

Hijab – The Islamic Dress Code: Its historical development,
evidence from sacred sources and views of selected muslim
scholars

By

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Abstract

The issue of a Muslim woman's dress code has been debated for centuries. This is of great importance as it is widely used as a criterion to measure the extent of a woman's piety or devotion to Allah.

A study of the religious texts on the issue is essential. Therefore, Qur'anic text, Prophetic Traditions and Qur'anic exegesis of both classical and modern scholars would have been used in determining the correct dress code for Muslim women.

While all research indicates that women dress conservatively, in order not to attract the attention of the opposite sex. The extent to which a woman must be covered has not been agreed upon. Even if what has to be covered is established by scholars, the manner in which this is to be done and the type of colours and fabric to be used needs further clarification.

The issue of the female dress code needs to be presented from a female perspective.

Key Terms

Hijab, Islamic Dress Code, Qur'an, Hadith (Prophetic Tradition)

Islam, Muslim Women, veil, headscarf covering, *Tafsir* (Qur'anic

Exegesis), Clothes

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Declaration

I declare that **“Hijab-The Islamic Dress Code : Its historical development, evidence from sacred sources and views of selected Muslim Scholars”** is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Mrs Rookhsana Aziz
(Student No 0668-4130)

Date

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System of Transliteration

The following table shows the system followed in transliterating Arabic words.

ء	.....	'a
	.....	a
	.....	b
	.....	t
	.....	th
	.....	j
	.....	h
	.....	kh
	.....	d
	.....	zh
	.....	r
	.....	z
	.....	s
	.....	sh
	.....	s
	.....	dh
	.....	t

.....	zh
.....	‘
.....	g
ف	f
.....	q
.....	k
.....	l
.....	m
.....	n
.....	h
consonant.....	w
long vowel	u
diphthong	au
consonant	y
long vowel	i
diphthong	ai

Abbreviations

C. E. Christian Era

A. H. Year after *Hijrah*

S. A. W. *Salallahu Alaihi Wasallam* (May peace and blessings be upon him)

S. W. T. *Subhanau Wa Ta'ala* (Glory be to Him, Most High)

Glossary

- Abaya* Black cloak worn by Muslim women
- ahadith* pl. *Hadith*. The sayings and actions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) as recorded and reported by scholars and his companions
- akinna* Covering of something
- awrah* The part of the body that should be covered and the private parts
- burqa* Head covering till the hips or lower (Urdu)
- chador* Large sheet worn by Iranian women (Persian)
- fiqh* Islamic jurisprudence
- hadith* Prophetic Traditions, i.e. sayings and actions of the Prophet (S.A.W.)
- hajaba* To conceal, hide, seclude
- Hanbali* Islamic school of thought according to the teachings of Imam Ahmad Hanbali. The followers are also called Hanbali
- Hibara Burd* Green silken shoulder wrap worn by women in public in Yemen
- hibara* Yeminite green cloak

- hijab* Women's veil and a mode of dress adopted by Muslim women
- izar* Waist cloth or pants. Urdu/Pashtun
- jaib* Pocket, cavity, bosom hollow
- jalabeebuna* pl. *Jilbab*. A cloth covering a woman, a garment, dress
- jawb* Cutting or split, gap, opening
- jilbab* Sheet of cloth a woman draws over her clothes, garments, dress
- juyubihinna* pl. *Jaib*. Women's chest/bust
- khimara* Cloth used to cover the head of a woman
- khimr* Wine or any substance that intoxicates
- khumur* pl. *Khimr*. Wine or intoxicant
- mahram* Unmarriageable, someone a woman is not allowed to marry; her father, brother, grandfather, uncle, etc
- mufassirun* Interpreter or translator of the *Qur'an*
- mulabba* A type of rough, coarse cloth favoured by the Prophet (S.A.W.)
- peplos* Ancient Greek dress worn by women. Greek
- shari'ah* Islamic law based on the Qur'an and Hadith; and with the consensus of the Muslim scholars
- sitr* Curtain or any drape that divides a room, screen

<i>Sunnah</i>	Sayings and actions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) as recorded
<i>taahir</i>	Clean; pure; unblemished
<i>tafsir</i>	Interpretation of the <i>Qur'an</i>
<i>Taliban</i>	Islamic group based in Afghanistan
<i>Ulema'</i>	Well versed scholars of Islam and various sciences
<i>yudneena</i>	To cast over your body

Chapter One

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Among Muslims the debate about *hijab* takes many forms. Some believe that the veil is a way of liberation in a world that oppresses women. Others feel that *hijab* allows women the freedom of movement while others argue that the veil only provides the illusion of protection and absolves men the responsibility of controlling their sexual behaviour. I have selected this topic for my dissertation as I believe there is a need for much research and investigation to be done on the aspect of *Hijab* even though, there are discussions and debates on this issue currently.

1.2 Motivation

I hope to contribute to the aspect of *Hijab* in our Muslim community through this research. As a female, I believe that men have expressed their views on what women should or should not wear without considering the women's perspective sufficiently. The views of women have been marginalized or labeled as liberalist or feminist. Any woman opposing the prescribed *hijab*

laws is seen to have incomplete faith and her opinions are considered either too radical or rejected as invalid.

The beloved and respected wife of the Prophet (S.A.W.), ‘Aishah (R.A.), was regarded as a very honourable lady who had a very high status amongst the people of Arabia. However, as soon as she expressed views contrary to society, with regard to how the murderers of Uthman (R.A.) should be dealt with, her opinions were opposed and she was regarded as a woman against whom war should be waged.

I have come across numerous books and articles written by men on the issue of *hijab* but found just a handful written by women. *Hijab* is an extremely personal issue for women and I believe that, as a result, women should have the ultimate say in what they should wear because only they are subjected to the inconveniences or even conveniences that arise as a result of wearing the *hijab*. Therefore, I have selected this topic in order to present a woman’s perspective on the aspect of *hijab*.

1.3 Literature Review

The books consulted have been written by both male and female scholars in order to obtain a more balanced view. I chose to look more closely into the views of female writers like Fatima Mernissi and Barbara Stowesser. Veronica Ions' book on *The World's Mythology* provides very useful information on the female perspective on many historical facts.

A more recent publication by Anthea Rugh called *Reveal and conceal: Dress in contemporary Egypt* gives a description of the lifestyle and dress of modern Egyptian women by describing specific experiences of females when faced with issues regarding *hijab*.

Another interesting writer, Virginia Hooker, shed some light on the *hijab* issue for contemporary women in her book *Islamic Perspectives on the new millennium*.

Published in 1999, Ruth Roded's *Women in Islam and the Middle East* sheds light on the issues women are faced with in the Middle East. Her work is very effective in highlighting the experiences of Muslim men and women living in the Middle East.

The work of Azizah al-Hibri published in 1982, called *Women and Islam*, is somewhat extreme in its feminism but is invaluable with regard to providing an insight into the thoughts of contemporary Middle Eastern women on the concept of *hijab*.

These are just a few of the works by women which were consulted. However, due to the vast number of books written by men on this topic, I referred to the books of both classical and modern (male) scholars. Many contrasting views are presented by these writers and due consideration is given to them.

1.4 Methodology

A qualitative method was used in the study on *Hijab-Islamic Dress Code*. Firstly, a literature review on *Hijab*, an Islamic Dress code was undertaken, providing a basis for the study on this aspect.

The basic sources of Islam, the *Qur'an* (Divine Script) and *Hadith* (Prophetic Tradition) were used as the starting point for the discussions on *Hijab*.

The Internet was used in order to search for information on the different dress codes prevalent in different eras and Muslim Societies. A brief historical background on the dress codes from the Hittite era to contemporary societies were presented.

Then verses pertaining to the aspect of *Hijab* in the *Qur'an* were quoted (based on Yusuf Ali's translation). In addition, the views and explications of some readily available translators and commentators of the *Qur'an* were included. The Authentic Hadith literature was surveyed and a general dress code of Muslims (Male and Female) was given, This was followed by a discussion on the views of some known contemporary scholars on *Hijab* like Doi, Memissi, Madani, Badawi, Afzalur Rahman, Al-Darsh and others. Finally, the research ends with a conclusion on the various aspects discussed in the dissertation.

1.5 A Brief Description of Each Chapter

1.5.1 Chapter One : Introduction

The introductory chapter discusses the motivation, literature review, methodology and gives a brief description of the chapters in the dissertation.

1.5.2 Chapter Two : An historical background of *hijab*

Knowing where and how a concept originated helps one to understand it better and put it into perspective. The chapter on the historical background of *hijab* explores the dressing of ancient civilizations such as the Hittites Phoenicians, Prehistoric Greeks and Romans and Ancient Egyptians. The information is obtained from archeological excavations that have yielded paintings and engravings on utensils and tombstones. An interesting parallel is found between the dress of ancient civilizations and the recommendations made by Islam.

