

MODESTY AT WORK

Thriving At Work without Compromise:
On Keeping Professional Boundaries



with Natasha Kamaluddin

The background of the image is a light pink color. It is decorated with numerous small, stylized illustrations of women. These women are wearing various types of hijabs (some are headscarves, some are full-face coverings) and long, flowing dresses in a variety of colors including blue, yellow, green, orange, pink, and white. Some women are wearing shoes, while others are barefoot. The illustrations are scattered across the entire page, creating a pattern around the central text.

**Work, when
done right and
paired with the
right Niyyah,
can be a source
of much good.
However, it can
also be a source
of Fitna (trial).**



PROPHETIC REMINDERS TO ANCHOR & INSPIRE:

Rasulullah ﷺ said,

**“Modesty
brings
nothing
but
good.”**

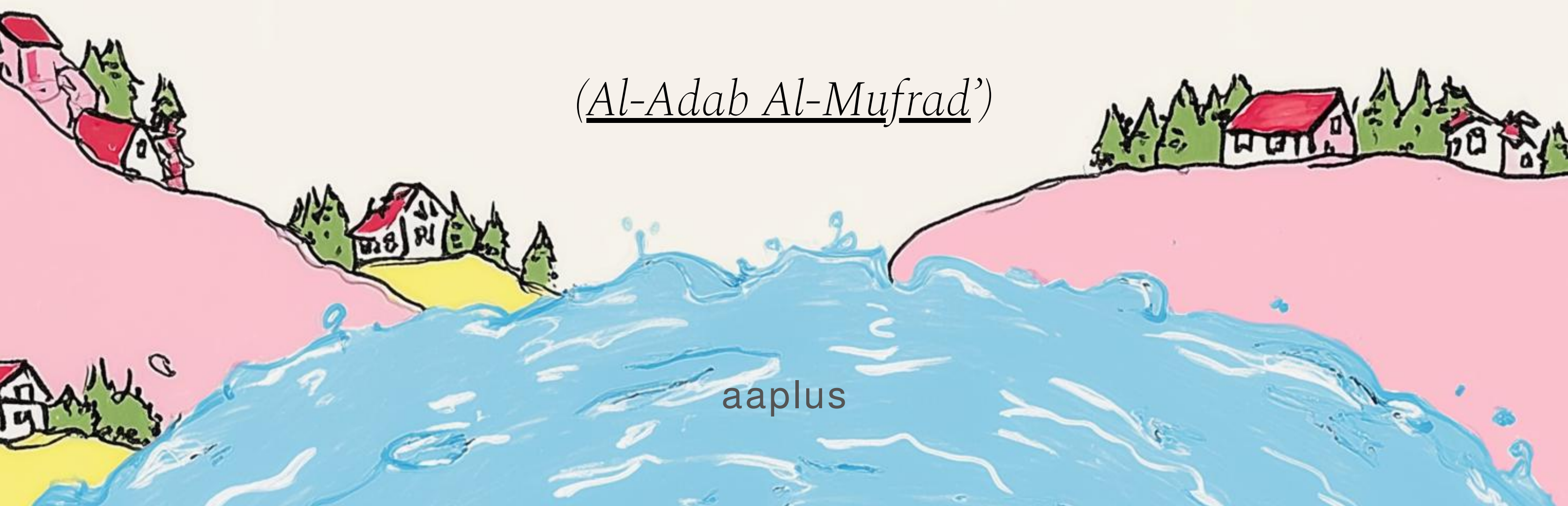
Bukhari & Muslim

Ibn 'Umar RA said

**“Modesty and
belief are
together.**

**If one of them
is removed,
the other is
removed.”**

(Al-Adab Al-Mufrad’)



Rasulullah ﷺ said,

**“Modesty is part
of faith, and
faith will be in
Paradise.**

**Obscenity in
speech is part of
harshness and
harshness will be
in Hell.”**

(Sunan Ibn Majah)

aaplus



What is Modesty?

