old cousin is still so little. So he's two years old but how old are you?

Student: Twelve.

Teacher: He's two and you're twelve. This is a very interesting situation and I'm so glad you brought it up. You see, today it doesn't matter at all, but how about when he'll be fifteen? How old will you be then?

Student: Twenty five.

Teacher: At that time, will the dynamics still be the same? You'll still be ten years older than him. Has age difference got anything to do with it? Now what if you had a baby brother who was ten years apart? Do you think the dynamics of the relationship would be different between you and a baby brother, in comparison to you and a baby cousin? Would the situation change after your cousin's fifteen?

Student: Yes they would. When my cousin's fifteen he won't be a little baby anymore, and he won't be my *mehram* either, but a brother would be.

Teacher: Absolutely. The dynamics would definitely be different, and will change with your cousin. What I want to ask is if any of you are close to cousins who are not two years old, but rather older, twelve or thirteen—same age as you?

Student: I'm close to my cousins as I don't have any brothers.

Teacher: You don't have a brother so you're close to your cousins. And you consider them as your brothers. You also raised your hand?

Student: Same thing.

Teacher: Ok, same thing. How about you?

Student: I have a brother but I'm close to my cousin, and not at all to my brother.

Teacher: Anybody else raised their hand?

Teacher: So you're closer to your cousin than you are to your brother. Is it because your brother's much older than you, whereas your cousin is closer to your age? Is that the reason?

Anyhow, moving on, many of us have amazing relationships with our cousins. We really and truly do. I remember when I started covering my face; the most difficult people to deal with were my cousins. This was especially the case with a cousin of mine who was like a true brother to me in those days, as we'd grown up together. We were very, very close; even now, *Alhamdulillah*, we are still very close, but in a different way. I remember the first time he saw me after I started *purdah*. He was visiting from America, where he lives now. He saw me and exclaimed in shock, "What's this?!" Naturally, it was very, very hard for him to deal with this drastic change. By the way, it's important for us to understand that even for the significant others, *hijab* and/or *purdah*, and the attitude that goes with these, are a difficult change to deal with.

So, if you're faced with such a situation, how should you behave?

You're close to your cousins (or even uncles who aren't *mehrams*) and you have to maintain family ties. Remember we can't break family ties, for if we do, we surely won't enter Paradise. It's as simple as that, according to *Rasulullah (SAW)*. Therefore, we cannot have cold and distant relationships with our cousins. So the next time at a get-together at your *Dadi*'s or your *Nani*'s, your male cousins come up to you, remember you can't be cold and rude to them. If they suddenly walk into a room where you're relaxing, you can't yell "Get out of my room! I can't talk to you anymore!" You just can't do that!

We shouldn't ever be rude with anyone, most especially our relatives. We all know why, don't we?

Politely casual, that's what we need to aim for. That's a very tough attitude change you need to make. I know it's not easy. Until now, you were doing high fives or whatever chums do together; and all of a sudden, you need to have some sort of polite distance.

We need to act perfectly natural, casual, polite and confident in your stance. Islam is not about being "filmy" or pretentious. We have to be real. That's the reason I was very surprised when I said let's talk about boys in the beginning and you all went "he-he-he"! That was a very filmy reaction!

Do you think Khadija or Aisha (*RA*) were like that? By the way, you all know that Khadija (*RA*), and even Maimoona (*RA*) proposed to *Rasoolullah (SAW)*? That's how emancipated women are in our *deen*. They're encouraged to be strong, confident and outspoken. Very emancipated—but still required to act within clear limits, in all their relationships. So being giggly and acting silly around boys is not being mature at all, really. Thus, we should speak up and say what's appropriate for the situation, but not cross limits by being overly chummy.

Remember—casually polite and natural. Have you all understood what I'm saying? If you haven't, then please ask me to clarify. Now, you said you are very close to your cousin. So tell me, how will you practically have a polite and casual relationship with him, from now on?

Student: Well, I won't be overly free with him, I guess, like I'm used to? But can I still give him a quick, small hug when I greet him, can't I?

Teacher: A hug? A physical relationship of any sort, even casual, is an absolutely no! Sometimes we feel like that a high five or a hug doesn't count as having a physical relationship.

You all do know that a physical relationship doesn't just mean having sex with somebody? It doesn't mean that alone. A physical relationship is any in which there's some form of touching.

Let's look at a practical example. All the cousins have decided to go out for ice cream, five of you. All five of you have got to go in one car, with the driver. What do you do? Can you squeeze together, sitting on top of one another? Or let's say a Cinnabon has opened and you all decide to check it out. Doesn't that ever happen to you guys? You're all together and you just decide to go. But there are five or six of you and one car with a driver. So what do you do? You know your cousins aren't your *mehram* and you need to have a polite casual relationship with them. So what do you do?

Student: I keep my distance

Teacher: How will you keep your distance in the car with seven people? Please tell me practically how you'll manage that?

Student: Oh, that would be difficult to manage.

Teacher: Yes, It's difficult as you can't possibly have all the boys sit in the front and all the girls at the back.