Thereafter, the origin of the Islamic concept of *hijab* during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.) is discussed under the heading of Seclusion in the Early Islamic Era. The first time that *hijab* laws were implemented and the circumstances surrounding it are detailed here using *Qur'anic* verses and relevant *ahadith* (Prophetic Tradition).

This is followed by a discussion on the use of the veil during the Middle Ages. Here the findings of the famous explorer, Ibn Battuta, are used as a basis to identify the different dress codes in the countries he travelled.

In looking at the concept of *hijab* in the Nineteenth Century, the chapter looks into the ideas expressed by two prominent female writers: Barbara Stowasser and Fatima Mernissi who included their personal experiences regarding the wearing of the veil.

The current concept of *hijab* is also discussed when looking at contemporary dress in Afghanistan, Iran, Jerusalem, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and South Africa. The differences and similarities of the dress codes in the various regions are discussed in greater detail here.

Finally, the conclusion sums up the development of the concept of *hijab* since the beginning of time through to the modern use of the term.

1.5.3 Chapter Three : Islamic dress code according to the Qur'an

This chapter deals with the *Qur'anic* concept of *hijab*. The literal meaning of the word as it is used in the Qur'an is examined using the translations and interpretations of various scholars such as Ibn

Kathir, Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, Mohsin Khan, Palmer and Rodwell.

This chapter mentions the use of the word *hijab* in eight verses of the *Qur'an* : 7:46, 33:53, 38:32, 41:5, 42:51, 17:45 and 46, 19:17 and 83:15.

The concept of *khimara* as expressed in Surah 24 verse 31 in the understanding of *hijab* is explored in the chapter together with the concepts of *juyubihinna* and *juyobihinna* which appear in the same verse. *Jalabeebuna* in Surah 33 verse 59 is examined to clarify the dress code too.

1.5.4 Chapter Four : The dress code in Prophetic Tradition

This chapter deals with the Prophetic traditions concerning the dress code of Muslims. The Ahadith relating to the length of the garment, wearing of silk, the beard, type of shoes, colour of clothes preferred and type of cloth to be used are quoted from many different sources.

Then there is a discussion of the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s dislike for certain aspects of dress like; men and women imitating each other

and pride with clothes. This is followed by his (S.A.W.)'s pleasure in seeing men and women wearing the best of clothes.

Various aspects of Islamic dress code are discussed, looking at issues such as the extent the female body can be exposed, *hijab* requirements regarding the hair, the use of henna and the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s favourite garment.

1.5.5 Chapter five : View of Muslim Scholars regarding the dress code for Muslims.

This chapter reviews the opinions of various writers and contemporary scholars on the issue of dress code for Muslims. The views of Abdul Rahman Doi are explored in detail. He mentions some *Qur'anic* verses and *ahadith* (Prophetic Tradition) on the dress code. He then explains that while women must cover their bodies with a loose outer garment, they do not have to cover their faces. He further outlines the conduct expected of Muslim women when appearing in public places such as swimming baths, shopping malls and even the *masjid* (place of worship) or mosque.

Fatima Mernissi, a well known modern writer, believes that the veil is a means of protection for Muslim women in Western society

and a means of differentiating Muslim from Non-Muslim women. Furthermore, Mernissi views the veil which sends a message to the world expressing that women are vulnerable and defenseless. However, she advocates that the emergence of women's freedom led to the wearing of the *hijab* correctly instead of it being imposed upon on women.

Madani's views are expressed in his book *Hijab- The Islamic Commandments of Hijab*, wherein he maintains that women should cover the entire body, including the face, with a separate large piece of cloth drawn over their clothes. He holds that even though the verse in the *Qur'an* (65:1) refers to the *hijab* requirements of the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives, it does include all Muslim women. He further quotes many Prophetic Traditions that specify that a woman's face should also be covered as part of her *hijab*.

Then the liberal views of South African writer, Vania are presented, who quotes verses of the *Qur'an* to argue that it is permissible for interaction between men and women providing there is no fear of committing evil. He then substantiates his arguments by quoting from the *adahith*, wherein it mentions

situations where men and women interacted with each other on a purely platonic matter.

Jamal Badawi maintains a woman's face and hands need not be covered, but she needs to wear a loose cloak and cover her hair. He emphasizes that the dress should not be similar to that of the Non-Muslim, neither should express the social status of an individual.

Afzalur Rahman, author of *Role of Muslim women in Society*, believes that there are many other things to be considered before imposing a dress code for women. The dress codes are studied in detail in this section. Afzalur Rahman does not advocate the idea that women should cover their faces and he presents many reasons.

On the other hand, the teachings of Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh which will be discussed in detail, explains how modern women should be dressed in order to maintain the dress code. He consults the works of the four recognized *Imams*, namely, Hanafi, Shafi', *Hanbali* and *Maliki*. Ad-Darsh discusses the dress requirements as prescribed by each one of these Imams.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes all the different suggestions of the dress code and offers an overall view of what the expected dress of a Muslim should be.

1.6 Conclusion

The Islamic dress has been debated over the years. Some scholars believe that it is there for the protection and privacy of women while others maintain that it is a symbol of a woman's relegation to a private world where they are passive and invisible. According to *Shafi'* and *Hanbali*, the entire female body, including the face, hands and feet must be covered, while the *Malikites* and *Hanafites* allow women to bare their face and hands. The question of whether or not the face and hands must be veiled is raised at every juncture and this is what is discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter Two

An Historical background of *Hijab*

CHAPTER TWO

AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *HIJAB*

2.1 Introduction

The study of *Hijab* will be incomplete without an historical overview of this aspect. The question arises as to who were the first people who adorned the *hijab* and why did they do so ? How has this evolved over time and what is the current situation ?

Adorning of *hijab* goes as far back as the time of the creation of mankind. When Adam (A.S.) and his wife Hawwa' (R.A.),

'tasted of the tree [and disobeyed Allah (S.W.T.), their shameful parts became manifest to them and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden to cover themselves' (Qur'an 7:22).

Adam (A. S.) and Hawaa' (R.A.) used the only material available to them to conceal their naked bodies. This was an attempt at making themselves feel less exposed and ignominious. Clearly,

from the beginning of time, covering the body has a significance that goes beyond the visual, physical and aesthetic realm it is usually seen in.

It is evident that though Allah (S.W.T.) has created mankind perfectly, He has also created him with a very thin skin as a form of protection. Human beings need clothes not only for protection from the environment, but also to give them self-respect and dignity. An attractive appearance makes one feel proud of oneself and it is human nature to feel elated when one dresses attractively.

The *Qur'an* encourages Muslims to dress in their best attire, but at the same time cautions them against extravagance. It teaches that to be a person of good character, who adheres to the rules of human nature, is much more notable than elaborate adornment.

This is evident in the following verse :

'Oh children of Adam, we have bestowed raiment on you to cover your shame as well as an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness is best'
(*Qur'an*. 7:26)

2.2 Evidence of *hijab* in the history of mankind

Information obtained from archeological discoveries assist us to determine how ancient civilizations dressed. There is clear evidence in rock paintings, sculptures, statues and even drawings on pottery which have been dug up, that people in the ancient times used some type of clothing that could conform to the concept of *hijab* as we know it today.

2.2.1 The Hittites

According to the old testament, the Israelites found several tribes inhabiting Palestine. One of these tribes was the Hittites. Archeologists spent hours studying their history attempting to bring to light the culture, customs and social order of this very prominent tribe.

In his book '*The Hittites*', Dr Gurney describes the dress of the king in detail : '*he wears a special costume consisting of a long shawl draped over one arm and under another, with the end hanging down freely over the front of his body; his headdress is apparently a close fitting cap and he carries a long crook ...*' (Gurney, O. R. 1961. 66).

In his study of the medium of exchange amongst the Hittites, Dr Gurney decodes the *Law Code* that contains a list of prices. Some of the garments listed here include a head-band 1 shekel, a large linen cloth for 5 shekels and a woolen garment for 40 shekels. (Gurney, O. R. 1961:76)

Even in the army, the Hittites wore '*long gown with short sleeves*' (Gurney,O.R. 1961:106). Egyptian sculptures show Hittite warriors wearing long robes armed with long spears.

In Mesopotamia (3500-3600 B. C.), women used fur shawls on their heads and wore loose and comfortable tunics or dresses which covered their legs. The soldiers also wore tunics, which were shorter and exposed their legs, and a headgear like a spiked turban, as a mark of recognition. A portrait of the famous King Sargon II shows him wearing the spiked turban with a neatly trimmed beard (Gurney, O.R. 1961:172).

