

MODESTY

“Every deen (religion) has a characteristic, and the characteristic of Islam is Haya (Modesty).” (Mishkaat)

Modestly is a sense of shyness or self-consciousness. The Arabic word that describes this good quality or behaviour is HAYA. The opposite or bad quality or behaviour is called FA-HI-SHAH.

Both these words appear in a number of places in the Holy Qur’aan. Modesty also means that quality which helps us shun or keep away from all forms of evil, shameless or immodest behaviour.

EXPLANATION:

A person is made up of two basic components or parts. The first part is visible (can be seen) and easily recognised- this is the body and is called the “outer self”.

The second part which cannot be seen as an image or form is called the “inner self”. It is recognised by a person’s conduct. Everybody likes their outer self to be handsome or beautiful. The same effort should be applied in developing the inner self too, e.g. men and women take great care of their bodies by bathing, combing their hair, wearing clean clothing etc.

In the same way everyone must take care of his/her inner self by having good and modest behaviour and keeping away from all types of immodest and bad behaviour.

Remember, for the outer self to be attractive the inner self has to be attractive too. It is no use when a person is very good looking but his or her behaviour is lacking in Modesty.

In the lesson on knowledge we learnt that knowledge helps us to understand our religion correctly- therefore in this lesson on Modesty, we will learn how to beautify our inner self to match our outer self.

Behaviour of the people in pre-Islamic Arabia

Before the advent of Islam most people of Arabia had very little or no modesty whatsoever. They young girls wore clothes that barely covered their bodies and put on jewellery that jingles while they walked. Dressed in these flimsy (see through) while they walked, they would parade in the bazaars or shopping centres to attract the attention of men. Men and women had no shame as to who married whom. Some of the poems, for which the Arabs were famous for, were also rude and vulgar- lacking modesty.

It was the common practice amongst some of the Pagan Hajjis to make Tawaf without wearing any clothes. They considered it to be an act of piety. They thought that it was a sin to perform Tawaf in those very clothes with which they had been committing evil or shameful deeds. As Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was aware about the harmful effects of immodest behaviour, he, through his teaching and by example stopped this kind of practice.

Therefore, Allah tells us in Surah Ahzaab, Surah 33, Verse 21:-

“You have indeed in the Rasool (Messenger) of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct).”

Which means that the beautiful and faultless code of conduct of Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is to be practiced by us.

Bearing in mind this Qur’anic Ayah, we will now learn about how to develop Modesty so as to attain or acquire a noble character.

Firstly, we must understand that only we, ourselves can beautify our inner self. This can be achieved if we remember that there is great reward for keeping away from evil, not only in this world but in the hereafter as well, Insha’Allah.

Some examples of how and when to have modesty:

Dressing:

Both men and women should dress modestly. They should cover their “Aurah” (private parts) according to the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith. Men should not dress like women nor women dress like men. Women should always wear loose fitting clothes and avoid see through clothes, as already learnt in Fiqh.

Sayyidina Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her), the youngest daughter of Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), was an extremely modest lady. Before her demise, she gave instructions that when she passes away, her body must be taken to the graveyard at night, covered with an extra sheet, so that the shape of her body could not be seen.

Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is reported to have said:

“Sayyidina Fatimah RadiAllahu Anha will be the leader of the women in Jannah.” (Tirmidhi)

Gaze:

Avoid looking at obscene things. Even if we happen to see something shameful accidentally, do not gaze at it or look at it the second time. This is the modesty of the eyes.

Talk and Laughter:

Be conscious of Modesty when talking or jesting (joking). Talk softly, politely and be careful of the words we use. Avoid foul, rude and slang language. Make use of good and simple words.

Allah tells us in the Qur’an, Surah Luqman, Surah 31 Verse 19:

“And walk moderately and soften your voice; indeed, the worst voice is the voice of the donkey.”

Walk:

Our walk must be according to the teachings of the Holy Qur'aan. In Surah Luqman, Surah 31 Verse 18, Allah tells us:

“... Nor boastfully walk upon the earth; indeed Allah does not like any boastful haughty person.”

The pace must be chaste (modest). We must not draw attention by earring sound making ornaments on the ankles or shoes. Not must we be obscene (shameless) in our strides (the way we walk).

Prayer:

When we pray – perform Salah or Dhikr, be sincere in word and action, because prayer prevents one from shameful deeds. As stated in Surah Ankabut, Surah 29 Verse 45:

“...Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds.”

Jobs/business:

In our work or business deals, practice modesty. Do not cheat on time, price, quantity, quality, measure etc.

Eating or Drinking:

When eating or drinking do not be greedy. Always sit down before eating or drinking. Eat from what is in front of your plate. Chew with your mouth closed. Avoid eating or drinking noisily (slurping). Begin with Allah's name and end by thanking Allah. All this will help to keep the shameless Shaitaan away and help us keep modest.

Relieving Yourself:

Have modesty when relieving yourself. Do not relieve yourself in the presence of others or in public places. Remember to recite the dua' before entering and leaving the toilet.

ALWAYS REMEMBER!

Every action of ours must be done with modesty and Allah consciousness!

Benefits of Modesty:

A great quality of a true Muslim is to shun all types of evil deeds and actions. Therefore, we should have Modesty because:

1. It is an essential part of our Imaan.
2. Allah instructed Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) in Surah A'raf. Surah 7 Verse 33 to inform us as follows:

“Oh Nabi! Say to the people: Indeed my Lord has made unlawful indecent or shameful deeds.”

3. Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has said:

“Every deed (Religion) has a characteristic. And the characteristic of Islam is Haya- Modesty.” (Mishkaat)

4. If we have modesty we will gain respect from other people which in turn will raise our self-respect.
5. Allah will be pleased with us and it will bring us closer to Him.

Harmful Effects of Immodesty (Fa-hi-shah):

1. If we have immodest or shameful behaviour, people will not respect us.
2. Disobeying the teachings of Our beloved Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) will invite the wrath (anger) of Allah, i.e. Allah will be displeased with us.

In this lesson we have learnt that Islam teaches us to keep our “inner self” free of shameful (bad, evil) thoughts and actions. By having modesty, both our outer and inner self will excel and Insha’Allah this will help us to become true Mu’mins and Muttaqis. Ameen.

Modesty is so essential and important that every Friday, verse 90 from Surah Nahl is recited in the second Khutbah to remind us to keep away from all shameful deeds.

Surah Nahl, Surah 16 Verse 90:

“Allah forbids all shameful deeds.”

Modesty is a special characteristic in women. If they lose it, they will lose their charms.