

Chapter Six

Hijab (Veil)

Hijab (Veil) **as Viewed by the Three Religions**

Let us shed some light on what is considered in the West the greatest symbol of women's oppression. This is the headcover, veil or '*hijab*' as Arabs call it. Is it true that there is no such thing as the headcover in the Judeo-Christian tradition? Is Islamic *hijab*, basically meant for women's oppression?

The headcover is a sign of nobility in the Jewish traditions

Rabbi Dr. Menachem M. Brayer, Professor of Biblical Literature at Yeshiva University, states in his book, '*The Jewish woman in Rabbinic Literature*', "It was the custom of Jewish woman to go out in public with a head covering which, sometimes, even covered the whole face except one eye."

He quotes some famous ancient Rabbis' saying,

- "It is not like the daughters of Israel to walk out with heads uncovered."
- "Cursed be the man who lets the hair of his wife be seen...woman who exposes her hair for self-adornment brings poverty."

Rabbinic law forbids the recitation of blessings or prayers in the presence of bareheaded married woman since uncovering the woman's face is considered 'nudity'. Dr. Brayer also mentions: "During the Tannaitic period, the

Jewish woman's failure to cover her head was considered an affront to her modesty. When her head was uncovered she might be fined four hundred zuzim for this offense."

The scarf of the Jewish woman was not always considered a sign of modesty. Sometimes, the scarf symbolized a state of distinction and luxury rather than modesty. The scarf personified the dignity and superiority of noble women. It also represented a woman's inaccessibility as a sanctified possession of her husband. In addition, the scarf signified a woman's self-respect and social status. Women of lower classes would often wear the veil to give the impression of a higher standing. The fact that the scarf was the sign of nobility was the reason why prostitutes were not permitted to cover their hair in the old Jewish society. However, prostitutes often wore a special headscarf in order to look respectable.

Jewish women in Europe continued to wear scarves until the nineteenth century when their lives became more intermingled with the surrounding secular culture. The external pressures of European life in the nineteenth century forced many of them to go out bare-headed. Some Jewish women found it more convenient to replace their traditional scarf with a wig as another form of hair covering. Today, most pious Jewish women do not cover their hair except in the synagogue. Some of them, such as the Hasidic sects, still use the wig. They even shave their heads so that stranger men do not see their hair!

Women's headcovering in Christianity

It is well known that Catholic nuns have been covering their heads for hundreds of years, but that is not all. St. Paul in the New Testament made some very interesting statements about the veil:

“But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonors her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to have his head covered, because he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man; for neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this cause the woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels.” (I Corinthians 11: 3-10)

St. Paul’s rationale for veiling women is that the veil represents a sign of authority of the man, who is the image and glory of God, over the woman who was created from and for man. St. Tertullian in his famous treatise *‘On the Veiling of Virgins’* wrote, "Young women, you wear your veils out on streets, so you should wear them in the church, you wear them when you are among strangers, then wear them among your brothers..."

Among the Canon laws of the Catholic Church today, there is a law that requires women to cover their heads in church. Some Christian denominations, such as the Amish and the Mennonites for example, keep their women veiled at all times to the present day. The reason for the veil as offered by their Church leaders, is that, ‘The head covering is a symbol of woman’s subjection to the man and to God,’ which is the same logic introduced by St. Paul in the New Testament.

Was *Hijab* Made Obligatory on the Prophet's Wives Only?

Much has been said and many questions have been raised about the issue of Islamic veil or '*hijab*' as a direct command revealed in the Holy Qur'an. However, one thing that should be clear is that whatever rules revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) addressing him and his wives, such rules were meant for the whole Muslim community to follow except if mentioned otherwise. Sending commands by addressing the Prophet (pbuh) and his wives was the style of guidance found in many places of the Holy Qur'an:

The Holy Qur'an says:

[O You who believe! Enter not the Prophet's house until permission is given to you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation; but when you are invited, enter; and when you have your meal, disperse without seeking vain talk, such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet. He is ashamed to dismiss you but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when you ask (his wives) for anything you want; ask them from behind a screen (hijab); that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that you should annoy Allah's messenger, or that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity.]

(Al-Ahzab: 53)

Commenting on the previous verse, is it logical to say that Prophet Muhammad who was purified by God would receive messages from Allah for only him and his wives to follow or that they are for us all to purify ourselves by following the rules?

