

# Significance of Purdah in Islam

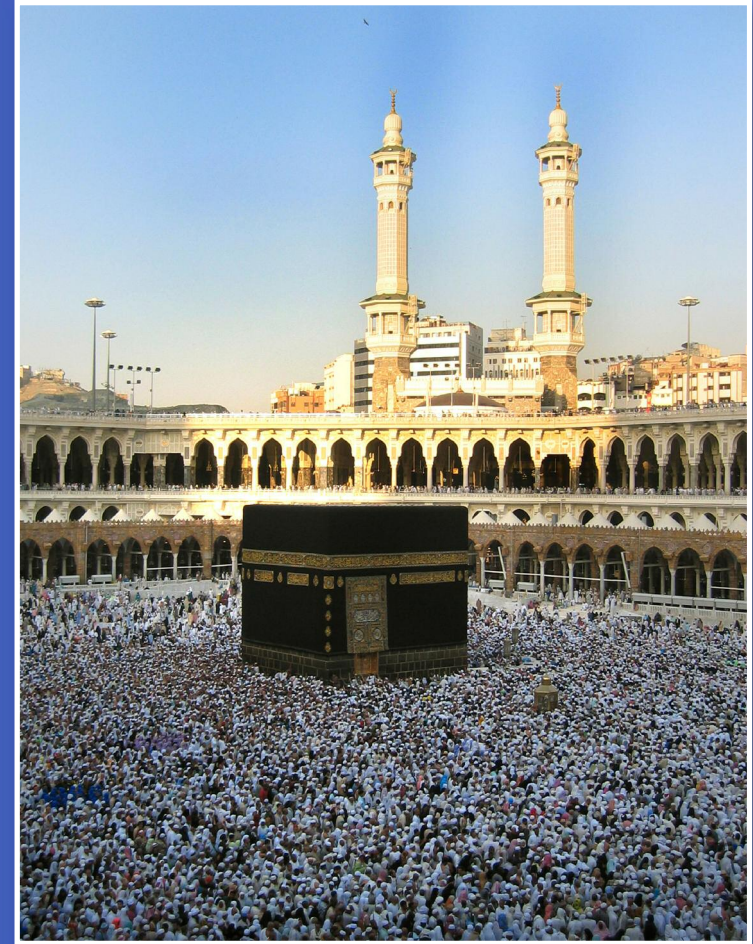
Presentation for the  
National Tabligh Department UK

## A POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE RELATING TO ISLAMIC TEACHINGS / INSTRUCTIONS

The beauty about the religion of Islam is that there is so much wisdom and logic behind every principle and teaching.

Islamic teachings construct a framework of precepts which apply to both the past and present and are communicated to humanity on an ongoing basis in the form of the Holy Qur'an and Ahadith.

Overall, the embodiment of Islamic knowledge, taken holistically, enables individuals to grow and develop towards even higher states of moral development and contentment, by providing both the knowledge and the practical means to achieve such attainment. These teachings are equally applicable to men and women and one of these teachings is the observance of Purdah.



# PURDAH...

## ...A NON-DEFENSIVE AND POSITIVE APPROACH

- ☾ Nowadays we are living in a very diverse world where many people in different parts of the world know something about Purdah. Unfortunately the media has always portrayed it in a very negative light. We continuously see two sides, one of the non Muslim societies constantly bringing up the issue of Islamic Purdah in the name of freedom. They feel it is their duty to try and liberate Muslim women from the veil.
- ☾ On the other hand we see the examples of extreme Muslims, using very negative and extreme ways to defend the Hijab.
- ☾ By the grace of Allah as Ahmadis we are able to explain and defend the significance of Purdah in a non defensive and positive way, explaining the wisdom and logic behind its teachings.
- ☾ But before we do that, as men and women, we must make sure that we are observing this command in accordance with the instructions of the Holy Qur'an.

