

MODULE 5

Class Title: Hijab - Part 5 (5th part of a 6 lesson series)

Category: Scripture/Popular Culture

Aim of Lesson: To understand the rationale & wisdom behind the rulings of hijab

Class format: Power point Presentation & discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(Ta'awwudh) A'oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir Rajeem

(Tasmiyah) Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

(Du'a) Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul 'uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli [Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28]

Alhamdulillah in our discussion on Allah (swt)'s commandments of hijab in the light of Surah Noor, verse 31 and surah Al Ahzab, verse 59 , we have learnt that there are these seven commandments within those verses:

- To lower their gazes.
- To guard their modesty.
- Not to display their beauty except what is apparent of it.
- To extend their head covering to cover their bosoms.
- Not to display their beauty except to their husbands, fathers...
- Not to strike their feet so as to make known what they hide.
- Lastly to draw their outer garments close around themselves.

Four commandments relate to dress which can be expressed as these three rules:

- Not displaying their beauty beyond what is apparent of it, except for the people listed in *Surah Nur* verse 31.
- Extending the head covering over the bosoms.
- Drawing the outer garment close around.

Three commandments that relate to attitude:

- Lowering the gaze.
- Guarding modesty.
- Not striking feet on the ground so as to reveal what is hidden.

Today, we shall try to understand the rationale & wisdom behind the rulings of hijab. You see there is great wisdom behind every commandment of Allah (swt) and if we know Him and have trust in Him, we realize that all – I repeat – all commandments He (swt) has ordained for His servants i.e. you and me – are for our own benefit and good, in this world and in the Hereafter.

Also, the commandments are not just beneficial for an individual but also for the community and society as a whole. The *Shari'ah* works as a holistic system – each part complimenting each other and strengthening each other.

What happens is that some commandments – particularly the commandments of hijab these days - we do not get - because of our limited intellect, because of prejudice, and because of many other internal and external factors.

The issue of hijab – which seems to be so controversial and hot today – was actually a non-issue just some decades back. We saw few backs back when examining the historical evidence of hijab that Muslim women across the globe got it – you are a Muslim woman, you wear hijab. Simple.

Slides 1 – 4:

Now why has Allah (swt) given us these commandments? Any idea?

Student: For our protection.

Teacher: Yes. And....

Student: Not to provoke people.

Teacher: We hear all of these slogans about Islam ...it oppresses women and the *purda* is only to seclude women, for men to have control over women, you've heard all of that, day in and day out.

Allah (swt) *naoozubillah* is against women. The gender bias of Islam, it's been flogged and flogged to death actually.

The thing is that verse 31 of Surah Noor and Verse 59 of Surah Al-Ahzaab, like you said are for protection of women and to promote a healthy society. That is extremely important. Protection of women is not only in isolation. Why?

When we analyze this 'why' we see a much larger picture – bigger than our puny little selves. In a nutshell, these commandments are part of a beautiful system given to us in order to promote a healthy society. How so? Let's look at a few examples.

Slides 5 – 6:

Why do we keep a burger in a box?

Yes, so that this doesn't happen. Because if this happens, not only is the burger getting contaminated by germs, but it is going to rot and spread disease all around as well.

So, when Allah (swt) says in *Surah Al-Ahzaab*,

'*Ya Rasullallah!* Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them, that is better in order that they may be known and not annoyed Allah (swt) is ever Forgiving and ever Merciful.'

The advantage in observing Hijab is that these women are recognized as pious and respectable. Thus, the perverts would not be after them and the women would not have to face unpleasantness. Nobody will dare follow and make advances to a woman who has completely concealed herself as opposed to the one who has come out nicely decorated without Hijab; the malicious and evil-minded folks will associate great hopes with such women. (Ahkam-ul Qur'an, vol. 4, p. 354)

In this Verse, Allah is commanding the Prophet (pbuh) to ask his Wives, his daughters and to all Muslim women that they should not dress like slave girls leaving their heads and faces uncovered when they come out of their homes. Instead, they should cover themselves with a cloak covering their faces so that nobody will stand in their way and everyone will know that they are respectable folks. (Tafsir Ibn Jarir, vol. 22, p. 29)

This is a personal, individual advantage for women. To be seen as respectable members of society, not to be considered as “eye-candy” for all and totally in charge of their own sexuality. If we look at hijab with a cool head without clouding our judgment with anti-Islam slogans and empty rhetoric, we will understand that actually hijab is an empowering tool for women.