Regarding the dress of the Hittite gods, Gurney says: '*The dress of the gods is the short belted tunic (sometimes also a cloak) with upturned shoes or moccasins and fluted conical headdress, while the goddesses wear a long pleated skirt, loose upper garment*

draping the arm, similar upturned shoes, and a kind of 'mural crown'; there is no veil. Both sexes wear earrings and bracelets' (Gurney,O.R. 1961:199). This costume represented the most fashionable attire of the time. He claims that the respective headdresses had a religious significance.

Egyptian portraits reveal a variety of hair fashions. Generally, hair was uncut and sometimes held into place with a headband. Some portraits show the forehead shaved. *'All Hittites on the Egyptian monuments are clean shaven except those who are in reality Syrian allies'* (Gurney,O.R. 1961:213). The weather god, however, is represented by a bearded figure. *'...later monuments show that the fashion of wearing a beard spread from Syria to the whole of Hittite Anatolia'* (Gurney,O.R. 1961:214).

Due to their military genius, political organization, legislation and administration of justice, the Hittites are remarkable ancestors of modern day Arabs. There is much work to be done in excavations and explorations to discover more about this wonderful nation. However, it is clear that the custom of wearing long, loose-fitting and flowing garments together with a religiously significant headdress by both men and women was already in place among the

Hittites. The trend of growing a beard was adopted later, resulting in a concept of *hijab* that is present today.

2.2.2 The Phoenicians

The Canaanites and the Phoenicians share a close history but it was only after the Bronze Age that the Phoenicians broke away to become a tribe of their own. This is according to Donald Harden, author of the book '*The Phoenicians*' who has based his observations on French excavations of Babylon and Ugarit (Harden, D. 1962:5).

This great tribe excelled as explorers, colonizers, traders and manufacturers. The fact that they were also mighty warriors gets obscured when one considers their most significant contribution to the world: the alphabet. All alphabetic scripts, including Indo-European and Semitic languages, adopted this method.

Focusing on the dress of these remarkable people, Harden (1962:103) describes Silius Italicus, a priest in Melqart at Gades, as '*wearing a cap and being clad in a simple close-fitting ungirdled tunic*'. He also gives a detailed description of other priests from statues found in Carthage. '*On one, a bearded priest*

with a head-scarf, a stole over his left shoulder and a transparent linen toga’ (Harden,D. 1962:103).

In another description, Harden mention a priestly figure carved out on a coffin found on a hill in Ste Monique : ‘... *he wears a head-band and stole, but his robe is fuller and it seems to show some Greek influence in its cut. The stele of Baalyaton in Copenhagen, found in Phoenicia, shows a priest similarly dressed.....*’ (Harden, D. 1962:103).

After examining coffins found in Carthage around the fourth century, Harden (1962:113) describes the dress of a priestess as ‘... *a scarf on her head, clad in a flowing peplos, ... above her head-scarf is a hawk’s head, showing Egyptian influence through the costume and the general style is Hellenic*’.

On a coffin from Babylos, there is a carving of a ruler who is bearded. ‘*Together with other figures, he is depicted seated on a throne surrounded by bearded men wearing tunics with girdles*’ (Harden, D. 1962:182)

There are many bronze artifacts, such as jugs, razors, combs and figurines found that have pictures engraved on them. Many of them depict Phoenicians as bearded with, sometimes, a high conical headdress. A mirror handle found in a tomb on a hill in Juno *'takes the form of a standing goddess in a long decorated girdled robe which reaches the feet'* (Harden,D.1962:206). Another bronze figurine found in Aleppo, Syria, shows a woman with a low headdress and her long hair in plaits. She wears a tasseled girdle over a long loose gown.

Clearly, the Phoenicians were a people who favoured wearing loose garments with some kind of headdress for both males and females. Although there are figurines and carvings that depict naked or semi-naked women, these are believed to be slaves or servants. Those of a higher status, such as gods, priests or leaders are shown as people dressed in long, loose-fitting tunics with a specific headdress. In other words, being dressed in a certain way signified a higher position in society. This is the very same idea that Islam propagates. Men and women must be dressed respectably so that they will be recognized as to who they are and as a result be respected for it.

2.2.3 The Ancient Egyptians

Ancient Egypt was a land of abundance. The most salient feature of Egyptian history is their effort to preserve life after death. This resulted in a rich diversity of ancient artifacts that have been discovered by modern day archeologists which help to tell the story of Ancient Egypt.

During Egyptian rituals, gods and kings were treated alike. The Pharaoh was ranked the highest in the priesthood and he was succeeded by his son. In her book *'The World's Mythology in Colour'*, Veronica Ions, gives a precise evaluation of the events in Ancient Egypt by studying thousands of archeological finds.

In Ancient Egypt (3000-300 C.E.), King Mycinerius had a beard and Queen Nemes always wore an elaborately bejeweled headdress. Most women covered their hair with a wig, while the female servant wore tight-fitting sheath dresses. The aristocratic women wore loose-fitting heavily adorned long dresses with a matching headdress.

Isis, Queen of the goddesses, is carved out on a wall in a temple at Abydos. In it, she is wearing an elaborate feather headdress above

which are cow's horns surrounding a solar disc (Ions, V. 1974:47). Another goddess, Mayet, the goddess of justice and truth, was identified by a large ostrich feather on her headdress. Her headdress fully covered her hair but left her bosom, neck and ears exposed.

A wall engraving, from the tomb of Pennut in Nubia, depicts attendants at a burial site. Women were hired at funerals to mimic the mourning of Isis. These women were dressed in long loose-fitting dresses with long to short sleeves. The hair was fully covered but the covering fell behind their backs, exposing their necks and ears. These were not women of royalty nor of religious significance and their dress identify them as professional mourners (Ions, V. 1974:68).

Although the Egyptian dress did not in all cases depict the wearing of long robes, it was customary to cover the hair with a type of covering that flows down to the back. This is similar to the *khumur* referred to in the *Qur'an* (24:31). Arab women wore a garment, at the advent of Islam that covered the hair but left the neck and ears exposed. Thus, the *khumur* can be traced back to the Ancient Egyptians.

2.2.4 Pre-historic Greeks and Romans

Stubbings, in his book *'The World of Archaeology: Prehistoric Greece'*, based his observations on the remains and ruins in Troy, Mycenae and Tiryns. He draws a great deal of information from the work of Heinrich Schliemann. He describes an elaborate headdress discovered by Schliemann in Troy. The headdress is made out of old gold and covers the front of the head and forehead (Stubbings,F. 1972: 21).

Greek goddess statues show long dresses made out of soft flowing fabric. The bronze statuette of Core, carefree daughter of the fertility goddess Demeter, shows her wearing a beautifully pleated garment over a thin dress. On her head, she has a covering that allows her hair to flow loosely over her shoulders but covers her head in front (Ions,V. 1974:101).

A terracotta statuette of Roman god, The Apollo of Veii, shows him wearing a softly pleated robe that falls to his knees (Ions,V.1974:128). Some gods, like Serapis, were bearded with long hair. Serapis wore a long, narrow crown that symbolized his status as a god of fertility and riches.

Many Roman artefacts depict Romans with no clothes at all. However, there may be a soft cloth draped over the body or a garment covering the lower half of the body present in artwork.

This shows the near-eastern tribes followed the trend of Greeks and Romans by moving away from covering the body. Their lack of modesty in their early statues and art is clearly evident. This is due to their separation from the near-eastern tribes both physically and traditionally.

During the ancient Roman rule (800-400 B. C.), men wore a soft fur hat that covered their hair and ears (http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancient_Rome#Women.27s_clothing).

Although many ladies sported elaborate hairstyles hairstyles with leaves and hairnets, they also used a *stola* which was a large soft fabric that was draped over the head. Sometimes, they wore a *palla* or a wrap over their *stolas* which had to be fastened in place with specially made fibulae bones (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancient_Rome#Womn.27s_clothing).

Initially these were colourless dull garments. Later they became more colourful and attractive. A Roman bride wore a veil on her head that was decorated with wreaths of flowers and then she was enveloped in an outer *palla*. Women at the wedding wore their increasingly elaborate and embellished stolas (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clothing_in_ancientRome#Womn.27s_clothing).

Other evidence of hijab can be found in many other cultures but the practice of covering the face and seclusion seems to have first appeared in Classical Greece around 300 B. C. (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/headcoverings3.html>). It was also prevalent during the Byzantine rule in Persia. Women of the aristocracy were not expected to mingle with the common folk and if they had to go out, they had to dress in such a way that they would not be recognized.

Early coins and recorded civil laws of those times provide evidence that in Greco-Roman culture, both men and women, wore head coverings in religious contexts (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/headcoverings3.html>).