In the previous verse, we find some etiquette and commandments of the Islamic way of life regarding:

1. Invitations for meals and conduct of guests.
2. The order of Islamic veil or '*hijab*' for women.
3. Prohibition of marriage with the Prophet's wives after his death.

As regards the second topic of *hijab*:

Hijab was made mandatory for all women since women were not required to wear *hijab* before the revelation of this verse. The majority of Muslim scholars agreed that although the wives of the Prophet (pbuh) were particularly addressed in the previous verse, the commandment of '*hijab*' is meant for all women.

This interpretation conforms with the *hadith* narrated on behalf of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): 'If a woman reaches the age of puberty, no part of her body should be seen, but this, and he (pbuh) pointed to his face and hands.'

The Holy Qur'an says:

[O Prophet! When you do divorce women, divorce them at their prescribed periods...]

(At-Talaq: 1)

It is very clear that divorcing women in their prescribed periods and waiting for their waiting period is a command not meant only for the Prophet (pbuh) but for all Muslims to follow.

In the same verse we find another clear proof:

[That makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs.]

So if '*hijab*' will bring about this purity and cleanliness of the heart to the Prophet (pbuh), his wives and his Companions who truly adhered to the real meaning of Islam, what about Muslims nowadays? It is obvious that after the death of the Prophet (pbuh) and his wives, that order needs to be carried out by the Islamic community more than any other time.

Another commandment addressed to the Prophet's wives is an excellent example for us to apply Allah's commands in the Holy Qur'an on ourselves:

The Holy Qur'an says:

[O Consorts of the Prophet! You are not like any of the (other) women; if you do fear (Allah), be not too complaisant of speech ...]

(Al-Ahzab: 32-33)

The previous verses show some very important commandments that are addressed to the Prophet's wives but must be applied upon all Muslim women:

1. Women should neither talk unnecessarily to stranger males (*non-mahrems*) nor in a soft or sweet tone of voice, but rather they should speak in a straight forward and honorable manner so that no one will misinterpret them or have any bad thoughts about them.
2. Women should not display their beauty to strangers (*non-mahrems*) as done in the Time of Ignorance *Jahiliyah*.
3. Women should establish regular prayers, give regular charity and obey the commands of Allah and his Messenger (pbuh).

Last, but not least, another Qur'anic verse was revealed commanding 'hijab' for all the believing women:

[Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. 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 and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of nakedness; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.]

(An-Nur: 30-31)

In the previous verse all Muslim woman are directly ordered to preserve a decent, unrevealing manner of dress and ornamentation and not to display their beauty in the presence of *non-mahram*.

It is clear enough by now that commandments and directions addressed to the Prophet (pbuh) and his wives in the Holy Qur'an must be followed by all Muslims unless clearly mentioned otherwise.

Hijab in Islam

From all the previous evidence, it is obvious that Islam did not invent the head cover but rather endorsed it. This proves the fact that Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace and all blessings of Allah be upon them all, were all prophets of the same God and that each one carried the same basic message. Islam corrected the errors that had been introduced into previous revelations by humans and completed the process that was planned by Allah.

The Holy Qur'an urges the believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty. The Qur'an says,

[Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.]

(An-Nur: 30)

Then it urges the believing women to extend their *hijabs*, to cover the neck and the bosom.

The Qur'an 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 and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their

women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of nakedness; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O you Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.]

(An-Nur: 30-31)

Women are ordered to preserve a decent, unrevealing manner of dress and ornamentation and do not display their beauty in the presence of strangers (*non-mahram*).

It should be noted that the visible or apparent ornament that the verse refers to has been interpreted by the majority of Muslim scholars to include *kohl*, finger rings, the face and the hands. However, some favor the cover of the whole female body from the head to toe.

Difference between '*Satr*' and '*hijab*'

There is a difference between '*Satr*' and '*hijab*' in Islam. A lack of distinction between these two concepts often leads to confusion, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the commandments of the Holy Qur'an.

- The word '*satr*' refers to covering of one's private parts (*`awrah*), while the word '*hijab*' mainly refers to head covering.
- Observation of '*satr*' has always been obligatory, whereas Islamic '*hijab*' was made mandatory for women in the fifth year of Hijrah.
- '*Satr*' is obligatory for both men and women, while '*hijab*', which mainly refers to headcovering, is only required for women.