Slides 8 – 10:

Let's look at another example, of our planet.

Allah (swt) has given us a perfect system. Everything is in a fine balance. And what did we do to it? Destroy and made a hole in the ozone layer. We just messed it up!

Allah (swt) says in Surah Rum: verse 41, ‘Corruption has appeared on the land and on the sea because of what the hands of men have earned.’

We are seeing huge environmental issues these days. Look at the climate change, its crazy! Did you guys hear last week that there was a hailstorm in Lahore? And some people were saying it was snow! Well it wasn't snow but it was crazy weather. It's getting warmer in some places and in other places there are *Tsunamis*.

We have never experienced this kind of weather system before, why because we have messed up the natural system. So the earth has become sick. Global warming has made it sick. And like I said all these freak weather phenomenon we see all the time, you said ozone layer; we have depleted the ozone layer.

Slides 11 – 13:

What has happened is that the harmful rays of the sun can now reach us. They are extremely dangerous, they can cause skin cancer.

‘It only takes five sunburns to double the risk of skin cancer’
And this is also extremely interesting:

‘80% of damaging lifetime exposure occurs before the age of 18 years’

Look at this, ‘The North Carolina Public Health Advertising Campaign’ advises, Just take these basic steps:

- Limit sun exposure.
- Cover up.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses.
- And always wear a sun cream SP15 or higher to help protect children and grownups from skin cancer in the years to come.

What have they written? Cover up!

Allah (swt) has also given us the perfect moral system. For what? For a healthy moral society. We understand the morality of not telling lies, of not cheating each other. That’s all part of the moral system. The *hijab* commandments are a part of the bigger picture, they are not in a vacuum all by themselves. No. The systems of *haya* and of *hijab* are prescribed to safeguard the moral health of communities and societies.

Slides 14 - 16:

These commandments weren’t given for women alone, but for men as well.

Allah (swt) is saying in verse 30, ‘Tell the believing **men** to lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that is purer for them...’ then Allah (swt) says, ‘..Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty...’ so it’s not that the commandment is only for the women.

But then when we humans say that, ‘Ok why should we do this? It is **my** body and I’m only 16 or 18 or 20’. Please remember, sun exposure before the age of 18. Maximum amount of exposure is already done. So forget about being 15 or 16 or whatever age you are, moral corruption can and does set in.

Then people started saying, ‘Why should **I** listen to this? what has happened? The society has become sick! Don’t you see that around you? When Allah (swt) says that corruption has appeared on the land and on sea because of what the hands of men have wrought. Don’t you see that moral corruption around you all that time? And who is taking the brunt of all that moral corruption?’

Women! Simple as that! Women are treated as objects. And since when did ignorance become a point of view? Just because you say, ‘I don’t know’ just because people aren’t aware of it so this is ‘my point of view’. What do you mean by ‘my point of view’?

Slide 17:

This is a very sad state of our moral deprivation as well. Moral pollution that we see around us is exactly as can be seen in the picture. This is the product of a sick society where the only value

left of a woman is what she looks like and what her measurements are. This Barbie doll culture has gone way too far. It only places value on what you look like and what your body looks like.

Slides 18 – 21:

It alters our mind set too because that's how corruption creeps in. You look at a person who perhaps doesn't fit the "*Miss Universe*" model and you go like, 'there is something wrong with her'. You automatically think like that even if you don't want to but you do think that. We measure people according to their measure of sizes. Big time! It's like a commodity.