In the Near East, Assyrian kings introduced the seclusion of women and the veil in their royal harems. Prostitutes and slaves were not allowed to adorn the veil as this was a punishable offence if they did. The urban classes were veiled throughout history, whereas the rural women did not veil; as veiling was a sign that her family was affluent and enabled her to go into seclusion and refrain from working outside (http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/fashion_costume_Culture/The-Ancient-World-Mesopotamia/Veilshtml)

2.3 Seclusion in the early Islamic Era

The beginning of seclusion in Islam can be traced to the occasion of the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s marriage to Zainab bint Harsh (R.A.) in the year 5 A. H. The revelation received by Muhammad (S.A.W.) on that specific night is a verse of the Qur'an that is often referred to as the '*Hijab*' verse. This verse provides the first guideline regarding the separation of the Prophet's wives from the rest of the community and their seclusion.

'Oh you who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses until leave is given 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 taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth.

And when you ask (his ladies) for anything you want asks them before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs.

Nor is it right for you that you should annoy God's Apostle or that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in God's sight an enormity' (Qur'an. 33:53)

The above verse presents the first guideline on the etiquettes and manners which Muslims must display before the Prophet(S.A.W.) in his home and in society. According to Moroccan scholar, Fatima Mernissi, this verse was originally revealed regarding the separation of two men and not between a man and a woman. It protected the privacy of the Prophet (S. A. W.) and his new bride (Mernissi,F. 1991:86).

Anas ibn Malik who was present, reports that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was just married and was unable to get rid of a group of guests, who overstayed their welcome. When the Prophet (S. A. W.) entered his marriage chamber, ‘ *he placed one foot in the room and kept the other outside. It was in this position that he let a sitr (curtain) fall between himself and me and the verse of hijab descended at that moment* ’ (Mernissi,F. 1991:87).

Mernissi, without elaborating further in this context, after introducing it, goes on to explain the three different dimensions of hijab:

- The first being the root word “*Hajaba*” meaning “to hide”.

- The second dimension is more spatial: to separate or mark a border.
- The third dimension is ethical: belonging to the realm of the forbidden, that is, '*a space hidden by a hijab is a forbidden space*' (Mernissi, F. 1991:93).

After the revelation of this verse, the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives excluded themselves from the communal affairs of Medina. By separating the chambers of the wives of the Prophet(S. A. W.) from the mosque itself, it gave more privacy and comfort for the elite females of Islam. This was done by means of a single curtain, which set the boundaries of the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s public and private life. While the *Qur'an* here refers to *hijab* as a physical curtain, partition or veil, the concept of *hijab* has evolved in *hadith* literature to imply the concrete and the abstract.

Soon after the revelation of the '*Hijab*' verse, the following verse was revealed :

“Oh Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters and the believing women,

that they should cast their outer garments over their persons. That is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”
(Qur’an. 33:59)

According to Stowasser, (1994:84) there was a slight variation in legislation on the form of *hijab* mentioned in the former verse (33:53). It dealt with women coming out of their houses and not remaining secluded, and furthermore, it included all Muslim women and was not only restricted and confined to the Prophet (S.A.W.)’s wives.

After the revelation of this verse the dress code became apparent. All the women dressed very modestly. The traditional scarf (*Khumur*) which was previously used to only cover their hair was now used to cover their bosoms as well.

As Islam expanded to the Byzantine empire, Muslims adopted many of their cultural and traditional concepts. (Stowasser,B.

1994:92) believes that this was the inception of '*veiling and seclusion of women, at least among the upper and upper-middle classes*'. She further alleges, that although very little is known about the various stages through which *hijab* evolved in Muslim society, it is widely acknowledged that the adorning of the veil became compulsory during the first centuries after the expansion of Islam, beyond the borders of Arabia and prior to the establishment of the '*Abbasid* Dynasty.

However, Kaukab Siddique, argues that women did not conceal themselves during the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s time nor during the era of the four Righteous *Khalifah* (caliphs). He presents the example of Umme -Hakim, wife of Khalid ibn Al-Saeed, that she participated in the Battle of *Marj As-Safar* in 14 A. H. and killed seven Romans. If she adorned the veil, she would not have been able to accomplish this feat. Siddiqui states that , '*These women are never mentioned as living secluded lives or covering their faces with a veil*' (Siddique,K. 1990:52). He mentions further that Muslim women from the time of the Prophet (S. A. W.) until 200 A. H., wore a head covering which did not cover their faces. It was

only after two centuries that the veil was worn more regularly, as a status symbol, in the Muslim society (Siddique,K. 1990:55).

2.4 The veil during the Middle Ages

The adorning of the veil became more common during the 10th century. Many laws were passed emphasizing the importance of veiling. The Mamluks in Egypt issued many decrees that encouraged veiling and seclusion. When Ibn Battuta, the famous Arab explorer, while travelling through Turkey in the 14th century was surprised to see that the Turkish women were unveiled. The elite ladies and merchants' wives did not cover their faces (Mernissi,F.1991 :190).

Mernissi accuses the 'Abbasid dynasty of imposing the *hijab* on women. This period, referred to as the '*Golden Age*' during the 8th and 9th centuries, witnessed the implementation of stricter laws regarding the seclusion and veiling of Arab Muslim women. '*The Arab woman was completely marginalized. She had lost all her freedom and pride. Then she began to be treated with contempt. She was imprisoned behind locked doors and windows*' (Mernissi,F. 1991:195).

2.5 The Concept of *Hijab* in the Nineteenth Century

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a great number of scholars, reformers and liberals denounced women's seclusion and veiling.

Stowasser (1994:127) mentions that prominent amongst these scholars was Qasim Amin, who in 1899, wrote the book called "*The Emancipation of Women*". He called for the re-interpretation of the *Qur'anic* laws pertaining to divorce, polygamy and wearing of the veil. He argues that many of the practices present in Muslim societies were contrary to *Qur'anic* injunctions and emanated from the customs of people who became Muslims in the different regions. He alleges that *hijab* is '*the true reason for the ignorance, superstition, obesity, anemia and premature aging of the Muslim woman*' (Stowasser, B. 1994:127).

Furthermore, Qasim Amin '*insisted as much on the woman's right to mobility outside the home as he did on the adoption of shar'ia Islamic garb, which would leave the woman's face and hands uncovered*' (Stowasser, B. 1994:127). Needless to say,

his remarks led to more aggressive and critical debates on this issue. This, in turn, created awareness among Muslims and they started thinking and employing constructive judgements in accordance with the *Qur'an*.

In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leader of Turkey, denounced the adorning of the veil. He stated that it was demeaning and a hindrance to a civilized nation, but he did not outlaw it (Mernissi,F. 1991:95). Thereafter, Reza Shah Pahlevi of Iran instituted a total ban on the veil in an effort to modernize society. Due to the suddenness of his decree, most women were too afraid to adopt it. Thus, they stayed within the home - deeper in seclusion - out of fear of having the veil removed forcefully by the police and governmental enforcement.

Mernissi recalls the opposition which she experienced at home from her own parents, when she replaced her heavy traditional veil with a smaller triangular piece of silk chiffon. Soon the small scarf became fashionable and all the Nationalist's wives wore it (Stowasser,B. 1994: 127).

In 1967, after Egypt's loss to Israel in the six-day-war, there was an asserted effort to apply Islamic laws, which had been abandoned. Modernization was construed negatively, while wearing the *hijab* symbolized 'superiority' and 'piety'. (Stowasser,B. 1994.112).

Al-Mawdudi interpreted the injunctions on *hijab* (*Qur'an* 33:33 and 33:53), as not specifically addressing the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s wives, but that it included all Muslim women. He infers from the verse (Q33:59) that the woman's Islamic dress must include the face veil and gloves. He claims that '*though the veil has not been specified in the Qur'an, it is Quranic in spirit*' (Stowasser,B. 1994:128). Faced with Al-Mawdudi's passionate view, in contrast with Amin's call for women to discard the veil, the contemporary Muslim woman is placed in a dilemma. Stowasser suggests that a woman's best *hijab* is still her home, but in extenuating circumstances, she may be allowed to go out to work (Stowasser, B. 1994:130).

2.6 Observations on current concepts of *hijab*

Today, with the renewed interest in reviving or creating Islamic movements, women have continued adorning the *hijab* throughout the world. However, this issue still remains a point of debate within various groups. Some liberal groups, like the Woman's Action Forum (W.A.F.) in Pakistan does not allow the imposition of the dress code on women, while the more conservative women's groups insist on adorning the *hijab*. Women who do not comply are stigmatized. Below is a brief discussion on the issue in various countries in the world.

2.6.1 The Taliban in Afghanistan

The *Taliban*, drawn from the Pashtun ethnic group implements an extreme interpretation of *Shari'ah*. Ahmed Rashid, author of the book '*Taliban: The story of the Afghan warlords*', says : '*The Taliban had closed down all girls' schools and women were rarely permitted to venture out of their homes even for shopping*' (Rashid,A.2002:2).He describes an interview in 1997 with Maulvi Qalamuddin who runs the Department of Religious Observances, '*.....he had just issued new regulations which banned women from wearing high heels, making a noise with their shoes while they*

walked or wearing make-up. Stylish dress and decoration of women in hospitals is forbidden. Women are duty bound to behave with dignity....’ (Rashid,A. 2002:104).