- 'Satr' is required whether one is alone or among company, while 'hijab' is obligatory only in the presence of strangers ('non-mahrams', i.e. marriageable men).

Islamic *hijab* is essential for Modesty

The Qur'an states that the *hijab* is essential for modesty,

[O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.]

(Al-Ahzab: 59)

Islamic *hijab* is neither a sign of man's authority over woman as the headcover of the Christian tradition, nor is it a sign of luxury and distinction of some noble married woman as the Jewish headcover. It is only a sign of modesty with the purpose of protecting women. The Islamic philosophy is that it is always better to be safe than sorry. In fact, the Holy Qur'an is so concerned with protecting women's bodies and women's reputation. A man who dares to falsely accuse a woman of indecency will be severely punished,

[And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses (to support their allegations),- flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after: for such men are wicked transgressors.]

(An-Nur: 4)

Western society falsely claims to have protected women

Some argue the fact that modesty is for protection and say that the best protection is the spread of education, civilized

behavior and self-restraint. To those we say: fine but that is not enough. If civilization is enough protection, then why do women in North America dare not walk alone in a dark street, or even across an empty parking lot? If education is the solution, then why would a university like Queen University have a 'walk home service' mainly for female students? If self-restraint is the answer, then why are the cases of sexual harassment in the workplace reported on the media every day?

Given the high rate of crime such as sexual abuse against women, Western women have really emotional and social problems. Despite the fact that the United States of America is one of the most advanced countries of the world, it also has one of the highest rates of rape of any country in the world. According to an FBI report, in the year 1990, every day an average of 1756 rapes cases were committed in the USA alone. Two years later (1992-1993), another report said that a daily average of 1900 cases of rapes were committed in USA.

Statistics issued by the Dean of Women's office at Queen's University stated that in Canada, one in every four women is at risk of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.

Implementation of Islamic *hijab* will reduce the rate of rape

Consider a scenario where the Islamic *hijab* is followed in America. Whenever a man looks at a woman and any brazen or unashamed thought comes to his mind, he lowers his gaze. Every woman wears the Islamic *hijab*, that is the entire body is covered except the face and the hands to the wrist. After this if any man commits rape he is given capital punishment. I ask you, in such a scenario, what would the rate of rape be?

It seems completely clear why women dressed in such a tempting way expect to be in trouble and how '*hijab*' is a great protection for them since it preserves women's modesty and guards their chastity. Hence, '*hijab*' is the right of the society and not a mere individual choice.

A radical change in the society's lifestyle is absolutely necessary. An environment of modesty is extremely essential; modesty in dress, in speech, and in manners of both men and women. Otherwise, the statistics will grow even worse day after day and, unfortunately, women alone will continue to pay the price.

Does the Islamic *hijab* mean oppression?

The West views the Muslim women's cover as a form of oppression and suppression. But Muslim women view it as form of liberation since it has liberated women from being treated as chattels and from the chains of man's sexual exploitation. Western talk of women's liberation is nothing but a disguised form of exploitation of her body, degradation of her soul, and deprivation of her honor. Western society claims to have 'uplifted' women. On the contrary, it has actually degraded them to the status of concubines, mistresses and social butterflies who are mere tools in the hands of pleasure seekers and sex marketers, hidden behind the colorful screen of 'art' and 'culture'.

Islamic *hijab*, has allowed woman to develop herself physically, mentally and spiritually, according to the definition that Allah has given to womanhood, not the definition that human beings have given to womanhood. A woman who wears '*hijab*' will be evaluated for her intelligence and skills rather than her looks and appearance.

When we look at the Islamic '*hijab*', we find that it is a gift, a mercy and a uniform from Allah for the Muslim woman. First of all it is a gift from Allah to protect her from sexual exploitation by man. It restricts man from approaching her in any wicked way and forces them to approach her only from a level of purity and righteousness. It is a mercy that allows her to develop herself as a human being without compromising her dignity, her honor and her integrity as a pious woman. Because, as Muslim women are considered soldiers of Allah, He has prescribed a uniform so that they can be recognized all over the world. In fact '*hijab*' for women is more important than they really realize, it is an indication of their own self-dignity and respect.

Modesty for Men

People usually discuss '*hijab*' in the context of women only. However, in the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, the All-Mighty, first mentions '*hijab*' for men before women's.

