

THE STATUS OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN AND THE VEIL IN ISLAAM

In the chaotic and confused times we are living in, many women are turning to Islaam due to what they see of it's beauty, simplicity and nobility. They wish to serve their Lord and Creator and to worship Him alone, without partners or intercessors and devoid of superstitious practices. So as Muslim women seek to practice their faith, they begin to recognise the importance of modesty and realise the evils of nakedness. Many men take advantage of women and see them as nothing more than sex objects to be exploited. This is not the Islamic vision of women. However, it is a point of concern for Muslims that if a Christian woman such as a nun is seen in modest clothing that covers her head and body, then she is viewed as righteous, noble and modest - yet if a Muslim woman is seen in the same type of clothing, she is labelled as extreme or otherwise oppressed by men - even if she wears the veil out of her own free choice!

The status of the Muslim woman in Islaam is a very noble and lofty one, and her effect is very great in the life of every Muslim. Indeed, the Muslim woman is the initial teacher in the building of a righteous society, providing she follows the guidance from the Qur'aan and the Prophetic tradition, since adherence to the Qur'aan and the Prophetic tradition distances every Muslim, male or female, from being misguided in any matter. So in the course of practicing her faith, the Muslim woman knows that she must cover herself as an act of obedience to her Creator. But to what extent and what are the conditions of the correct Islaamic veil?

Much has been written and said in the West about this very important topic, unfortunately most of it misses the mark! The Muslim woman is required to veil herself in accordance to the regulations of the Qur'aan and the pure Prophetic *Sunnah*. In recent times, these requirements have become blurred due to widespread ignorance amongst Muslim communities. Verdicts are often issued by those who are referred to as 'Muslim Scholars'. However these verdicts are often based upon cultural or political biases, not upon the Qur'aan and Prophetic *Sunnah*. One must also consider the dress code of the believing women in the time of Prophethood as a source of guidance for the Muslim woman in modern times, as the Islamic religion is not confined to a particular era or location, rather the beauty of Islaam is for all times, all places and welcomes all people to it. So this small leaflet is designed to enlighten the reader with the conditions of the hijab based upon textual proofs with the understanding of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

The First Condition: "TO COVER THE WHOLE OF THE BODY EXCEPT THAT WHICH IS ALLOWED TO BE UNCOVERED". And this is mentioned in the statement of Allaah, the Most High, "**And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their private parts from lewd acts and not to show off their beauty except that which is apparent, and to draw their scarves (i.e. the *khimaar*) over themselves and not to reveal their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their hus-**

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band's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (muslim) womenfolk, or the female servants whom they possess, or old male servants who do not possess desire, or small children who have no sense of sexuality. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornments. And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you, O believers, that you may be successful." (*An-Noor* 24:31) There is also His statement, "**O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the believing women to draw their cloaks (i.e. *Jilbaabs*) all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known as free respectable women so as not to be annoyed. And Allaah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**" (*Al-Ahzaab* 33:59). So in the first verse there is a clear obligation upon the woman to conceal all of her beautification and a forbiddance of revealing anything from her beauty in front of strangers, except for that which appears from her unintentionally or unavoidably and her outer garment is worn over her normal clothing. And as for the meaning of the word *jilbaab*, then it is defined as a large sheet or cloth that covers the woman's garments as well as her head scarf (i.e. the *khimaar*) as has been mentioned by the scholars of the Religion and Arabic language such as Ibn Hajr, Al-Baghawee, Ibn Hazm, Al-Qurtubi and others. This is further supported by the statement of the female Companion, Umm 'Attiyah, "The Prophet (peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him), commanded us to go to out on *al-Fitr* and *al-Adha* (to the morning 'Eid prayer)... So I said, 'O Allaah's Messenger! If one of us does not have a *Jilbaab*?' He replied, '**Let her wear the *Jilbaab* of her sister.**'" (Bukhaaree and Muslim). So this narration clearly shows that even if a woman does not have a *Jilbaab* to wear before leaving her house, she should borrow one from a Muslim sister. So there is no doubt wearing a *Jilbaab* for a woman is an obligation established in the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*. So the woman should be completely covered. However, she is allowed to uncover her face and hands upto her wrist if she wishes as has been stated by a great many scholars of early times based upon various narrations of Allaah's Messenger, though it is better to cover the face and hands. The great Scholar Al-Albaanee stated that the *jilbaab* can be a one piece garment or two pieces, so long as it covers the *khimaar* (head-scarf) and meets all the conditions of the *jilbaab*, as stated here.