Body and sold. Women are the ones who are the victims of abuse. They are sold into sex slavery, and do you know who the majority of human trafficking victims are? Young girls! Prostitutes as young as ten and nine year olds! Pornography, that's called an industry, its sick! Where is it all coming from? You can make all sorts of excuses but it boils down to the fact that the society is sick because we have abandoned the moral system of Allah (swt).

People go to Thailand just for sex tourism! With little children! Where is all that coming from? 'It's my life, it's my right I can live whichever way I want to', and 'I can flaunt myself'. That's what it is; you can't regulate people's personal lives. 'Their life is their life, and your life is your life'. Breakdown of moral laws has made us selfish and mean.

Islam has brought morals which make perfect sense. That is the reason when you look at the *hijab* from a point of view other than morality, then it becomes a problem.

And as women, we know how attractive we are. We are 100% eye candy for someone or the other. Maybe *Miss World* is eye candy for 2 million, you are maybe for 2000. But you most certainly are for someone. And if you think you are not, you are kidding yourself.

Haya is not just of the eyes, it's a whole system that works. And we see that corruption around us. Look at the fashion industry or TV industry. And it's getting sicker and sicker. We need to heal the world.

Just like we are having conferences on global warming and in the same way we need to have a conference of moral laws as well. We need to sit together, discuss and say '*Ya Allah* what are we doing!'

Open your eyes to what is going on around you. Cover up for crying out loud. Guard your modesty, lower your gaze and do not stamp your feet.

And that is not extremism at all. Talking about 'lowering your gaze', if you see an 18 year old young man who does not look square at girls, **they** make fun of him, 'Oh God, he is the *mulla* type, poor thing'. It doesn't even cross their minds that he is following Allah (swt)'s commandment and you don't know how much *fitna* he's saving himself from! He is guarding his modesty.

You know there is a *hadith*, the gist of it is that there will be seven people whom Allah (swt) is going to give refuge under His Throne on ‘The Day of Judgment’, the day when there will be no refuge, no respite. There is a whole list of people and among them will be a young man who a beautiful woman of noble stature invites for sin and he declines saying “I am scared of Allah (swt)”. [Bukhari]

And that could be true for a young woman too. Because we see these invitations of sins around us openly without any problem, in our Islamic Republic of Pakistan! I’m sure you guys know better than I do. Dating is no big deal, “being together” is no big deal.

If you are a young woman and you are tempted to be part of the bandwagon (it’s not like you’re not), and you stop yourself... that, ‘No! I fear Allah (swt)’, just think what you are going to get in return! Yes, people are going to make fun of you, *mullani* and all.

This moral decadence and breakdown of decency is something very serious, we need to heal our society and start with our own actions.

They say look at your contribution. Its fine and dandy to say, ‘Oh my God, everything is going to the dogs’ so what are you going to do about it? What am I going to do about it? Start from myself. Am I contributing to the corruption or am I trying to pick up that plastic bag. Each of us needs to ask that, what is my contribution in this pollution?

Allah (swt) says in this is beautiful verse of Surah Al-Mulk, (verse 14)

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

‘should not He Who has created you know?’

He’s the one who has created us. Just like He gave us a perfect planet and we messed it up. So He’s the One who has given this perfect and humane system which we have just messed up and the moral standards have gone really low.

We have men dressing up as women and coming on TV shows and we have no problem with that. We have women exposing themselves on national TV and we have no problem with that. We have magazines coming to our homes with half naked people and we don’t even write to them, and these are Muslim women.

It doesn’t upset us, why is that? If I’m not feeling it in my heart then what am I doing? Am I becoming part of that? Am I becoming insensitive?

Remember when we initially talked about *haya* we said, we get desensitized to lack of *haya*. Just like when we go to *katchi bastis* (shanty towns) you wonder, ‘Oh my God! How do these people live in this dirt and in this stench?’ They become so used to it day in and day out that it doesn’t bother them anymore.

That's how we have become, the moral depravity doesn't bother us! Why do I endorse brands who have become like that? Because its fashion, that's why! What am I standing up for? We need to ask ourselves. And we need to begin with ourselves.