The Qur'an states,

[Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.]

(An-Nur: 30)

We may conclude from the previous verse the following points:

- 1) The previous Qur'anic verse commands modesty for men through their behavior. The moment a man looks at a woman and before any brazen or unashamed thought comes to his mind, he should lower his gaze. It should be noted that the Islamic command of lowering one's gaze is addressed to both men and women. Islam protects the society from unwanted temptation by instructing men and women to avoid staring at each other.

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Do not give a second look (to women), for while you are not to blame for the first, you have no right to the second.”

- 2) Men are obliged to shield their modesty (private parts). This implies restraining oneself from all forbidden means

to satisfy one's sexual desires. Such forbidden means include adultery, rape, masturbation, homosexuality, lesbianism, etc.

- 3) Furthermore, men are forbidden to act or speak in ways that may tempt or seduce women, just as women are commanded to behave and speak in manners that do not imply any temptation towards men.
- 4) Modesty is also obligatory in men's dress. They are obliged to cover their private parts or '*awrah*' which refers to the area between the navel and the knees. Men are also forbidden to wear clothes of ostentation or clothes that may imply seduction to women.

Requirements of Muslim Woman's Dress

According to the Holy Qur'an and the noble *Sunnah*, there are basic criteria and requirements in the Muslim woman's dress. These basic requirements are also a condition not only in the presence of strangers (*marriageable men*), but also for the validity of prayers.

1. Extent of covering

The Noble Qur'an states,

[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 and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of nakedness; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.]

(An-Nur: 30-31)

According to the previous Qur'anic verses:

- a) The extent of covering obligatory for women is to cover the whole body except for the face and the hands up to the wrist.

This is the interpretation of the majority of Muslim jurists which is confirmed by consensus that a Muslim woman is not allowed to cover her face and hands during pilgrimage. This opinion is also based on the authority of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who was reported to have said at one occasion when Asma', daughter of Abu-Bakr, was visiting her sister `A'ishah, the Prophet's wife, *"If a woman reaches the age of puberty, no part of her body should be seen, but this; (and he pointed to his face and hands)."*

However, some scholars favor the covering of the whole female body from the head to toe.

It is noteworthy that whatever appears of the woman's body owing to uncontrollable factors such as the blowing of the wind is automatically forgiven without any need for specification.

b) A Muslim woman should not display her beauty and adornment except for that which is apparent.

The apparent ornament that the verse refers to has been interpreted by the majority of Muslim scholars to include:

- Natural beauty or her general shape.
- Acquired adornment such as *kohl*, finger rings, bracelets and clothes. However, we should take into consideration that hearing the sound of noisy ornaments worn by women could be sexually arousing for men.

This implies that women are forbidden to wear makeup and scented oils or perfumes in the streets.

The Prophet (pbuh) was reported to have said,

"Every eye is adulterous and when a woman perfumes herself and passes a company, she is such and such (meaning adulterous)."

- c) The head covers should be drawn over the neck and the bosom.

The '*Khumur*', which means the head covers, is the plural form of the Arabic word '*Khimar*'. While the '*Juyub*' is the plural of the Arabic word '*Jayb*' and it refers to the neck slit (of the dress) and it can also mean 'something cut split' such as the cleavage of the breasts. The Qur'an says,

[They should draw their Khumur, over their Juyub.]

(An-Nur: 31)

This means that the head covers should be drawn so as to cover not only the hair, but it should also be drawn over the neck and to be extended so as to cover the bosom.

2. Looseness

The dress must be loose enough so as not to describe the shape of a woman's body. This means that tight clothes which cover the whole body but expose some of its parts such as the bust line, the waist, and the buttocks are not considered correct Islamic dress.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) once said,

"Two kinds of people would be in the worst situation in Hell. First, those officials who would carry with them whips looking like the tails of cows, and they would use them for whipping people. Second, those women who would be naked despite wearing clothes (due to wearing tight and transparent clothes); they would attract strangers (men) towards them. Their heads will be hanging on a side like the humps of fast camels. They will neither enter paradise nor would even smell the

*fragrance of it despite the fact that its fragrance will reach far distances."*¹

3. Thickness

The clothing must be thick enough so as not to show the color of the skin it covers, or the figure of the body it is supposed to hide.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once received a thin garment as a gift. He (pbuh) gave it to Usamah ibn Zayd, who in turn gave it to his wife. When asked by the Prophet (pbuh) why he did not wear it, Usamah indicated that he gave it to his wife. The Prophet (pbuh) then told Usamah, *'Ask her to use a 'ghulalah' under it (the garment) for I fear that it may describe the size of her bones.'*²

The Arabic word *'ghulalah'* means a thick fabric under the dress to thicken it and prevent it from describing the shape of the body.