Modesty is related to shyness, but **not to be confused with timidity**. Modesty reflects humility and restraint in behavior, while shyness may stem from hesitation, and timidity from fear. Take for example, our Mother Sayyidatina Aisha RA. Her powerful voice carried such authority that, during the Battle of the Camel (Ma'rakat al-Jamal), she directed troops from within her howdah—a curtained carriage mounted on a camel. **Her boldness was harmoniously paired with modesty.**

When teaching both men and women, Sayyidatina Aisha RA delivered her lessons from behind a partition, ensuring she remained unseen while sharing her vast knowledge. **Sayyidatina Aisha (RA) remains a timeless example of how modesty can coexist with courage and intellectual authority.**

Veil of Justice

We should not use modesty as an excuse to veil ourselves from speaking out against oppression and injustice. It is part of our Deen to speak against all forms of injustice. Like Rasulullah ﷺ taught us:

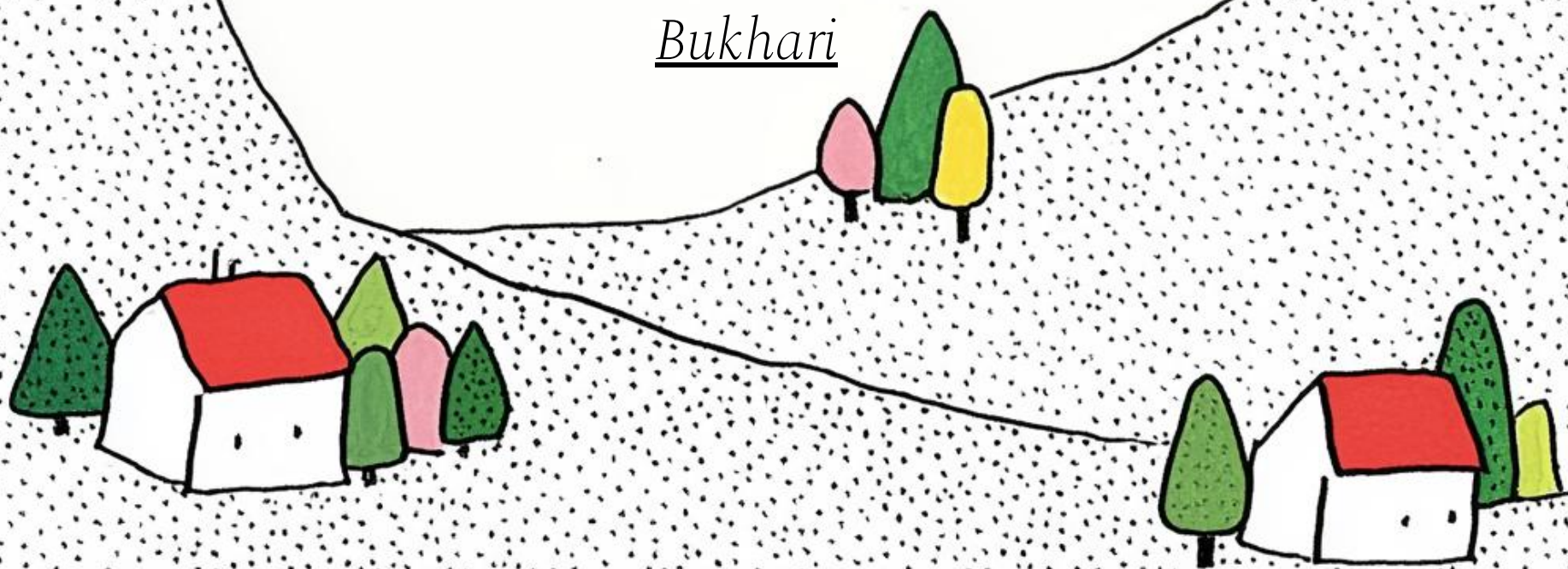
“He who amongst you sees something wrong should modify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) the he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith.” (*Muslim*).

Having modesty and decorum is necessary, but it is not enough to protect women from predators or wrongdoers. Because bullies are naturally attracted to the weak. Women need more than modesty to protect themselves. They need courage, confidence, and knowledge of their rights to stand up to oppressors.

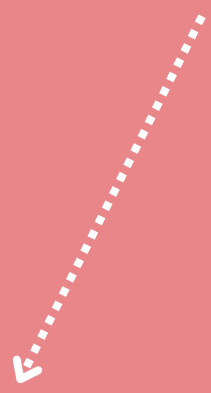
Rasulullah ﷺ said,

**“If you don't
feel ashamed
(from Haya':
pious shyness)
do whatever
you like.”**

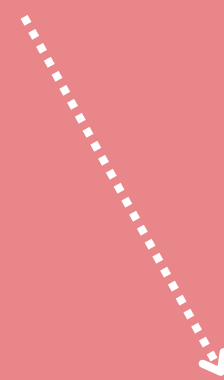
Bukhari



The 2 Important Anchors of Modesty



**Rooted in
Knowledge**



**Must be for the
sake of Allah**

Three Advices on Modesty at the Workplace

#1: Don't take anything about the Deen lightly. Protect your Istiqamah.