Dr. Katherine Bullock (a Canadian convert and community activist) observes, "The point to covering is not that sexual attraction is bad, only that it should be expressed between a husband and wife inside the privacy of the home. A public space free of sexual tensions is seen as a more peaceful place for human beings, men and women, to interact, do business, and build a healthy civilization."

Slides 22 - :

There is one more question that comes to our minds when we look at these commandments. Why are these commandments different for men and women? Because it's a fact these commandments **are** different.

The simple answer is – because men and women are different!

Men are from Mars Women are from Venus (published in May 1992) is a book by John Gray offering many suggestions for improving men-women relationships in couples by understanding the communication style and emotional needs of the opposite gender. It looks at profound differences among the two sexes.

Men and women:

- ▶ are as different as beings from other planets
- ▶ have reciprocally different natures
- ▶ "score" each other differently
- ▶ have different emotional needs

If we are honest, we will acknowledge this fact.

Islam regulates interaction of sexes. Has commandments for BOTH men and women regarding this and those commandments are based on the differences of men and women. So yes. Allah (swt)'s commandments are gender biased!

Now if we want to give it a negative connotation – then we do not know our Rabb at all.

When Rasool Allah (pbuh) said: Gold and silk are lawful for the females among my followers, but prohibited to the males. [Ahmad, Nasia & Tirmidhi] how come no one screamed "discrimination".

What has happened is that these laws of hijab have been exploited by some Muslim men in the name of religion, have been mixed up with "cultural practices" and used to subjugate women. And us ladies, instead of having half a brain and finding out the real story – simply started shouting – not fair, not fair.

If Allah (swt) did not want women to be productive members of society and be locked up in their homes and never meet or talk to any non-mehram man **ever** – why bother with such detailed hijab laws, gender interaction principles and dress code?

Men and women are equal spiritually in the eyes of Allah (swt). No difference at all. Whoever works righteousness – **whether male or female** – while he (or she) is a true believer, verily, to him We will give a good life, and We shall pay then certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do. {Surah An Nahl 16: Verse 97}

So their Lord accepted of them (their supplication and answered them), “Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, **be he male or female**.... {Surah Al e Imran 3: Verse 195}

We, as believing women need to look beyond the hoopla and recognize these commandments for what they truly are – beneficial for **me**, liberating for **me**, a means to get **my** Lord’s pleasure, a means to attain **my** Jannah ... its all about moi! *Alhamdulillah*.

Lets review, What’s in it for Me? Five Advantages of Hijab.

I can’t be messed with! Hijab protects me – Hijab identifies a Muslim woman as a person of high moral standards to reduce her chances of being harassed.

I am liberated from slavery to ‘physical perfection’ – Society makes women desire to become ‘perfect objects’. The multitudes of alluring fashion magazines and cosmetic surgeries show women’s enslavement to beauty. The entertainment industry pressures teens to believe that for clothes, less is better. When we wear Hijab, we vow to liberate ourselves from such desires and serve only God.

I don’t let others judge me by my hair and curves! – In schools and professional environments, women are often judged by their looks or bodies—characteristics they neither chose nor created. Hijab forces society to judge women for their value as human beings, with intellect, principles, and feelings. A woman in Hijab sends a message, “Deal with my brain, not my body!”

I feel empowered and confident – In contrast to today’s teenage culture, where anorexia and suicide are on the rise, as women attempt to reach an unattainable ideal of beauty, Hijab frees a woman from the pressure to ‘fit in’. She does not have to worry about wearing the right kind of jeans or the right shade of eye shadow. She can feel secure about her appearance because she cares to please only Allah.

I feel the bond of unity – Hijab identifies us as Muslims and encourages other Muslim sisters to greet us with the salutation of peace, “Assalamu Alaikum”. Hijab draws others to us and immerses us in good company.

May Allah (swt) make it easy for us to understand His words and His commandments – *ameen*.

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*