

MODULE 5

Class Title: Dress Code – part 1

(2nd part of a 4 lesson series, should be done after *Haya* series)

Aim of Lesson: To understand the meaning of “*awrah*” (must-cover body parts)

Category: Scripture/popular culture

Lesson Format: Power point presentation & narration. Discussion

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

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

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

Slide 1:

Last week we started talking about how *haya* (modesty) has an inner and an outer dimension and about the evolution of clothes; when people began wearing clothes and how the idea of clothing has changed over the years.

This week *inshaAllah* we will talk about the expression of *haya* in our outward appearance.

Slide 2:

To understand why clothes are a sign of *haya*, we must understand 3 things:

- 1) when people starting wearing clothes
- 2) and how this idea of clothing evolved over the years.
- 3) We also need to analyse the purpose of wearing clothes.

Alhamdulillah we had already covered the first 2 points in the last class, so today we will focus on the purpose of wearing clothes.

Slide 3:

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an,

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

“O children of Adam, We have bestowed garment upon you to cover yourself and as an adornment. And the garment of righteousness - that is best. Such are among the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.” (Surah Al Araf 7: verse 26)

The purpose behind wearing clothes is something which is not prescribed by a human being, let's have this one thing clear. We often hear people say that whenever people talk about Islam and women, they immediately start talking about modesty; "What difference does it makes, what somebody is wearing or not wearing?" You hear it all the time.

Slide 4:

The reason it **does** matter what someone is wearing or not wearing is that this is not something prescribed by any human being, it is a direct commandment of Allah (swt). Allah (swt) has said, "We have bestowed garments upon you." Why? "To cover yourself and as an adornment."

As simple as that!

We always do things for a particular reason, even if it is just for entertainment; and here Allah (swt) has told us the reason why He bestowed garments on us, the basic aim of wearing clothes; to cover ourselves and to beautify ourselves.

Slide 5:

Let's start with covering of the body, and then we will talk about beautifying it as well *inshaAllah*.

What is meant by; "To cover our body"? Allah (swt) says to cover yourselves. What does that mean? Cover what? Should we wear a tent? How much do you cover yourselves? That's all it says: "Cover yourself."

Slides 6 - 9:

The first question that comes to mind is, what parts of the body do we cover? No guessing games over here *Alhamdulillah*. We do not need to resort to guess work when it comes to do's and don'ts of our *deen*, because Islam has made life very simple for us.

Allah (swt) gives the commandment in the Qur'an or made the suggestion in the Qur'an and how to do it is actually demonstrated by the Prophet (pbuh). There is not a single commandment in the Qur'an that has not been practically applied by the Prophet (pbuh) and when it comes to women, because he was a man, practically applied by the *sahabeehaat*; his own family as well as other *Muslimahs* around him.

In fact, you must be aware that Aisha (ra) used to say about the Prophet (pbuh) that "He is like a living Qur'an." He was like the living Qur'an in terms of his *Ikhlaqeeyaat* (character) as well as his *Aa'maal* (deeds) and that means all the *Aa'maal*.

For example, we've talked about it millions of times in various different ways; it says in the Qur'an, "Establish *Salah*" but it never says in the Qur'an how to do it. There is no manual of

how to offer *Salah*. We say *Allah u Akbar*, we stand in a certain position, where do we get all that from? We get all that from the Prophet (pbuh).

Similarly, in manners of how we dress ourselves, what we wear etc., we get the guidelines from the examples of the Prophet (pbuh), and since we are women and he was man, he has specifically told the women how to dress and we saw this in his own lifetime among his family and the female companions.

That is how we have clear do's and don'ts in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which apply to this particular verse of the Qur'an as well. There wasn't a single verse of the Qur'an that was not demonstrated by the Prophet (pbuh).

Slide 10:

Again, for example Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an; and we will *insha Allah* be talking about this verse in Surah Nur a lot, where Allah (swt) says, "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof, that they should draw their veils over their bosoms." This is the translation of the verse.

Slide 11:

Aisha (ra) reported that once Asma (Aisha's (ra) sister, the Prophet's (pbuh) sister in law, and the daughter of Abu Bakr (ra)) came in front of him, wearing thin clothes; thin meaning sheer or transparent. When she came to see the Prophet (pbuh), he said to her, "O, Asma! When a woman comes of age (you know what "Comes of age" means right, it means, reaches puberty; all of you have reached puberty, *Alhamdulillah*), she should not display parts of the body except this and this and he pointed to the face and to the hands."

We will talk about this because there is a very clear cut commandment in the Qur'an and this is the very clear cut commandment in the Hadith. There is no ambiguity about it. *Alhamdulillah* the Qur'an is simple and straightforward and it has simple and straightforward commandments. We don't want to get into a very scholarly level discussion now, so there are lots of *Ahadith* that I will quote to you but there are lots of *Ahadith* that I will not quote to you too.