Student: I'd stay back.

Teacher: You wouldn't go? Okay. What about you, sweetie?

Student: We could just not sit on someone's lap, but next to each other?

Teacher: *Beti*, there are six people who need to sit in the car, so can everyone sit next to one another without touching? How can you do that? Do you have a limousine? I don't. If you sit in my car with one in front and five people sitting in the back, there is no way they will be sitting side by side, especially without touching one another.

Student: Try and get another car.

Teacher: Yes, that's the best solution. But what if you just can't arrange another car, then what?

Student: The guys could take a cab.

Teacher: That's not a bad idea. As we're looking for practical solutions here, asking the guys to take a cab is good one. Or, the car could shuttle back and forth twice. You guys send your

drivers for photocopying notes and stuff ten times a day, so I'm sure that can be done, especially if the place isn't too far away. The guys can go first and the girls can follow later, or the other way around. The important fact is that we need to make a careful and conscious effort with regards to how we behave with our *non-mehrams*. Often times, we don't even realize what we're doing is unacceptable until it's too late; usually, we're just not aware there's even a problem. It's as simple as that.

This is the purpose behind our discussion today. We need to be aware of this very real situation that we all face in dealing with close non-mehram relatives. Rather than avoiding them, we have to find the right way of behaving with them. They're family and interacting with them is a normal part of life. However, we need to be very careful precisely because we're so familiar with one other. So much so that crossing the line becomes very easy; we may do it without even realizing it. That's why I'd said that dealing with total strangers is much easier. For instance, if a complete stranger was sitting next to you in McDonalds or wherever, how would you behave towards him?

Student: Ignore him; be as if he's not even there.

Teacher: Ignore him. Not much to think about here; as simple as that. With our cousins though, we can't do that. Right? In such a situation, we need to consciously think about the speech and actions we're going to use. Remember, we have to be politely casual. How many of you go to a co education school. Raise your hands; quite a few. So half of you go to a co-ed school and half of you don't. In an ideal world, all girls would go to a girls' school and all boys to a boys' school. In the real world though, this doesn't happen. Even those of you who are going to a girls' school today will come to a point where you'll have to go to a co-educational institution for higher learning. All institutions aren't for girls or boys exclusively, particularly at the college level. So you're going to be dealing with this specie which is called classmates. Yes. And this is very tricky specie; they aren't our relatives nor are they total strangers, they're

Student: Significant others

Teacher: Yes, significant others, good. I'm glad you've got that sorted out. Now how are we supposed to behave with them? By the way, how many of you watch movies? So, whatever you watch, do you think it doesn't influence you? Absolutely it does; whatever we watch, it surely influences all of us. Now in movies and on TV, the significant others—classmates or school/college buddies are portrayed as if they're *mehrams*. They show ultra casual and close relationships in which non-related girls and guys hang around with one another without any hang-ups at all. We see this closeness in most movies and shows. As a result, we see this attitude amongst girls and guys all around us. Such easygoing and overly friendly behavior is considered the norm. Those of you who go to co-ed schools know this better than the ones who don't. Am I wrong in this perception? You all know this is the case; I'm well aware of it, too.

Actually, today, it's expected to have such close relationships. Not only do the media make them seem like the absolute norm that everyone should conform to, but they actually seem completely normal and natural as you may have almost grown up with these significant others. You may have been together since kindergarten, or grade one or two, or whatever. In fact, that's why behaving as our *deen* requires us to seem abnormal, by today's expectations! You could have a friendly relationship with them—as the so called norm dictates, but then it would be highly problematic for you, in terms of your relationship with Allah (SWT). In reality, we shouldn't get taken in by what we see in the media in terms of school or college relationships between girls and guys. If you feel yourself being influenced by these, then you shouldn't be watching them. Today, the lines between acceptable and actual relationships are getting way too blurry...way, way too tangled together!

So what we're going to try to do, *inshaAllah*, is to untangle these lines, and clearly define what's acceptable for us as Muslim girls—who want to please Allah (SWT), and what's not.

One important thing you must note in all this gender relations discussion – Allah (swt) has given various dos and donts about gender interaction to both guys and girls, right. So, that means Allah (swt) knows that in the real world guys and girls **interact**. Girls are not locked up behind closed doors and the keys thrown away! That concept of secluding women completely, not allowing them to study or go to school, treating them like cattle, like some lower species – a lot of that we see in our country and other places in the name of Islam, in the name of *purdah* – well, where is that coming from? certainly not from Allah (swt).

We see the lives of women around Rasool Allah (pbuh) – his wives, his daughters, his other female Companions – their participation in all areas of life was phenomenal – they were not uneducated, suppressed, subjugated or bullied by their male relatives or other males in society.

If Allah (swt) meant for us women to simply stay behind closed doors, there would have been no need for such detailed *hijab* rulings, for interacting with the opposite sex rulings, would there?

Our *deen* is realistic, made for real people and it is the *deen* chosen by our Creator for us. So, it is naturally based on our nature.

Well, we're completely out of time. Have your questions ready for next week; we'll continue then, *inshaAllah*.

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*