In another *hadith*, Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said,

*"In later generations of my Ummah, there will be women who will be dressed but naked. The top of their heads (due to their hairstyles) would look like fast camel humps. Curse them for they are truly cursed (i.e. they will be deprived of Allah's mercy)."*³

¹ Reported by Muslim.

² Reported by Ahmad, al-Bayhaqi and Abu Dawud.

³ Reported by at-Tabarani and Musli.

4. Overall appearance

It should be taken into consideration that the clothing in itself should not be an adornment or so glamorous so as not to attract men's attention. This means that wearing bright colors, glittering decorations and shiny materials, all of this should be avoided.

This is why the Qur'an, addressing the Prophet's wives as examples for Muslim women says,

[Adorn not yourselves with the adornment (display of beauty) of the Time of Ignorance...]

(Al-Ahzab: 33)

5. The dress should not resemble men's dress

The clothing worn by women should not be similar to what is known as a male costume.

Ibn `Abbas narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) cursed the men who act like women and the women who act like men.¹

However, this does not apply to women wearing wide trousers under long wide shirts or tops as the Pakistani clothing style.

6. The dress should not resemble unbelievers dress

This means that women should not wear clothes that specifically identified as or symbols of the unbelievers' religions.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Ahmad and ad-Darimi.

7. Muslim woman's dress among a group of only women

Among a group of women, a Muslim woman may wear whatever she pleases of clothes, ornaments, make-up and scented oils. The previously mentioned Islamic dress requirements do not bear a necessity in this case. However, as regards the requirement of the extent of covering, it should be taken into consideration that woman should cover her '*awrah*' even among a group of women. The only difference is the definition of her '*awrah*' in this case, which only includes the area between the navel and the knees and not her whole body as the case in the presence of strange men (*non-mahrams*).

Requirements of Muslim Man's Dress

The basic requirements of Muslim women's dress apply as well to the Muslim man's clothing with the difference being mainly in degree. This can be understood considering the Islamic definition of '*awrah*' which refers to the part/parts of the human body that should be covered all times unless there is an expressed exception. The covering of '*awrah*' is a requirement in the presence of others, whether males or females of marriageable or non-marriageable degrees (i.e. *mahrams* or *non-mahrams*). It is also an essential condition for the validity of prayers.

It has been agreed among jurists on the basis of the Holy Qur'an and the noble *Sunnah* that '*awrah*' for the woman is defined as the whole body except for the face and the hands. As for the men, the '*awrah*' is defined as the area between the navel and the knees. Within the definition of '*awrah*' for men and women, all basic dress requirements are essentially the same:

1. Extent of covering

Man should cover at least his '*awrah*' (private parts), which is defined as the area between the navel and the knees.

2. Looseness

The clothing must be loose enough so as not to describe what he is covering (his '*awrah*'). This means that tight clothes which cover the body but describe the shape of the '*awrah*' are not considered Islamic dress.

3. Thickness

The dress must be thick enough so as not to show the color of the skin it covers, or the figure of the body it is supposed to hide.

4. Overall appearance

It should be taken into consideration that the clothing in itself should not be designed in a way to attract women's attention. The clothing should not be clothes of fame. The basic rule of modesty and avoiding 'show off' or ostentation applies to all believers, men and women.

5. The clothing should not resemble women's dress

The clothing worn by men should not be similar to what is known as a female costume.

Ibn `Abbas narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) cursed the men who act like women and the women who act like men.¹

However, this does not apply to men wearing wide shirts or '*Jilbab*' as the Arabian dress style.

6. The dress should not resemble unbelievers' dress

This means that men should not wear clothes that are specifically identifies with or symbols of the unbelievers' religions.

Men are forbidden to wear silk or gold

Muslim men, unlike women, are forbidden to wear gold or clothes made of silk.