Please do try to understand that whatever is being told to you in this class is not made up by anybody, this is all based on the authentic *Ahadith* of the Prophet (pbuh) and the practice of the female companions. I am going to keep on repeating that because a lot of times there is a misconception that may be a group of these *Mullanees* and *mullahs* got together and just formulated an Islamic dress code. This is a huge misconception. We are going to try to clarify all that *inshaAllah*.

Slide 12:

Covering the body includes three things:

Awrah or *Satar*, which means body parts which must be covered,

Libas which means clothes or garments and

Hijab which means outer covering.

We will now look at each one of them individually.

Slides 13 - 15:

Awrah or *satar* is an Arabic word. The plural of *Awrah* is *Awraat* and in the Urdu language we use this word *Awrat* for “woman”. There are lots of Arabic words that we use in Urdu.

The literal meaning of *awrah* is a secret and hidden place; everything that Allah (swt) has created precious, Allah (swt) has kept hidden, without exception.

Allah (swt) Himself is the most precious entity ever, and can you see him? He is in *Hijab*.

Where do you find pearls, scattered on the beach? No, inside an oyster on the ocean bed. Oysters don't even float on the sea level, they are really deep inside; you have to make an effort to get a pearl.

Diamonds! Where do you find them? You cannot find diamonds anywhere other than mines. So anything precious is secret and hidden.

Slides 16 & 17:

It is not just a coincidence that an *Awrat* is called an *Awrat*. So *awrah* means those body parts that must be kept hidden. It also means anything that causes shame when exposed.

Even little kids are very conscious about their bodies, they realize the concept of *haya*. They do not like to expose themselves. However, this feeling of *haya* - which is naturally inside of us - goes away very easily as well. If you see half naked people around you all the time, then that becomes fine and acceptable. You see then that the *haya* level keeps going down more and more. Little children don't want to use a toilet in front of everybody; they don't want to expose their private parts in front of everybody, they get embarrassed. So *awrah* also means something which, once exposed, causes you embarrassment.

Slide 18:

Awrah or *Satar* requirements are not absolute. They depend on who we are with. So the requirement is different when Muslim girls/women are amongst themselves, when they are in front of their *mahram* men and different when in front of all others. There is also a distinction made by some scholars about a Muslim woman's *satar* being different in front of non-Muslim women.

Slide 19:

A *Satar* of a Muslim woman in front of another Muslim woman is from the belly button to the knees. This is something which is extremely important for us to understand and extremely important for us to remember because there are many instances when we forget that.

Slides 20 & 21:

The Prophet (pbuh) said to Ali (ra) did not look at the thigh of a person; dead or alive. So let me here talk about the fact that men also have a *satar*; a fact that some people seem to completely ignore! Men's *Satar* is also from the belly button to the knees.

Slides 22 & 23:

Among common instances where we forget our *satar* requirements are when we go swimming and when we get waxing done. As far as swimming is concerned, in front of other women, what I generally do is that I wear a swim suit and pair of tights under it and the tights cover your knees. You can wear your regular swim suit but your knees should be covered.

I hope you get yourselves waxed. It is a very hygienic way of getting rid of extra hair which by the way is very essential for us to get rid of. So how do you do it? You cannot expose your thighs to anybody, except your husband or a doctor – in case of need. I generally wear lowers, and roll them up to just below my knees, that ensures that thigh area is covered. No matter how hard you try to keep it covered by wearing a long shirt, it exposes while waxing.

Working out in a gym or with friends is another place where we sometimes don't bother with *satar* requirements. Just wear sweat pants and a T-shirt.

Slide 24:

Flaunting the body is not a good idea, even if you don't look at the Islamic perspective; it goes against modesty whether you are a Muslim or not. It can cause jealousy among other girls, it can cause inferiority complexes. When you flaunt your body, you have that feeling of arrogance and you show off. It's that simple, whether you admit it to yourself or not.

Slide 25:

There is no *satar* requirements between husbands and wives; that is the only relation where that is so. *Alhamdulillah*.

Slides 26 - 28:

Having said all this, is there anybody here who will take off their shirt now? Your *satar* in front of me is from the naval to the knee; we are all Muslim women over here. There is no difference of opinion. You won't be sinning. Then why don't you? Some times in summer when it's hot & sweaty, why not just take off your shirts?

Student: Because it's just too weird.

Teacher: Technically speaking, that's where your *satar* is (points from naval to knee). That's amazing you see; that none of you want to take your shirt off. Can you imagine me saying that today you have to come to class topless? So what is the problem with the picture in this slide? In front of female cousins and friends you might wear something like this, but would you wear it in front of your father or your *dada*? You wouldn't, because you have some sense of modesty; that's the bottom line.