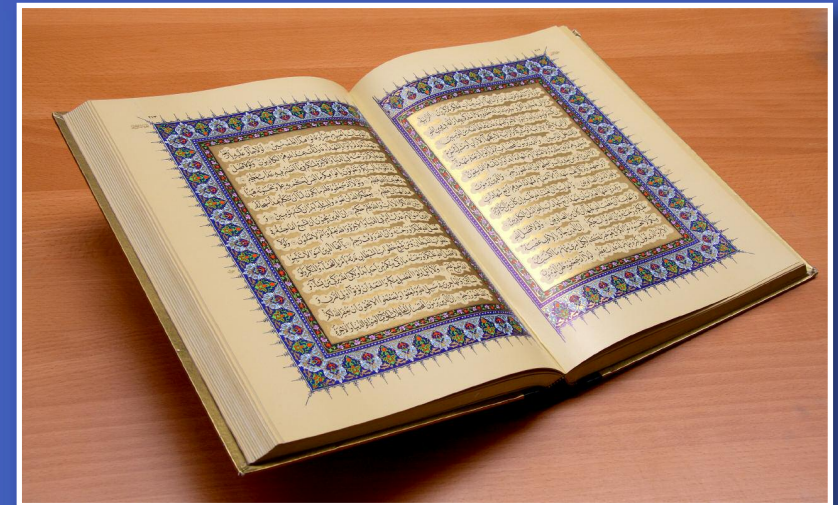
# PURDAH...

## ...IS INSTRUCTED IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

It is an instruction of the Holy Qur'an for both men and women. The command to observe purdah was given to men first.

**Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.**

[24:31]



## AND THEN TO WOMEN:

And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and they display not their beauty and embellishments except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-coverings over their bosoms, and that they display not their beauty and embellishments thereof save to their husbands, or to their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands or their sons or the sons of their husbands or their brothers, or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or their women, or what their right hands possess, or such of male attendants who have no wickedness in them, or young children who have not yet attained any concept of the private parts of women. And they walk not in a style that such of their beauty as they conceal is noticed. And turn you to Allah all together, O believers, that you may succeed.

[24:32]



# THE HOLY PROPHET

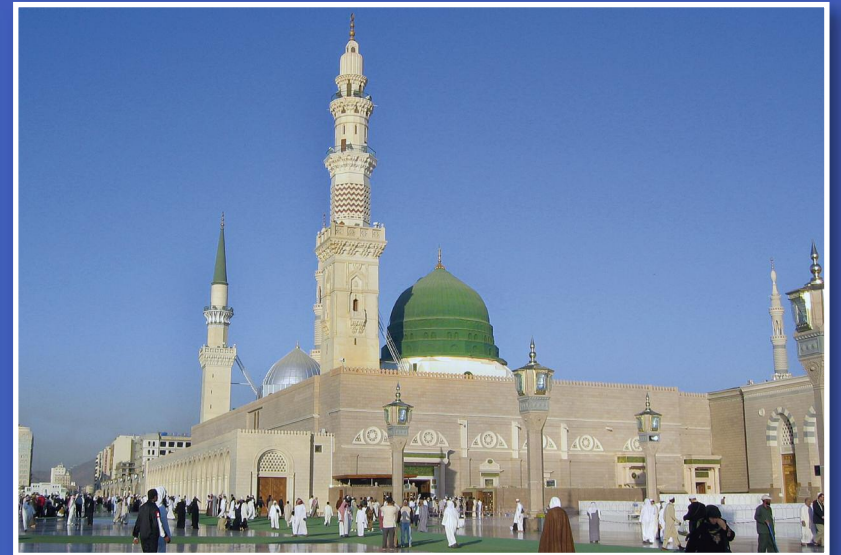
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

## SAID REGARDING PURDAH

According to one Ahadīth, Umme Salma reported that she and Maimūnah, who were both wives of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), were with him when the son of Umme Makhtūm, who was blind, came to speak with him. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told his wives to observe purdah in front of the visitor.

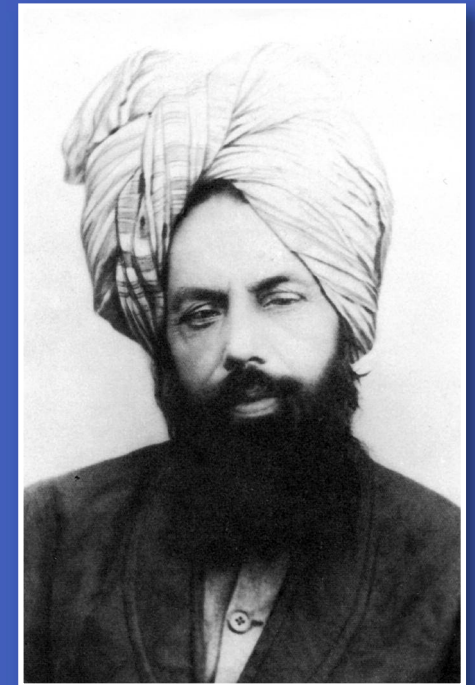
Umme Salma said, ‘O Messenger of Allāh, he is a blind man and will not see us.’ The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, ‘He may be blind but you are not, and do you not see him?’