¹ Reported by al-Bukhari, Abu-Dawud, Ahmad and ad-Darimi.

The Virtues of the Islamic Hijab

There are many virtues of the Islamic covering:

1. An Act of Obedience

The '*hijab*' or the Islamic covering is an act of obedience to Allah and to his Prophet (pbuh).

Allah says in the Qur'an,

[It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His messenger have decreed a matter that they should have an option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, has indeed strayed in a plain error.]

(Al-Ahzab: 36)

Allah also said,

[And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc..) and not to show off their adornment except what must (ordinarily) appear thereof, that they should draw their veils over Juyubihinna.]

(An-Nur 31)

It has to be noted that a woman who refuses to wear the *hijab* is disobeying Allah and committing a serious sin, putting worldly pleasures above spiritual attainment, and neglecting her duty in the religion of Islam.

2. Hijab is modesty

Allah made the adherence to the 'hijab' a manifestation for chastity and modesty.

Allah Says:

[O Prophet ! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) over their bodies (when outdoors). That is most convenient that they should be known and not molested.]

(Al-Ahzab: 59)

In the above verse there is evidence that the display of the apparent beauty of the woman is harmful to her. When the cause of attraction ends, the restriction is removed. This is illustrated in the case of elderly women who may have lost most aspects of attraction. Allah made it permissible for them to lay aside their outer garments; however, it is still better for them to keep their modesty.

3. Hijab is protection

The veil reduces temptation so that more serious sins will be avoided. It protects women from the harm and molestation of evil men.

4. Hijab is a shield

The Prophet (pbuh) said,

*"Allah the Most-High, is Heaven, is Hayiyy (the Bashful), as Sitteer (the Shielder). He loves Hayaa` (Bashfulness) and Sitr (Shielding; Covering)."*¹

¹ Reported by Abu Dawud and an-Nasa'i.

The Prophet (pbuh) also said,

"Any woman who takes off her clothes in other than her husband's house (to show off for her unlawful purpose), has broken Allah's shield upon her."¹

The *hadith* demonstrates that depending upon the kind of action committed there will be either reward (if good) or punishment (if bad).

5. Hijab is purity

Allah had shown us the wisdom behind the legislation of the *hijab*:

"And when you ask them (the Prophet's wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind screen that is purer for your hearts and thier hearts."

(Al-Ahzab: 53)

The '*hijab*' makes for greater purity of the hearts of believing men and women because it screens against the desire of the heart. Without the *hijab*, the heart may or may not desire. That is why the heart is more pure when the sight is blocked (by *hijab*) and thus the prevention of *fitnah* (temptation) is very much demonstrated.

The '*hijab*' cuts off the ill thoughts and the greed of the sick hearts:

[Be not soft in speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy or evil desire for adultery, etc) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honorable manner.]

(Al-Ahzab: 32)

¹ Reported by at-Tirmidhi.

6. *Hijab* is righteousness

Allah said in the Qur'an,

[O children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover yourselves and (screen your private parts, etc) and as an adornment. But the raiment of righteousness, that is better.]

(Al-A`raf 26)

The widespread forms of dress in the world today are mostly for show and hardly taken as a cover and shield of the woman's body. To the Muslims, however, the purpose of clothing is to safeguard their bodies and cover their private parts. It is considered as an act of righteousness.

7. *Hijab* is belief and faith

Allah did not address His words about *hijab* except to the believing women.

`A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (pbuh), addressed some women from the tribe of Banu Tamim who came to visit her and had light clothes on them, they were improperly dressed, she said: 'If indeed you are believing women, then truly this is not the dress of the believing women and if you are not believing women then enjoy it.'

8. *Hijab* is *Haya'*

There are two authentic *hadiths* which state,

*"Each religion has a morality and the morality of Islam is haya' (modesty)."*¹

The other *hadith* states,

¹ Reported by Ibn Majah.

*"Haya' is from belief, and belief is in paradise."*¹

9. Hijab is dignity

A woman who wears '*hijab*' will be evaluated for her intelligence and skills rather than her looks and appearance.

10. Hijab is *da`wah* (calling for the spread of the message of Islam)

One important aspect that is often overlooked, however, is that the *hijab* is a symbol of Muslim identity. A woman who covers her head is making a statement that she is a member of the Muslim community and that she follows a particular code of moral conduct.