Women are not allowed to work in any field except as medical personnel. The women that are working had to organize their own private transport to and from the work place. The prohibition of women in the work environment, placed a great strain on the education system in Afghanistan. Most of the teachers were women and with them not being allowed to teach, education came to a standstill. According to Maulvi Qalamuddin, “... *there are no provisions for separate transport, separate school buildings and facilities to educate women. Women must be completely segregated from men. And within us we have those men who cannot behave properly with women*” (Rashid,A. 2001:106).

It seems, that the motive of the *Taliban* for segregating men and women, is that of the safety and protection of women and not their oppression. Despite media reports, that when the *Taliban* took over Kabul, the police beat men for not having long enough beards and women for not covering themselves up properly. Maulvi

Qalamuddin says that they were not beaten but merely warned to keep within the restrictions. *'We advise our staff not to beat people in the streets. We only advise people how to behave according to shari'ah'* (Rashid,A. 2001:106).

Before the *Taliban* took over Khandahar it used to be a place where women copied the latest fashion trends from Iran and forty percent of the women worked. *'Women with even a smattering of education and a job, exchanged traditional clothes for skirts, high heels and make up. They went to movies, played sport and danced and sang at weddings'* (Rashid,A. 2001:110). Over the years, the *Taliban* have become stricter in implementing their rules regarding the seclusion of women. The educated women, therefore, left Afghanistan and sought employment in other countries.

The *Taliban* ordered tailors not to sew clothes for female clients. Fashion magazines were destroyed, movies and television were banned and the singing and dancing at weddings were forbidden. In 1996, after the capture of Kabul, they released a decree relating to women, which was announced by the *General Presidency of*

Amr Bil Maruf and Nai Az Munkar (Religious Police), some of the points made are as follows :

- Women should not step outside their homes.
- Women should not attract the attention of men.
- If women need to go out for the purpose of education or social services, they are to cover themselves up completely.
- Elder family members are responsible for ensuring that the laws are abided to by the women.
- Female patients must be seen to by female medical staff.
- During the examination, both the male doctor and the female patient must be fully veiled. Only the affected part may be exposed.
- Female doctors must dress simply with no cosmetics or make-up.
- No discussion between male and female doctors is allowed. If there may be an urgent need then both male and female must be covered in full *hijab*.

- No taxi is allowed to pick up a lady not wearing a plain black *burqa*, even the Iranian *burqa* is not allowed (Rashid,A. 2001:218).

John Weaver, in his book '*Inside Afghanistan*', describes the dress of Afghan men : '*The traditional Afghan clothing for men consists of a very loose pants made from light cloth – similar to what we call a pajama bottom in the States. The waist of the pants is more than twice the size of the wearers midsection, but the fabric is gathered up and held up by a drawstring. Over these pants, men wear a loose – fitting pullover shirt with very long tails front and back. These look a little like linen night shirts, but the sides are sewn in an eye-pleasing arch, rather than a slit from bottom to waist*' (Weaver,J. 1982:56).

Men also wear a light wrap over their shoulders which can be used to shield the face. They also wear a cap made out of heavy wool with a flat top rolled up at the sides. These hats denote the tribal heritage of a man depending on the shape and colour. Sometimes, a turban is wrapped around this hat, creating the well known headdress worn in the Middle East for many centuries.

The *Taliban* have introduced many restrictions regarding women and their dress. Except for enforcing the long beard and the shortening of the pants, they have left men's clothing largely as it has been for the past centuries.

The extreme measures implemented for women have been justified as being a requirement of *Shari'ah*. Unfortunately, because discussion on these issues is not entertained, women in Afghanistan are being oppressed and discriminated against, instead of being valued and emancipated as originally intended by Islam.

2.6.2 Iran

Iran, a Middle Eastern country, has followed a relatively modern mode of dressing. In the past it allowed women to go about unveiled in fashionable clothing that even included skirts that revealed the legs. In contrast, Iran is very different from Saudi Arabia. *Hijab* is enforced on women according to the less strict Wahabi school. Women are allowed to go about more freely provided they are dressed modestly. The head and hair must be covered with a loose outer covering or cloak that covers the body to mid-calf.

The more conservative women wear a *chador* which comprises a large loose black sheet which is held in place by hand. Other women and school girls prefer a large hood that covers the head and shoulders which is worn with a long shapeless coat. More fashionable ladies also wear colourful scarves with patterns on them.(<http://www.bootsnall.com/articles/99-05/dresscodeiniran.html>).

In the villages, farmers wear mostly European dress. *'The native costume of cotton shirt, baggy black or blue cotton trousers and a long blue cotton coat is generally worn. The women wear black trousers which are gathered at the ankles, a skirt and a length of cotton piece goods draped around the body and over the head so that it serves both as a head covering and a veil, although the village women were never closely veiled as were the women of the towns'* (Wilber,D.N. 1976:56).

From the pictures in Wilber's book *'Iran : past and present'*, we see Iranian village women dressed with loose – fitting garments with some sort of cloth covering the head. This does not necessarily cover all the hair but is large enough to cover the whole body. In some cases, when women are threshing wheat, they wear

a short skirt with long boots that fully cover the legs (Wilber,D.N. 1976:146).

Women in Iran wear lots of jewellery which includes strings of gold and silver coins. These and other items such as weapons and horses, signify the wealth of the family and are a source of pride for Iranians.

In 1935, the wife of Reza Shah, ruler of Iran at that time, appeared in public without a veil (Amirsadeghi, H.2009.50). This was a bold step for women who up to this time had to be fully veiled in public. It was also an action that was responsible for a forceful movement for the abolition of the veil. Later, pictures of the Empress of Iran, on a visit to China accompanied by the Prime Minister, show her wearing a knee-length dress that revealed her legs. Her head is bare with a neat modern hairstyle (Amirsadeghi, H. 2009. 177). There is no sign of the veil. In fact she appears to be a very modern Western woman, with no sign of Middle Eastern tradition in her dress.

According to Amirsadeghi, Professor Mortaza Motheri, a most respected modern scholar in Iran, has '*defended in two books, the veiling of women, but points out that it neither requires face or hands to be covered, nor does it prevent women from participating in public life*' (Amirsadeghi, H.2009. 189).

There is a strong trend towards the emancipation of women in Iran because of its favouring of Western ideas. There has been increasing public education for girls since the 1920's, state pressure for the unveiling of women since 1928 and even the creation of cabinet posts for women in parliament in 1976 (Amirsadeghi, H. 2009.193).

Women's organizations provide literacy courses, vocational training as well as legal and family planning council. They are supported by the *Ulema* and help women to function in a society that is very quickly becoming modern, yet trying to avoid being Western.

2.6.3 Jerusalem

Paul Johnson in his book *'Civilizations of the Holy Land'* quotes a decree that outlines how Jews had to dress in order to be identified.

'Speak unto the Children of Israel and bid them to make a tassel on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put it on a twined cord of blue' (Johnson,P. 1979:64).

Eventually certain trademarks of appearance became identified as Jewish. These clothing rituals became a sign of the level of piety of a person. This led to the remark by Jesus in Mathew 23:5, *'They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments'* (Johnson,P. 1979:65).

The highest in rank of piety was occupied by the High Priest of Jerusalem. His dress included a very *'elaborate multi-coloured sash over an embroidered tunic with a bejewelled breastplate. The Jewels on the breastplate according to Midrash tradition corresponded to the sons of Jacob : Ruben (red), Simeon (green), Levi(white, black and red), Jardah (azure), Saachar (black), Josef (black) and Benjamin (all 12 colours). The most complicated item was the head gear – a linen coronet with a muslin headdress over it, then a blue headdress embroidered in gold, then a gold crown*

with a gold plate with the name of God which was fixed to the High Priest's forehead' (Johnson,P.1979:65).

Jerusalem is a city of three religions and the districts in the Old City are separated by religious faith and race. In modern day Jerusalem, Muslim men still wear their traditional long robes and well known embroidered black and white or red and white chequered scarves secured with a black band. Most young men wear a pants and shirt with a suit jacket. They do not wear any headdress even during prayers.

Women wear long colourful dresses with a small scarf covering the hair. Their feet are always covered with socks and either sandals or shoes. There is no face covering or veil in the Palestinian Muslim community. Women go out and work freely provided they are dressed conservatively (Raffin,P.1991:16).

Amongst the Christians in Jerusalem, women cover their heads and wear conservative clothing. In her book called '*Inside Jerusalem*', Patrizia Raffin shows wonderful pictures of Ethiopians carrying a wooden cross during a procession through the Old City. Most of

these ladies have a white scarf on their heads while the men wear suits and ties (Raffin,P.1991:56).