*(Sunan Abū Daūd)*



## The Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> said: 'Allah has set forth directions in the Holy Qur'an for both men and women.' His explanation on Surah Al-Noor (24:31-32), is follows:

Direct the believing men to restrain their eyes from looking at women outside the prohibited degrees so openly as to be sexually excited by them, and to cultivate the habit of guarding their looks. They should safeguard all their senses. For instance, they should not listen to the singing or charming voice of women outside the prohibited degrees nor should they listen to descriptions of their beauty. This is a good way of preserving the purity of their looks and hearts. In the same way, direct the believing women that they should restrain their eyes from looking at men outside the prohibited degrees and should safeguard their ears against listening to the passionate voice of such men. They should cover up their beauty and should not disclose it to anyone outside the prohibited degrees.



*The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam. Islam International Publications Ltd: London. 27-28. (1979).*

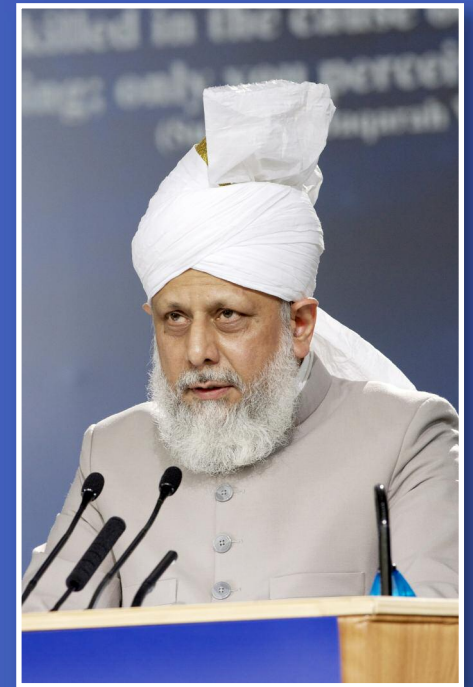
# Elaborating on the Qur'anic verse Ch.24:V.31

Hudhur (may Allah assist him) explained that in these verses, men are instructed in the first instance to restrain their looks. And the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) has also instructed that while in public places we should walk with our eyes partially closed - not so closed that we will be stumbling over other things.

Hudhur (may Allah assist him) quoted Allama Tibri who has written that the meaning of restraining your looks is that you prevent yourself from looking at every such thing that has been forbidden by Allah.

Hudhur (may Allah assist him) stated that this instruction is for men in the first instance and if acted upon, a lot of the evils will vanish automatically.

(Friday Sermon January 30th, 2004)



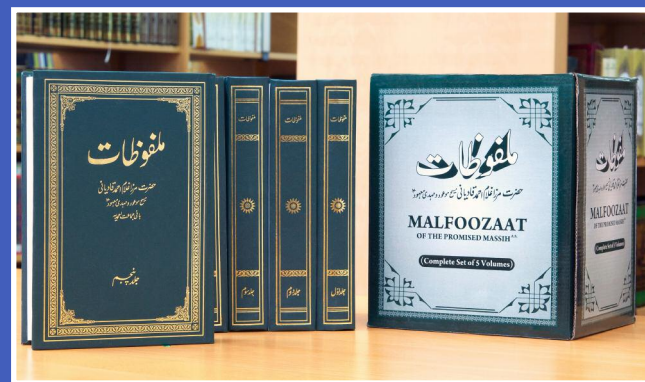


# Attitudes about Purdah

Ḥaḍhrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, on whom be peace, further says:

*People have adopted extreme attitudes in respect of the veil. Europe has gone to one extreme in abolishing it altogether, and some of those among us, who profess to follow nature, wish to do the same here, while it is patent that the unrestricted freedom current in Europe has flung open the gates of vice. On the other hand, some Muslims go to the other extreme and do not let their women step out of their home at all, whereas it often becomes necessary for them to travel or to go about on account of some other need. We consider that both these types are in error.*