How can a woman perform *da`wah* for Islam when she is not even practicing it herself? Once a woman begins to wear *hijab* she completes a large portion of her responsibility for *da`wah* with very little effort. Each time that she goes to the grocery store, the library, to work, to school, or to any other public place, she is spreading the magnificent message of Islam. This is not only because of the outer *hijab* that she wears, but more importantly, the modesty of her behavior that accompanies it.

11. Hijab is safeguarding

The '*hijab*' fits the natural feeling of jealousy, which is intrinsic in a good man who does not like people to look at his wife or daughters. Jealousy is a driving emotion that drives man to safeguard women who are related to him from strangers. The Muslim man has jealousy for all Muslim

¹ Reported by Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi.

women to protect them from lust and desire. Weak men may stare with lust at other women while they do not mind that other men do the same to their wives or daughters. The mixing of sexes and absence of '*hijab*' destroys the jealousy in men. Islam considers jealousy an integral part of faith. The dignity of the wife or daughter or any other Muslim woman must be highly respected and defended.

12. *Hijab* protects the woman's marriage

Wearing the veil limits a woman's beauty to her immediate relatives and so reduces the competition between women. In addition, a pious woman who wears the veil as an act of obedience to Allah's commands protects her marriage. She indirectly saves her husband from being seduced by other women as a divine reward for her not displaying her beauty to the public. As she limits her beauty in her youth while it is at its peak, Allah certainly rewards her when she grows old.

Hijab and Science

There are a number of health and moral benefits that wearing the headcovering can provide. The moral duty of wearing '*hijab*' in Islam is a frequently discussed topic among Muslim women. However, little has been written about scientific reasons that the headcovering and modest dress is beneficial for society. There are, in fact, a number of health benefits that wearing *hijab* can provide, as well as there are many behavioral studies that suggest that the Veil is the best attire for women.

Health purpose of the headcovering

Protecting the head is very important from a health perspective. Results of medical tests show that 40-60% of body heat is lost through the head, so persons wearing headcoverings during cold months are protected about fifty percent more than those who do not.

Chinese and Muslim medical texts take this concept even further. In *the Hua Di Nei Jing* (The Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal Medicine), wind is said to cause sudden changes within the body, and shaking, swaying, and other movements that potentially upset the body's equilibrium; thus, creating bad health. These texts attribute the common cold to wind elements entering the body and causing the typical symptoms of sneezing and a runny nose.

In the traditional Islamic medical texts of al-Jawziyyah, we can find numerous references to the "four elements" of fire,

water, air, and earth, and how these affect the body in adverse ways. In particular, we are advised to stay away from drafts and to protect our heads from wind, breezes, drafts, and cold weather. All outdoor workers should wear some sort of head covering.

For this reason, protecting the head is even more important in warm weather. V.G. Rocine, a prominent brain research specialist, has found that brain phosphorus melts at 108 degrees; a temperature that can be easily reached if one stays under the hot sun for any length of time without a head covering. When this happens, irreversible brain damage, memory loss and loss of some brain functions can result. Although this example is extreme, brain damage can still be measured in small degrees from frequent exposure to and overheating of the head. Bernard Jensen, a naturopath and chiropractor, states that this is because the brain runs on the mineral phosphorus, which is affected greatly by heat.

Hygienic purposes

All people out in public should wear a veil or head covering, especially food and health care workers to ensure cleanliness and purity. Workers in a number of professions wear "veils" - nurses, fast food workers, and deli-counter workers, restaurant workers and servers, doctors, health care providers, and many more. In fact, when we compare the number of workers who cover their heads to the number who do not, we find that more people probably cover their heads.

Social influence

Aside from personal and public health benefits of the headcovering, it has numerous benefits to society. In

analyzing visual data, a study by Ball and Smith discusses the acknowledgement of sociologists that visual representations are influential in shaping people's views of the world and their interpretations of life. Men use visual data to interpret their relationships with the women around them.

Studies cited in Encyclopedia Britannica show how a female presents herself to society falls under the category of ritualized behavior through which animals provide specific information to other animals, usually members of its own species. Virtually all higher animals, including humans, use displays to some extent to do this, and the best known displays are visual ones. Some biologists actually restrict the term display to refer to visual signals or gestures. These visual signals, which in animals can be simply a bright color or plume, encourage attraction. In humans, they are usually exhibited in ornamental hair, make-up, or clothing.