Jewish women in Israel are very Western in their dress. However, during religious prayers and ceremonies, they are required to cover their hair. Women soldiers are a common sight in Jerusalem. They wear the military uniform that men wear. There is no distinction between the uniforms except a small cap worn by ladies. *'Only Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox, together with some religious girls are exempt'* (Raffin,P.1991: 46).

2.6.4. Egypt

Andrea Rugh, in her book *'Reveal and conceal : Dress in contemporary Egypt'* differentiates between 'fundamentalists' and 'pious' styles of dress in Egypt. Both styles can accommodate grades of pious commitment. The final stage being the covering of the entire face and the wearing of gloves. The 'fundamental' style of dressing serves to distinguish between educated and uneducated classes. The lower-class Egyptian women still wear folk dresses (Rugh,A. 1986:45).

The most obvious recent revival of Islamic awareness can be seen in the current trend towards Islamic dress especially amongst the women. Previous generations of women who preferred to be called modern and westernised are now seeing their granddaughters adorning longer dresses and covering their hair. This trend, which began about twenty years ago, has developed to such an extent that it has become overwhelmingly universal in its application (<http://www.wluml.org>).

Attempts at banning the face veil have been made as recently as 2004 and 2007 at the American University in Cairo and the Helwan University. (<http://www.islamfortoday.com/women.htm>) Mohamed Tantawi, a leading Islamic scholar in Egypt and head of Al-Azhar University, issued an order, in 2009 that the face veil was not allowed in the classroom and during examinations because it “is a cultural tradition without Islamic importance”. However, after protests from human rights and Islamist groups led to it being overturned later (<http://www.islamfortoday.com/women.htm>).

2.6.5 Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, women follow the *Hanbali* school of *shari'ah* which adopts a very conservative approach that forces women to cover their entire face. Women are not permitted to go out of the house without an approved male companion nor are they allowed to drive their own cars. (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_national_dress_of_saudi_arab)

Females who have reached puberty, wear a loose unadorned black robe that covers the feet, called an *abaya*. Although Saudi women wear a veil that covers the face, other ladies including Arabs from other countries may leave their faces open. Some women adopt the hijab to such an extent that they cover every part of the body even the hands and feet. Western women in Saudi Arabia have to wear the *abaya* when appearing in public (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_national_dress_of_saudi_arab).

2.6.6 Indonesia

In Indonesia, women wear sarongs, a full length wrap around skirt with a *kebeya*, a tight, low-cut, long sleeved blouse. Some ladies also wear a *seledong*, a long cloth draped over the shoulder which is sometimes used to carry babies or objects (<http://www.expatriate.or.id/info/kebaya-traditional-dress.html>)

The government is very strict in enforcing hijab laws. Any woman caught violating the dress code is forced to put on “*government issued full length skirts or long pants*” (<http://www.radiance-weekly.com/179/4468/FORT-HOOD-SHOOT-OUT-The-Price-US-is-Paying-for-Global-War/2009-11-15/Muslim-World/Story-Detail/DRESS-CODE-IN-INDONESIA.html>)

2.6.7 South Africa

Traditional South African women favour a *kaftan* or *Boubou* which is an adaptation of the *kaftan* worn by West African men. It is said that African traditional wear has been inherited from ancient Egypt. The same embroidery with mirrors and charms found on clothing worn by Egyptian Queen Cleopatra are used, with a

modern touch, in South Africa today (http://www.squidoo.com/Traditionalafricanwearforwomen?utm_campaign=directdiscovery&utm_medium=sidebar&utm_source=speechryter).

Even though fabrics may be modern, the colours and symbols used in the prints signify power, love and protection to the wearer in much the same way as it did in Ancient Africa. Modern royal queens wear a more stylish dress which shows the influence of the traditional white *voortekker* dress(http://www.squidoo.com/Traditionalafricanwearforwomen?utm_campaign=directdiscovery&utm_medium=sidebar&utm_source=speechryter).

Traditionalafricanwearforwomen?utm_campaign=directdiscovery&utm_medium=sidebar&utm_source=speechryter).

2.7 Conclusion

The concept of *hijab* has evolved in the Muslim world, from being a societal segregation as stipulated in the *Qur'an*, to a type of dress that bears testimony to the morality and cultural authenticity of a woman performing new duties in modern society.

The Muslim woman does not need to live up to Western definitions of beauty because her main goal is to attain spiritual beauty so that she can prove herself and attain recognition in society, through her actions and accomplishments instead of her looks.

After many decades of swinging between the two extremes of total segregation and complete liberation, women today realise the true significance of *hijab* and are reclaiming their true identity. The trend towards wearing the *hijab* today signifies the awakening of Islamic culture and identity. It is the recognition of women as significant contributors to society and their acceptance into positions of leadership (http://www.squidoo.com/Traditional-africanwearforwomen?utm_campaign=directdiscovery&utm_medium=sidebar&utm_source=speechryter).

Chapter Three

The Islamic Dress Code According to the Qu'ran

CHAPTER THREE

THE ISLAMIC DRESS CODE ACCORDING TO THE QUR'AN

3.1 Introduction

Here, a detailed analysis of the concept of *Hijab* in the Qur'an is provided.. Concepts like *Khumur*, *Jalabeeb*, *Juyubihinna*, *Yudneena* and *Akinnah* are discussed in order to truly comprehend the proper dress code of Islam. Various Qur'anic translations and commentaries are used to explain the above concepts and the context in which they are utilized.

The discussion of the dress code of Muslims is based in the relevant Quranic verses mentioned below with further explanation from Ibn Kathir, Yusuf Ali, Mohsin Khan and Marmaduke Pickthall. The translations of E. H. Palmer and J. M. Rodwell have also been included.

3.2 The concept of *Hijab* in the Qur'an

According to Hans Wehr's "*A dictionary of modern written Arabic*", the word made up of the root letters *H-J-B* means 'to veil, cover, screen or form a separation' (Wehr,H. 1976:156). This root word forms the basis of eight similar words in the Qur'an, which will be discussed here together with the implied meaning.

3.2.1 Surah 7 verse 46

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ وَعَلَى الْأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلًّا بِسِيمَتِهِمْ وَنَادَوْا
 أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ سَلِّمُوا عَلَيْنَا لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

'Between them shall be a hijab and on the Heights will be men who know everyone by his marks. They will call out to the Companions of the Garden "Peace be upon you." They will not have entered but they will have an assurance' (Ali,Y. 1994:352).

Ibn Kathir gives the meaning as ‘screen’(Ibn Kathir, 2000:vol 2,68). The other translators give the meaning if *Hijabun* as ‘veil’ (Ali,Y.1946:353, Palmer,A.2007:143 and Pickthall,M. 1989:125) ‘barrier screen’ (Khan,M.1996:298) and ‘partition’ (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

In this case, the word *Hijabun*, is used to describe a definite physical separation between the dwellers of Heaven and Hell. It does not have any thing to do with what one wears, instead, it is a division between two very different communities.

Yusuf Ali claims that this is a difficult verse to interpret, since there are three different versions of interpretation :

- *‘One school thinks the men on heights are angels, or men of exalted dignity (e.g. the great apostles) who will be able to know the souls at sight as regards their spiritual worth: the Heights will be their exalted stations, from which they will welcome the righteous with a salutation of peace...*
- *Another school of thought thinks that the men on the Heights are such souls that are not decidedly on the side of merit*

or decidedly on the side of sin, but evenly balanced on a partition between Heaven and Hell. Their case is yet to be decided....

- *The third line of interpretation, with which I agree, is close to the first, with this exception, that the Partition and the Heights are figurative. The higher souls will rejoice at the approaching of the righteous (Ali, Y.1946:352).*

3.2.2 Surah 33 verse 53

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَظِيرِينَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكِنَّ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَأَدْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَنْسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِيُّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنْ الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسَأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ذَٰلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنْكِحُوا أَرْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٣﴾

“O you who believe ! Enter not the Prophet’s houses until leave is given you for a meal. Not to wait for its preparation, but when you are invited, enter and when you have eaten,

disperse without seeking familiar talk.

This annoys the Prophet. He is ashamed to dismiss you but Allah is not ashamed of the truth.