The Second Condition: "THE JILBAAB SHOULD NOT BE BEAUTIFYING". This is based upon the statement of Allaah, "**and not to show off their adornments...**" (*An-Noor* 24:31). This beauty and adornment is that which would cause men to look towards the believing women with desire. And this is further supported by the statement of Allaah, the Most High, "**...and do not display your adornments like in the times of ignorance.**" (*Al-Ahzaab* 33:33). The Prophet said, "**...the woman who's husband is absent from her, and he has left her with sufficient worldly provisions and she displays her beauty in his absence, then about them do not ask (due to their sin).**" (Reported by Al-Haakim). Imaam Adh-Dhahabee stated

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in his book of major sins that from the actions that cause a woman to be cursed is if she was to reveal her beauty such as displaying gold, pearls or to perfume herself when leaving her home. It is, however, permissible for a woman to utilise other than black or white as the colour of her *jilbaab*, so long as that is the norm amongst the people as stated by the Scholars.

The Third Condition: "THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD BE THICK AND NOT TRANSPARENT". The Prophet (*may the peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him*) said, "**There will be in the latter part of my nation women who will be dressed yet undressed. Their heads will resemble the humps of camels. Curse them, for indeed they are accursed. They will not be admitted to Paradise nor smell its fragrance.**" (Combined report by at-Tabaraanee and Muslim). The great scholar Ibn Abdul-Barr stated that this refers to the garment that is thin and shows the body and does not conceal it, so she is dressed in name, but naked in reality. In a narration reported by Al-Bukhaaree, Ibn Sa'd and Al-Bayhaqee it is stated authentically that Umm 'Alqamah said, "**I saw Hafsa, the daughter of Abdur-Rahmaan bin Abu Bakr, enter upon 'Aaisha (the wife of the Prophet) and Hafsa was wearing a thin, transparent *khimaar*, so 'Aaisha pulled it off her, and said, 'Do you not know what Allaah**

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revealed in Sooratun-Noor?! She then asked for a *khimaar* and dressed her with it." The meaning of transparent as far as the *jilbaab* is concerned is that the colour of the skin underneath or the garments underneath can be seen through it.

The Fourth Condition: "THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD BE WIDE AND NOT TIGHT SO AS TO REVEAL THE SHAPE OF THE BODY". And the reason for this is that the purpose of the outdoor garment of the woman is to prevent temptation and arousal of desires, and this will not be achieved except by a wide spacious garment. So even if the beauty underneath cannot be seen because the garment has fulfilled the previous condition, it must also fulfill this important condition whereby the shape and size of the bodily parts of the woman are not described, such as her breasts and waist, due to the tightness of the *jilbaab*. For indeed if the *jilbaab* is tight, then it's objective is lost! The noble Companion Usaamah bin Zaid said, "**Allaah's Messenger gave me a dense Coptic cloth to wear which he was given as a gift from Dihyah Al-Kalbee. So I dressed my wife with it. So the Messenger said, 'Why have you not worn that Coptic garment?' I replied, 'I clothed my wife with it.' So he said, 'Command her to wear a garment underneath it, for I fear it will reveal the size of her bones (i.e. her bodily parts).'**" (Reported by Ahmad and Al-Bayhaqee).

The Fifth Condition: "THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD NOT BE SCENTED AND PERFUMED". There are many narrations from Allaah's Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) that forbid women from leaving their homes whilst perfumed. The Prophet (*may the peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him*) said, "**Any woman who perfumes**

herself and passes amongst the people so that they may smell her scent, has (resembled) a fornicator.” (Reported by An-Nasaa’ee, Abu Dawood, and At-Tirmidhee). Zainab Ath-Thaqafiyah stated that the Prophet (*may the peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him*) say, “If any of you women leave out to go to the mosque, do not approach scented perfume.” (Reported by Muslim). A woman passed by Abu Hurairah smelling of perfume, so he said to her, “O female slave of the Exalted! Are you going to the Mosque?” She replied, “Yes.” He said, “And you perfumed yourself for it?” She replied, “Yes.” So he said, “Then return back and take a bath, for indeed I heard Allaah’s Messenger (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) say, ‘Allaah will not accept the prayer of a woman who leaves for the Mosque smelling of perfume up until she returns to her home and takes a bath (to remove it’s smell).” (Reported by Al-Bayhaqee). So these textual proofs should be sufficient warning with regard to this serious affair.