In our society, most of the time attractive hairstyles and clothing are worn for the purpose of making the adorer more attractive. The ever changing variations in fashion tend to affect the brain because it typically has trouble constantly adjusting to changing shadows and forms in the world. Reasonably then, the brain automatically simplifies these images into the unconscious message that attractive hair and clothing is meant to attract. Joining these two concepts together, we can see how the human male could receive the signal of "attraction" from the brain before he has enough time to "block" it by "lowering his gaze." Having to re-form an image already processed by the lateral inhibition network is a cause of stress for most people. Doing this day after day, after seeing many "displays," potentially causes a great cumulative stress on society.

Present day pressure arises from many things; among these are the vast amounts of visual and physical input we are bombarded with in this "Information Age" of personal freedom. The problem we face in this is that the body still continues to respond in the same fashion as during primitive times, releasing large amounts of these hormones, which can be very harmful. They can cause an increase in blood pressure, damage muscle tissue, lead to infertility, inhibit growth, damage the hippocampus, and suppress the immune system.

***Hijab* is the solution for sexual stresses**

The two most effective solutions to this problem are:

(1) to convince the advertising industry, and society as a whole, to alter the presentation of women to our males.

(2) The second and more viable one is to simply influence women to dress modestly, which will help ensure that they do not send inappropriate visual signals to men.

Female psychological balance

Last, but not least, covering the hair can also have a beneficial effect on the female psyche as well. Studies of women being interviewed for jobs show that there is a high correlation between what they wear and their perceptions of how successful they will be in their interviews. There are many more examples of how what we wear can influence how we act.

Wearing a veil can serve to remind women of their religious duties and behavioral expectations. It can also serve as a reminder to women that we are not only individuals, but also representatives and diplomats of our "*Ummah* (Muslim nation)."

Tight Clothes Cause Sterility and Uterine Inflammation

Modern medical studies proved that wearing tight clothes in the adolescence has a role in causing inflammations of the inner layer of the womb, a serious disease that can decrease fertility and even cause sterility in women.

Professor John Dickinson, an expert in blood pressure diseases in Wolfson Institute for the Preventive Medicine in UK says that the pressure due to wearing tight clothes can cause massive accumulation of the cells of the inner layers of the womb in another area of the body causing inflammation.

He adds that despite the fact that this disease has been known over 70 years ago, its causes were still unknown to scientists. He points that the key to identifying the real causes is to be able to find out how the tissue finds its way from the uterus to other parts of the body like the ovaries where it accumulates causing severe "premenstrual pain and sometimes can cause sterility.

He states that the changes in pressure resulting from tight clothes creates in the cells a force that enables them to be expelled from the uterus and accumulate in another area. He warns that wearing tight clothes makes high pressure around the uterus and fallopian tubes near the ovaries. Even after removing these tight clothes, the pressure remains for some time in the thick walls of the womb despite its decrease around the fallopian tubes. This forces the cells to go outside

the uterus until they reach the ovaries. The effect of this retroactive pressure for many years after reaching the age of menses leads to the accumulation of the cells and inflammations.

He says that wearing tight clothes and bras was prevalent in the last century among women in the elite classes of society, which leads to their infection of severe abdominal pains. This shows that the type of clothes women wear during the monthly menstrual period plays an important role in increasing the probability of being affected by the disease.

Experts said that if that "tight clothes theory" is true, so the inflammation of the inner wall of the womb must be – according to the theory – relatively rare in the countries where women wear loose clothes.

Dickinson answered with an article published by *the British Magazine for Gynecology and Obstetrics* saying, "Medical studies made over that subject validates that theory, for all women in India, for example, wear the Indian Sari, that is why through the preceding 30 years, only four cases of uterine endometriosis had been discovered. This number was given based on reviewing 12,000 articles published in the Indian Medical Magazines." He assured that this situation is the opposite in the West where the womb endometriosis is prevalent among women where they mainly wear tight clothes.

Angela Bernard, Head of the American National Society for endometriosis, says that wearing tight clothes for many years is the reason behind the increasingly high rate of this disease. She stressed that the ladies and young women should avoid wearing them.

Investigating and studying the scientific findings for the benefits of wearing the veil strengthens our faith in the religious legislation whose wisdom serves both religion and science together.