We have individual deeds that we consistently perform in our daily lives, such as our supergatory prayers, our Dhikrs, and so forth.

In the pursuit of meeting deadlines at work, we may sacrifice some of these optional deeds.

Nevertheless, this presents a precarious situation, serving as a pathway for Syaitan to gain the upper hand over us.

We should not compromise on our small deeds for fear of going down this slippery slope.

#2: Be careful about the pressure to fit in.

In trying to advance in an organisation, we may tend to try fitting in with their culture. Many times, it requires us to be social, whether it is through attending social events, indulging in haram entertainment, etc.

The only way to sustainably fix this ‘problem’ is to **invest in our character / our brand, and what we stand for as individuals**. When we are recognised for our competence and strong integrity, our character will be appreciated, and our involvement in the organisation's social events will be disregarded.

We should **work hard on our personal value proposition as individuals** so that people overlook our non-involvement in their culture that goes against our beliefs.

#3: Wearing the Hijab transforms us into Ambassadors of Islam.

As visibly practicing Muslims, we must exercise heightened mindfulness in our conduct, reflecting the values of Islam through our actions. We are living, walking, breathing examples of our faith! In non-Muslim environments, remaining steadfast in our beliefs is both a personal duty and a form of da'wah. By embodying the teachings of Islam with confidence and integrity, we gently remind others of the values they may overlook, such as discipline, modesty, and devotion.

Our actions also provide a powerful opportunity to demonstrate the essence of Islam to non-Muslims. Through dedication to Ihsan (excellence) in our work, we might encourage employers to recognize the competence and commitment of Muslim professionals, paving the way for more job opportunities for our Ummah.

Workplace Dilemmas faced by Modest Muslims

(Based on true events!)

Scenario # 1:

You work in an environment where you are responsible for securing corporate clients. Your colleagues, with the same portfolio, spend a significant amount of time networking with their clients. You are expected to do the same. What would you do?

What you can do:

- Be creative! Identify clients that you would target where the senior roles or decision-makers within the organisation are held by women. Show your boss that you are cultivating a relationship with these clients.
- Gently push back.

Scenario # 2:

You have been placed in a department under the supervision of a successful Muslim female manager. However, you have discovered that she is quite Westernised in her attire, opinions, and interactions with men. She holds the view that wearing the Hijab is unprofessional and does not honour prayer times, disapproving of those who take breaks to pray. This begins to encroach upon your rights as she makes forceful recommendations for you to alter your dress and behavior to conform to her professional standards. How would you address this situation?

What you can do:

- Think of strategies to ‘win the whole war, not just individual battles’:
 1. Protect yourself. Be self-aware of your potential weaknesses and points that she could pick on. Sit down with her and ask for professional feedback.
 2. Observe her to understand how she thinks and what influences and impresses her. Challenge her stereotypes about a modest Muslim woman. For eg: One can be modest *and* also read Harvard Business Review. :P

Scenario # 3:

You are employed under a supervisor who fails to honour personal and family time. She anticipates that you will work until midnight on a regular basis and expects you to be available for last-minute tasks during the weekends. You realize that you are unable to fulfill what is essential for you, which is to dedicate time to your husband and children. What would you do?

What you can do:

- Two questions you can ask yourself:
 1. Is this a temporary or permanent state? If it's the latter, perform Istikharah and consider finding another job.
 2. Is it possible to reach a point where you are deemed reliable enough to produce high-quality work, allowing her to accept that she need not observe you working until the late hours of the night? Establish the credibility necessary to gain flexibility with her.

Scenario # 4:

You have been assigned to work under a team leader who exhibits sexist behavior and makes inappropriate comments, even in front of others. How would you navigate this situation?

What you can do:

1. Collect actual evidence like noting down what was said, when, and to whom before going to HR or respective authorities.
2. Never engage nor “laugh it off” as that might be perceived as acceptance. Instead ask, “I’m sorry can you repeat that, please?” to trigger him to re-think what was said.
3. Inform them that you are knowledgeable about the law and policies, and that you will not hesitate to apply this knowledge effectively.
4. Never let them think that you are timid and weak.

Final Thoughts & Advice

By Kak Nat