The Sixth Condition: “THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD NOT RESEMBLE THE CLOTHING OF MEN”. This condition is based upon extensive authentic narrations forbidding women from resembling men and from men resembling women. Abu Hurayrah stated, “Allaah’s Messenger cursed the man that wears the clothing of the woman and the woman that wears the clothing of the man.” (Reported Abu Dawood, Ibn Maajah and Al-Haakim). And ‘Abdullaah bin ‘Amr said that he heard Allaah’s Messenger (*may the peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him*) say, “Not from us are the women who take to resembling men and nor the men that take to resembling women.” (Reported by Ahmad). Ibn Abbaas stated, “The Prophet (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) cursed the men who take to the effeminate behaviour of women and cursed the women who take to the manly behaviour of men.” (Reported by Al-Bukhaaree and Abu Dawood). And this refers to taking on the behaviour that is specific to the opposite sex, such as utilising the types of beautification, jewellery and clothing etc.

The Seventh Condition: “THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD NOT RESEMBLE THE CLOTHING OF THE UNBELIEVERS”. The texts of the Qur’aan and Sunnah establish for the Muslims that they have their own identity that must be preserved. The Islamic legislation therefore forbids the believers from resembling the unbelievers in that which is specific for them in their worship, their celebrations and clothing. This is an important principle in Islaam that has been abandoned in these times, so much so that much of the Islamic heritage is being lost as the generations go by, and this is due to the large number of Muslims blindly following non-Islamic cultural practices. In this regard there are many authentic narrations from the Prophet (*may the peace and blessing of Allaah be upon him*), such as, “Differ from the people of the Scripture...”, “Differ from the Jews...”, “Differ from the unbelievers...”, “Whoever imitates a people is from them.” (Reported by At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Hibbaan, Abu Dawood and others). So he would command the people to differ from the non-Muslims in many issues such as growing the beard, trimming the moustache, praying in shoes, etc. Additionally, Allaah’s Messenger said,

“You will follow the ways of those who came before you, handspan by handspan and cubit-length by cubit-length so much so that if they enter into a lizard’s burrow, you would surely enter it!” So it was said, “Do you mean the Jews and Christians?” He said, “Who else?!” (Reported by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim).

The Eighth Condition: “THAT THE JILBAAB SHOULD NOT BE OSTENTATIOUS & SEEKING FAME OR REPUTE”. The Prophet (*sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Whoever wears clothing seeking to stand out and seeking fame in this world, Allaah will dress him with clothing of humiliation on the Day of Resurrection, then it will be set ablaze.” (Reported by Abu Dawood and Ibn Maajah). Shaikh Al-Albaanee mentioned that this refers to any clothing which is worn intending to stand out amongst the people, whether it be clothing which is costly which one may wear to show off and boast regarding this world and its adornment, or clothing which is lowly or simple and worn to manifest abstinence and for displaying a righteous act with the purpose of impressing others. Ibnul-Atheer stated that it means making something manifest, and the intent here is that the clothing is such that it makes one stand out amongst the people due to its colour being different from the colour of their clothing, so the people look towards such a person, so he displays self importance such that it causes amazement and pride (See *Naylul-Awtaar* 2/94). When asked regarding the various colours of *Jilbaab* that the wives of the Prophet wore, Shaikh Ubaid Al-Jaabiree stated that the intent behind that which is mentioned in those narrations is not colours that turn one’s attention - so one should not envision that the Mothers of the Believers and their sisters from amongst the Companions or their Successors used to wear *Jilbaabs* or *Khimaars* so as to turn the attention of unrelated men towards them. End.

Sources: “*Jilbaab al-Mar’atil-Muslimah fil-Kitaab was-Sunnah*” by Shaikh Al-Albaanee; *Madeenah Dawrah* (1428H) of Shaikh ‘Ubaid al-Jaabiree.

Collected and compiled by Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Waahid

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THE VEILING of the MUSLIM WOMAN & IT’S CONDITIONS

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