And when you ask for any thing you want ask them (females) from before a hijab. That makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that you should annoy Allah's Apostle, or that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity. (Ali, Y. 1946:1124)

Here, Ibn Kathir, Ali and Khan translate the word *hijab* as 'screen'. (Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 8, 23; Ali, Y. 194:1124 and Khan, M.1996:776). Pickthall and Palmer use 'curtain'(Pickthall, M. 1989:303 and Palmer, E.H. 2007:147). Rodwell uses 'veil' (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

Commonly referred to as the '*Hijab Verse*', this verse and the preceding one, explain the etiquette required for communicating with the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s wives, visiting his homes and general behaviour towards him in his social environment. This verse is specific, in that the wives of the Prophet (S. A. W.) were to be addressed from behind a "*screen*" or "*curtain*". There is a physical separation of the noble ladies from the common folk, by a barrier that could not be seen through. It secludes the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s wives by giving them privacy and is simultaneously a symbol of their high status and dignity. The context of this *hijab* is the separation of two spaces that are not to intermingle.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, in his book '*A thematic commentary on the Qur'an*', states '*It is essential to lay down the rules because, unlike palaces of kings or other rulers, with reception facilities and several wings, the Prophet (S. A. W.)'s home consisted of a limited number of small rooms attached to a mosque*' (Al-Ghazali, M. 2000:460).

This was also the reason, according to al-Ghazali, for the implementation of *hijab* for Muslim women in general. In their

homes, women dress more casually and are therefore in need of privacy from visitors.

3.2.3 Surah 38 verse 32

فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ



*'And he(David) said, 'Truly do I love
the love of good with a view to the
glory of my lord. Until it was hidden
in the hijab' (Ali,Y. 1946 : 1225)*

Pickthall translates this word as '*curtain*' (Pickthall,M.1989:326) while Ali, Khan, Palmer Ibn Kathir and Rodwell use the word 'veil' as the translation (Ali,Y.1946:1225; Ibn Kathir, 2000:vol 8, 327; Khan, M.1996:830; Palmer, A. 2007:178 and <http://www.Sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

In this verse, Dawud (A. S.) regrets spending too much time with his beloved horses instead of remembering Allah (S. W. T.). He laments when the horses are taken away from his presence. Despite variations in interpreting this verse, *hijab*

*a hijab. So do what you will. For us
we will do too*"(Ali,Y. 1946:1287)

Rodwell translates *hijabun here as 'shelter'* (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>). Ibn Kathir, Ali and Khan translate it as '*screen*'(Ali,Y. 1946:1287; Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 8, 511 and Khan,M. 1996:867) while Palmer uses '*veiled*' (Palmer,A. 2007:147). Pickthall gives the meaning as '*barrier*' (Pickthall, M. 1989:340).

Here, the word *hijab* refers to an invisible barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims which prevents non-Muslims from listening to what Muslims desire teaching them, nor does it open their hearts to Islam. It becomes an uncompromising barrier that is impregnable by either party.

Yusuf Ali explains this verse as, '*This is either a superiority complex adopting the sarcastic tone of an inferiority complex, or it expresses calculated indifference to spiritual teaching. In effect it says: 'Our hearts and minds are not intelligent enough to understand your noble ideas, nor our ears sufficiently acute to hear their exposition: you and we are quite different; there is a*

gulf between us. Why worry about us? You go your way, and we shall go ours' (Ali, Y. 1946:1287).

Here *hijab* refers to a division that cannot be breached. It is a deep gorge that does not allow mixing of two separate entities.

The word *akinna*, which is mentioned in this verse, is translated by Yusuf Ali as 'veil' (Ali, Y. 1946:1287), Ibn Kathir and Khan use 'coverings' (Khan, M. 1996:867 and Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 8, 511).

These translations tend to relate closer to the contemporary concept of '*hijab*' than the Qur'anic context.

3.2.5 Surah 42 verse 51

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَآئِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بَأْذَنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ حَكِيمٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

'It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration or from behind a hijab or

*by sending of a messenger to reveal
with Allah's permission what Allah
wills. He is Most High, Most Wise'*
(Ali,Y. 1946:1321)

All translators have used the word “*veil*” to explain this word.
(Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 8, 610; Ali,Y. 1946:1321, Khan, M.
1996:890,Pickthall, M.1989:347: Palmer, A. 2007:147 and
<http://www.sacredtexts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

Yusuf Ali feels that this is not a physical veil or screen but
a mystical one. It is a veil of light or 70 000 veils of light.
He makes reference to a hadith quoted by Imam Ghazali :
*'God has 70 000 veils of light and darkness. Were he to
withdraw their curtain, then would the splendours of his
aspect surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with
his sight'* (Ali,Y. 1946:921).

Al-Ghazali comments that there is only a certain calibre of men
that Allah(S. W. T.) makes direct contact with. *'..they, like the
stars in the sky, vary in their qualifications for this selection. Some
are sent to single communities, while others are sent to larger
ones, or to all humanity'*(Al-Ghazali. 2000: 536).

Even these selected few righteous men cannot come into direct contact with Allah (S. W. T.) without a protective screen between them.

Here *hijab* refers to a protection and shield from something too powerful. It is a medium through which safe communication with Allah (S. W. T.) is made possible. Without it, it is not ‘fitting’ for man to talk to Allah (S. W. T.) (Ali, Y. 1964:1321).

3.2.6 Surah 17 verse 45 and 46

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا
مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ
رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ، وَلَوْ عَلَى آدْبَرِهِمْ نُفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾

*‘When you recite the Qur’an, we put
between you and those who do not*

*believe in the hereafter an a hijab
invisible.*

*And we put coverings over their
hearts lest they should understand the
Qur'an and deafness in their ears :
when thou dost commemorate thy Lord
and Him alone in the Qur' an they turn
on their backs fleeing (from the Truth)'
(Ali,Y. 1946:707)*

Ibn Kathir, Khan and Ali translate *hijab* as 'veil'(Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 6, 23; Ali,Y.1946:707 and Khan, M. 1996:523).

Pickthall uses 'barrier' (Pickthall ,M. 1989:207), while Palmer translates it as 'covering veil' (Palmer, A. 2007:6). Rodwell, on the other hand translates it as 'dark veil'

(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

Although the translators vary in their explanation of the word here, the general consensus is that Allah (S. W. T.) puts an unseen

barrier between those who do not believe and those who believe when the Qur'an is being recited.

Khan states "It is said in the Book of *Tafsir* (Imam Qurtubi) Vol 10, page 269 as regards this Verse (17 : 45) : Narrated Sa'id bin Jubair (R. A.) *'When Surah no 111 (Tabat Yada) was revealed, the wife of Abu Lahab came looking for the Prophet (S.A.W.),while Abu Bakr (R.A.) was sitting beside him. Abu Bakr said to the Prophet (S.A W.) "I wish if you get aside (or go away) as she is coming to us, she may harm you." The Prophet (S.A.W.)said: "There will be a screen between me and her." So she did not see him. She said to Abu Bakr : "Your companion (S. A. W.) is saying poetry against me." Abu Bakr said : "By Allah, he does not say poetry." She said : "Do you believe that ?" Then she left. Abu Bakr said : "O Allah's messenger (S. A. W.) ! She did not see you. The Prophet (S. A. W.) said : "An angel was screening me from her"*.

Ali maintains that the meaning of *hijab* in the above verse is mystic. *"If all nature, external and within ourselves, declares God's glory, those unfortunates who cut themselves off from their better nature are isolated from men of God and the revelation of*

God.....The veil is none the less real because it is invisible”
 (Ali,Y.1946:707).

The word ‘*akinna*’ appears in verse 46, and in surah 41, verse 5. The translation of Ibn Kathir transliterates this word (Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 6,23), but it has been translated as ‘*coverings*’, (Ali,Y.1946:707; Khan, M. 1996:523 and <http://www.sacredtexts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>), ‘*veil*’ (Pickthall, M.1989:207) and ‘*covers*’ (Palmer, E.H. 2007:6). It is evident that this word has a close resemblance to the word “*hijab*” as we use it today. This is somewhat different from the Qur’anic concept of *hijab*.

Yusuf Ali describes it as an invisible veil placed on the disbelievers, which has the effect of confusing their minds and deafening their ears. *‘In other words, the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out God’s grace’* (Ali,Y. 1946:707).

Ibn Kathir explains the concept of *akinnah* as ‘*meaning something which covers or that cannot be seen, so there is a barrier between them and guidance and this is the interpretation that Ibn Jarir thought was correct*’(Ibn Kathir, 2000 : vol 8,610).

3.2.7 Surah 19 verse 17

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ
لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾

'She (Mary) placed a hijab between them. Then We sent to her Our angel and he appeared before her as a man in all respects' (Ali,Y. 1946:771).

Ibn Kathir, Ali and Khan use '*screen*' to translate *hijab* (Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 6, 240; Ali,Y. 1946:771 and Khan, M. 1996:563). Pickthall's '*seclusion*' describes the physical removal of Mary (A.S.) from her community (Pickthall,M. 1989:222). It also implies '*seclusion*' and '*privacy*'- similar to that which is being referred to in the verse of *hijab*. Palmer explains it as a '*veil (to screen herself)*' (Palmer, E.H.2007:28) and Rodwell interprets it as '*veil to shroud herself*' (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

Mary was isolated from her people and she remained in a state of piety and devotion for a period. She placed a barrier between herself and her community that was determined by her seclusion and removal of herself from society. *Hijab* in this verse refers to her action of withdrawing from society for the purpose of prayer.