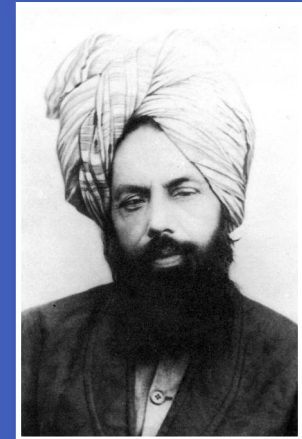
(Malfūzāt, Vol. VI, p. 322)



# Can Purdah be discarded?

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

*'Dear people, may God Himself reveal to your hearts..... If you discard purdah now, you will be sowing poisonous seeds in this land. Even if the custom of purdah was never practised before, it ought to be practised in these precarious times when the earth is filled with sin, corruption, debauchery and drinking. Atheistic thinking is spreading and people no longer respect Divine injunctions. Tongues are loquacious and lectures are loaded with logic and philosophy, but hearts remain devoid of true spirituality.'*  
(Ahmad, H. M. Lecture Lahore Islam in comparison with other religions. Islam International Publications Ltd pg.35)



# Can Purdah be relaxed?

Some people tend to argue that they live in a civilised society and that it is no big deal if they take liberties with these teachings so long as they don't do it with any bad intentions. The Promised Messiah, on whom be peace, argues otherwise. He said:

*'It should be kept in mind that as the natural condition of man, which is the source of his passions, is such that he cannot depart from it without a complete change in himself, his passions are bound to be roused, or in other words put in peril, when they are confronted with the occasion and opportunity for indulging in this vice. Therefore, God Almighty has not instructed us that we might freely gaze at women outside the prohibited degrees and might contemplate their beauty and observe all their movements in dancing etc., but that we should do so with pure looks. Nor have we been instructed to listen to the singing of these women and to lend ear to the tales of their beauty, but that we should do so with pure intent. We have been positively commanded not to look at their beauty, whether with pure intent or otherwise, nor to listen to their musical voices or to descriptions of their good looks, whether with pure intent or otherwise.'*

*(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam. Islam International Publications Ltd.)*

## Is Purdah for this day and age?

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah strengthen his hand) responded to a few people saying that purdah is an antiquated restriction that should be removed in this day and age and that the progress of Islam and Ahmadiyyat is not dependant on strict observance of Purdah. Hudhur (may Allah strengthen his hand) said that his answer to these people is:

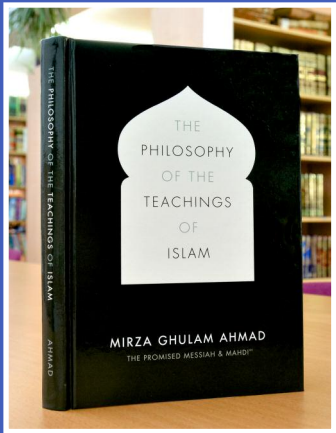


*‘..that Allah has given clear instructions in the Holy Qur’an regarding purdah. Also, it is evident from the practice of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that purdah was strictly observed at that time.’*

*‘Whether these people like it or not, Islam’s and Ahmadiyyat’s progress are linked to purdah. The teachings of the Holy Qur’an will never be outdated and if anyone thinks this way then they should beg for Allah’s forgiveness.’*

*(Friday Sermon January 30th, 2004)*

# Lowering the gaze



Expounding on the philosophy of purdah, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) further explains:

*'The Book of God does not aim at keeping women in seclusion like prisoners. The purpose of these regulations is to restrain men and women from letting their eyes rove freely and from displaying their good looks and beauty, for therein lies the good both of men and of women.'*

Regarding Lowering of the gaze (ghadd-e-basar), the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) writes:

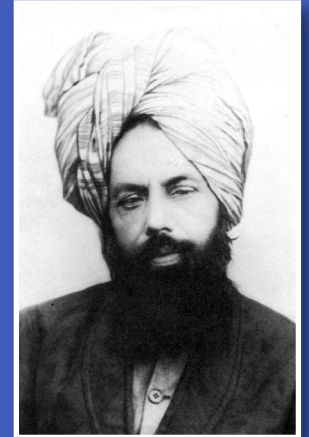
*It does not behove a pious person, who desires to keep his heart pure, that he should lift his eyes freely in every direction like an animal. It is necessary that such a one should cultivate the habit of ghadd-e-basar in his social life. This is a blessed habit through which his natural impulses would be converted into a high moral quality without interfering with his social needs.*