Technically speaking yes you can, but if you want to keep your *haya* level high, you won't. I am not telling you to wear it or not; if you want to, that's up to you. But if you want to keep your *haya* level high, you must remember that the Prophet (pbuh) told Mu`awiyah (ra) to protect his nakedness from all except his wife. He asked how about if one of us was alone? The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "It is even more appropriate that modesty be shown for Allah than for people." The Prophet (pbuh) never recommended being naked; even when you are alone.

If you look at some of the clothes that people are wearing these days, that's almost being naked. Whenever the Prophet (pbuh) went to relieve himself, he would sit down first before pulling up his garments, so that there was minimum exposure and obviously he was not using the toilet in front of people, was he? The reason for this is that exposing, even to ourselves, lowers our sense of *haya*. I found this *Hadith* amazing because it reminds us that Allah (swt) is watching us all the time, so it is very important to keep our *haya* level high; thus, what you are wearing is extremely important.

Slides 29 & 30:

We spoke about our *satar* in front of Muslim women and *mahram* men, so let's talk about who our *mahrams* are. A *mahram* is a close male relative. The definition that men you cannot marry are your *mahrams* is wrong. It is wrong because a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man, but that does not make him a *mahram*! Remember that the definition of a *mahram* is not coined by any human; it was not even the Prophet (pbuh) who was given the authority to define

who a *mahram* is. Allah (swt) has Himself defined who a *mahram* is. Mahrams are: your father, your brothers, your uncles related through blood (*chacha* and *mamoo*), your grandfathers, your father-in-law, your sons, your nephews, your husband, your husband's children, or those boys whom you have adopted and have nursed, your mom's uncle and your dad's uncle, etc. Your cousins from any side are not your *mahrams*. Your *khaloo* (mother's sister's husband) and your *phoophu* (father's sister's husband) are not your *mahrams*; even the cousins who live in the same house with are not your *mahrams*.

Allah (swt) has made these relationships. For example, I don't have a brother, so that's that; end of story. I cannot pretend that somebody else is my brother. I may care a lot about somebody; a cousin or somebody else a lot, but he can never be my brother; that's the end of it.

Slide 31:

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an in Surah Nur 23: Verse 31: "And let them not reveal their beauty except to their husbands or their fathers 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." Some people interpreted that as "Muslim women". Surah Nur verse 31 continues, "Or their slaves or their male servants free of desire." That means male servants who have been in the family for many many years and are very old; some times you have these family servants who are in their eighties or so. Surah Nur verse 31 continues, "Or children who have no sense of the shame of women's nakedness." That means boys who have not reached puberty.

The first time I read this surah I was shocked; I had not realized that these relationships were specified in the Qur'an. Allah (swt) has only authorized Himself to tell us who our *mahrams* are. It's not our choice. This is something which is commanded by Allah (swt). We don't have a choice in the matter. Remember this is no **human** standard of decency.

When you get *hidayah* (guidance) and you start reading the Qur'an and you start covering yourselves up, sometimes it causes a big problem in the home, because when you start to cover up in front of the male cousin who lives in your home - if you live in a joint-family system - people say, "*Wo tumhara bhai hae, ab us se parda karo gee?*" (He's your brother, will you start covering yourself in front of him?). It is very difficult to explain to other people, because we are so far away from our *deen*. We only have the aspect of ritual worship in our *deen*; we are totally unaware of the social aspect.

Slides 32 - 35:

Satar requirements in front of *mehram* relatives are relaxed – naval to knee and front and back covered. But, just like you would not go topless for no rhyme or reason in front of Muslim women and girls – similarly think twice about wearing these kind of revealing outfits in front of *mehram* relatives.

The thing to remember is keeping guard over our *haya* level and that can be done by dressing decent in front of everyone.

Slides 36 & 37:

Satar requirements in front of all other guys is – lets read the hadith again where Aisha (ra) reported that once her sister Asma came in front of the Prophet (pbuh) wearing transparent clothes, and he said to her, “O, Asma! When a woman comes of age, she should not display any parts of the body except this and this; and he pointed to the face and hands.” We are talking about the *Awrah*, not the *Hijab* yet. The *satar* of a woman in front of everybody except women, children and non *mehram* men is her entire body except for her hands and her face.

So whole body except face and hands. It isn't as tough as it may sound to some of you. Muslim women have been covering themselves for centuries and that has not been an issue for them at all.

Student: Our school uniform is half sleeves.

Teacher: Those of you who are concerned about your school uniforms, can always get a full sleeve uniform made; there's no problem with that. I cannot think of any school who would not allow you to do that on religious grounds – even in non-Muslim countries, *Alhamdulillah*.

May Allah (swt) make it easy for us to understand His commandments and to implement them whole-heartedly in our lives – *ameen*. *InshaAllah* we will continue with this topic next week.

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

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