*(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam. Islam International Publications Ltd)*

# Free-Mixing

Ḥaḍhrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) says regarding free mixing of sexes:

*'The Holy Qur'an teaches us not to look at them unnecessarily, with or without lust, for this is likely to lead us astray. Should such a need arise, we should keep our eyes half shut and avoid staring at them. This is the only way to preserve the purity of our hearts. Those who oppose us might also oppose this teaching because of their newly discovered freedom, but experience has already shown that there cannot be a teaching more appropriate. Listen, dear friends! No good can come out of the free mixing of the sexes and the exchange of lascivious glances, while we know that men and women are not free from their carnal passions. Indeed, it amounts to deliberately throwing them into a pit.'*



*(Lecture Lahore Islam in comparison with other religions. Islam International publications Ltd. pg.26)*

# Friendship between men and women

Hudhur (may Allah strengthen his hand) referred to the Qur'anic verse:

*And the believers, men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoy good and forbid evil and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is these on whom Allah will have mercy. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. (Ch.9:V71)*



Hudhur (on whom be peace) explained that, this does not entail friendship without purdah and mutual modesty, rather this is a friendship that establishes relationships based on sanctity to make sacrifices for each other. These ties of affection grow when mutual grievances are shunned and each person decides to make an effort to do every small act of piety and to set a great example of the relationship of one Ahmadi with another..... Safeguarding others' honour and sanctity should be our way, men and women both should observe restraining of eyes and make it their characteristic. Ahmadi women should observe Purdah and be conscious of their clothing and be modest.

*(Friday Sermon, October 17th, 2008)*

# Parental guidance for children regarding Purdah

- It is very important that Purdah is implemented within the home from the beginning. Boys and girls should be taught modesty and piety. The observance of Purdah should be inculcated into the lives of children so that it becomes the norm. Then they would have no problem adhering to the teachings when they grow up.
- Learning about and accepting the observance of Purdah is not something parents should suddenly expect their children to automatically accept all of a sudden when they hit their teens, nor should it ever be enforced upon them.
- This is something parents should discuss in a loving way making sure that their children reflect on, analyse and understand the reasons and benefits of observing purdah.

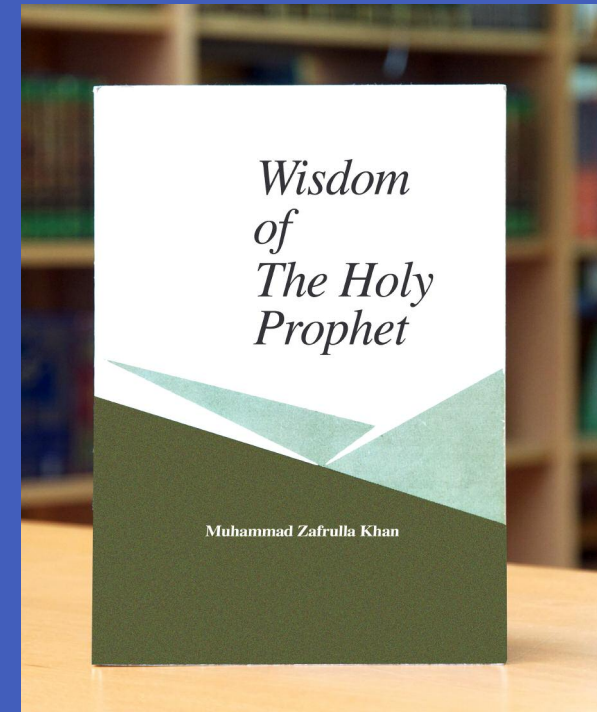


It is important that parents do not treat their girls and boys differently so that children feel that parents set double standards. It is not equitable to keep girls in the homes unnecessarily and allow boys to go out freely. Both boys and girls should be aware of how they behave in society.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘Refrain from sitting along the streets. Someone said: there is no other place for us to converse together. He observed: Then you must render its due. He was asked: what is the due of the street? He said; Guard your looks, let no one be put to inconvenience, return the salutation of peace, enjoin good and forbid evil.’

*(Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Wisdom of the Holy Prophet pg.46)*



# Observance of Purdah

## INWARD CRITERIA:

To try to be modest, chaste, conscious of God (Taqwa)

## OUTWARD CRITERIA:

### **Intent:**

*Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes..... Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.*

(Ch.24:V.31)

*And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes...*

(Ch.24:V.32)

### **Dress:**

*In accordance with instructions of Holy Qur'an (Ch.24: V.32)*

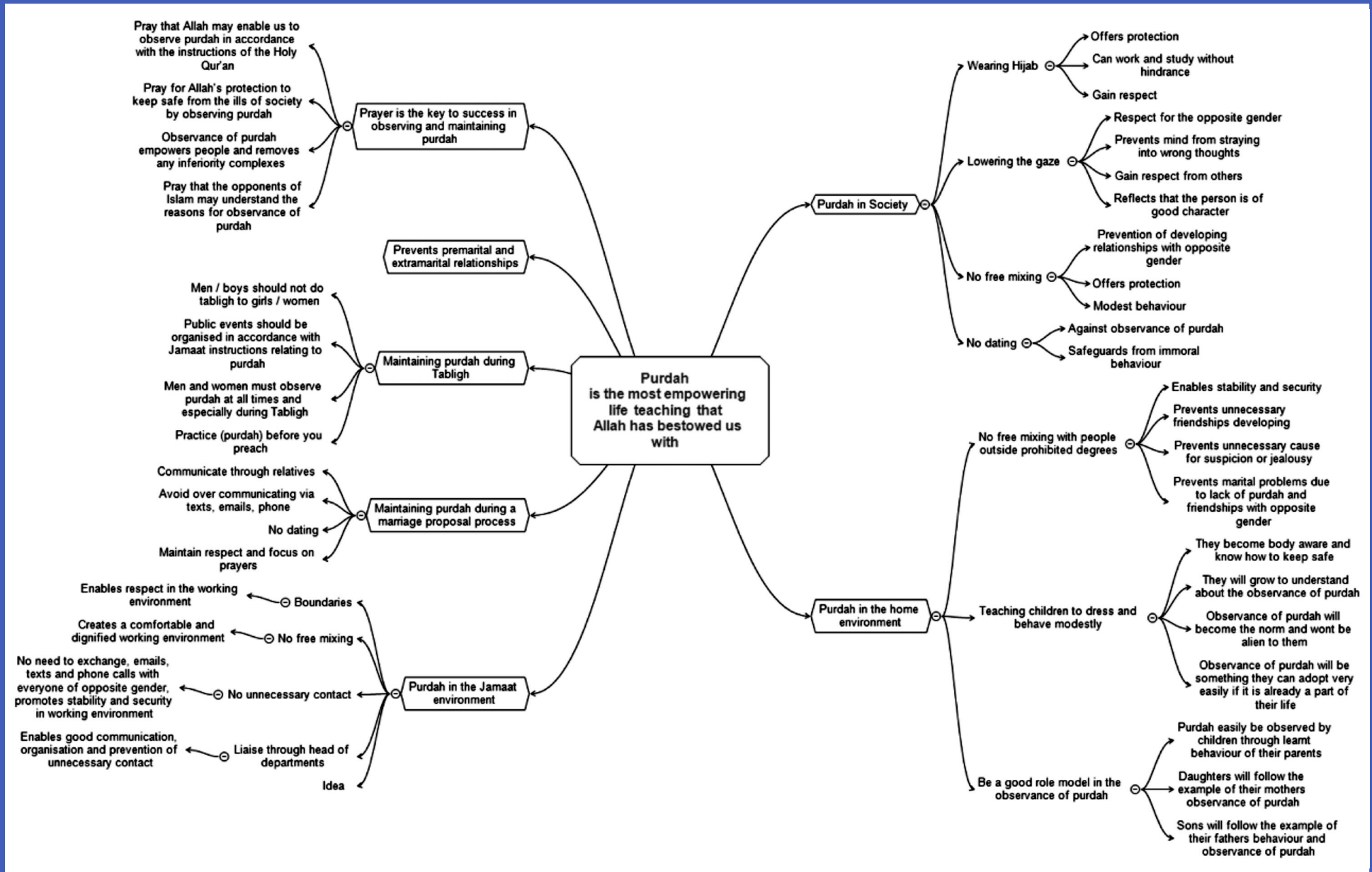
### **Speech:**

*Be not soft in speech, lest those in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire. (Ch.33: V.33)*

### **Conduct:**

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said man shall never be alone with a woman except that the third party between them is Satan.

*(Tirmidhi)*



# PURDAH

is the most  
empowering  
life teaching  
that Allah  
has bestowed us with