3.2.8 Surah 83 verse 15

كَأَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

'Verily from their Lord, that day, will

they (unbelievers) be mahjubun'

(Ali, Y. 1946:1705)

Palmer, Ali, Khan and Ibn Kathir translate this word as '*veiled*' (Palmer, E.H. 2007:324; Ali, Y. 1946:1705; Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 10, 401 and Khan, M. 1996:1095) and Pickthall translates it as '*covered from*, (Pickthall, M. 1989:433). Rodwell explains it as '*shut out as by a veil*' (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

The reference to '*veil*' in this verse implies a definite separation between Allah (S. W. T.) and the disbelievers. According to Al-Ghazali, this verse refers to the consequence of consistently performing sinful acts. *'Those for whom lowly behaviour becomes a habit and who get used to living like animals shall be barred from entering the gates of heaven'* (al –Ghazali, M. 2000:708).

Hijab here refers to a prohibition for disbelievers from receiving the mercy of Allah (S. W. T.). It is the means with which they will be cut off from the Creator, so that they will not receive forgiveness.

These days, *hijab* refers to the dress code, together with the moral conduct of a Muslim in society. The *Qur'an* uses the word *hijab* in various contexts. In the above verses, *hijab* is used as a visible or invisible barrier between two spaces. The groups in each space are not allowed to mix. There is a definite physical, mystical or psychological reason for this separation.

Translators have used “curtain”, “barrier”, “veil” and “screen” when translating the word *hijab*. Lexicon and contemporary dictionaries define the root word H-J-B as ‘to hide’ (Wehr, H. 1976: 156).

Clearly the difference in meanings show an evolution in the way the word “*hijab*” is being used today. It does not assist in defining the specific dress code for Muslims so we need to look at other word and verses in the *Qur’an*, for further understanding of this concept.

3.3 The concept of *Khimara* in the *Qur’an*

3.3.1 Surah 24 verse 31

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ^ط
وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ
أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي
أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي
الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ^ط
وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ
اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

'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 appear of it. They should draw their khumurihinna over their jububihinna 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 sex; 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 God, that ye may attain bliss. (Ali,Y. 1946 : 904)

This verse defines the proper dress code according to Islam and how it should be done according to Islamic *Shari'ah*.

3.4 The word *juyubihinna*

Let us analyse the word *juyubihinna*. What exactly must be covered in this verse? It is observed that most translators have used the word '*bosom*'. Khan transliterates the word and then provides an interpretation of it as '*bodies, faces, neck and bosoms*' (Khan, M. 1996:649).

The question of whether the face is included or not here, is clarified by Khan by substantiating with the following *Hadith* :

'Narrated Ayesha (R. A.), 'May Allah bestows His Mercy on the early emigrant women. When Allah revealed : 'And to draw their veils all over their Juyubihinna (i. e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms, etc.)' - They tore their Mourts (a woollen dress, or a waist-binding cloth or an apron, etc.) and covered their heads and faces with those torn Mourts' (Khan, M. 1996: 649).

Ibn Kathir explains *juyub* as 'they should wear the outer garment in such a way as to cover their chest and ribs so that they will be

different from the women of the *jahilia* who did not do that, but would pass in front of men with their chest completely uncovered and with their necks, forelocks, hair and earrings uncovered so Allah commanded the believing women to cover themselves...’(Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 7 ,67).

3.7 The word *Khumurhinna*

Yusuf Ali, Mushin Khan Ibn Kathir and Marmaduke Pickthall translate *khumurhinna* as “veils” (Ali,Y.1946:904, Khan, M. 1996:649; Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 7, 67 and Pickthall, M. 1989:255).

The dictionary defines ‘*khimara*’ as ‘*veil, covering head and face of a woman*’ and “*covering – tablecloth, blanket*”(Wehr, H. 1976:261).

Technically, the word “*khimr*” is used to indicate any substance that intoxicates the mind. It prevents the mind from thinking clearly by placing a type of unseen internal veil over it. Being a very similar word, it stands to reason that *khimara* is an external veil that covers the head. Women before Islam always wore a head covering that was tied behind the head. This left the ears, neck and bosom uncovered.

During the Islamic era, the above verse was understood as a command for ladies to use this same headscarf to cover their bosoms. This means that their faces need not be covered. However that is a debate that goes beyond the *Qur'an* to *Hadith*, *Shar'iah* and *Fiqh*.

Another possible meaning of *khumurihinna* could be a skirt worn by ladies of the early Islamic Era. This is explained by the following hadith mentioned by Khan :

'Narrated Safiyah bint Shaibah : "Aisha used to say : 'When the Verse : 'And draw their veils all over their Juyubihinna (i. e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms, etc) (Qur'an. 24:31) was revealed, (the ladies) cut their waist sheets at the edges and covered their heads and faces with those cut pieces of cloth' (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol 6, Hadith no. 282 and Khan, M. 1996:649).

The variation in the meaning of the word *khumurihinna* is a debated issue. It is a subjective interpretation of what each individual understands the word to mean. For women who accept it as a headscarf, the question of whether or not a lady should cover her hair does not arise. On the other hand, for the women who accept that the *Khimar* was a type of waist cloth or skirt, the

obligation of draping the head is a questionable issue, as the *Qur'an* does not specify the covering of the head, like it specifies the covering of the bosom.

3.6 The concept of *Jalabibihinna* in the *Qur'an*

3.6.1 Surah 33 verse 59

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ
جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا



“ O Prophet ! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their jalabeebihinna over their persons. That is most convenient that they should be known and not molested. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful”(Ali,Y. 1946:1126).

Ali refers to this as an ‘*outer garment; a long gown covering the whole body, or a cloak covering the neck and bosom*’(Ali,Y. 1946:1126) Pickthall and Khan refer to it as “*cloak*” (Pickthall,

M. 1989:306 and Khan, M. 1996:649) while Palmer translates it as *'outer wrappers'* (Palmer, E.H. 2007:148) and Rodwell simply uses *'veil'* (<http://www.sacredtexts.com/isl/sbe06/index.htm>).

Ibn Kathir interprets this verse as they should *'draw their jilbabs over their bodies so that they would be distinct in their appearance from women of jahillia and from slave women. The jilbab is a Rida' worn over the khimar. This was the view of Ibn Mas'ud, Ubaydah, Qatadah, Al-Hassan Al-Basri', Sa'id bin Jubayr, Ibrahim An-Nakha-I, Ata, Al-Khurasani. It is like the Izar used today. Al-Jawahari said, 'The Jilbab is the outer wrapper'* (Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 8, 45).

The word *yudneena* explains how this *'cloak'* must be worn. This word means *'cast over their persons'* (Ali, Y. 1946:1126), *'draw close round them'* (Pickthall, M. 1989: 306) *'draw all over their bodies'* (Khan, M. 1996:778).

Yusuf Ali presents a brief explanation on the message of this verse. *'The object was not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation under the conditions then existing in Medina. In the East and in the West, a distinctive public dress of*

some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women ' (Ali, Y. 1946:1126).

Ibn Kathir explains *yudneena* as 'to draw means to pull it around and tie securely their veils all over their *jujub* means over their necks and chests so that nothing can be seen of them' (Ibn Kathir, 2000: vol 7, 69).

It is evident that Muslim women must wear this loose cloak in such a way that their body shape is not visible, so that they would be recognized and respected.

3.7 Conclusion

From the *Qur'anic* words and verses relating to the dress code of a Muslim, we can deduce the following :

- The *Qur'an* orders Muslims to be as well-dressed as possible (*Qur'an*. 7:26).
- All Muslims must lower their gazes and guard their modesty, and women must cover their bosoms with their headscarves (*Qur'an*.24:31).
- Women have to draw their cloaks over themselves (*Qur'an*.33:59).

In brief, the *Qur'anic* point of view is that every Muslim female has to wear an outer cloak that covers her body and a headscarf which covers her bosom, when she goes out of her home. Islam places these conditions on a woman, not as a means of oppressing her, but as a way of protecting her and giving her dignity through instant recognition, as a Muslim woman who should be respected and revered.

Chapter Four

The Dress Code in Prophetic Tradition

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DRESS CODE IN PROPHETIC TRADITION.

4.1 Introduction

With the demise of the Prophet (S.A.W.), it was impossible to refer to him about matters arising in daily life. These problems were resolved either by consulting the *Qur'an* or on the basis of the actions and sayings of the Prophet (S.A.W.). These eye-witness accounts of occurrences in the life of the Prophet (S.A.W.) are recorded as *ahadith*. The *Sunnah* or practice of the Prophet (S.A.W.) has had a considerable influence on Islamic Law. To obtain a proper appreciation of the Islamic requirements of *hijab*, the reference to various hadith literatures is essential.

Here, the *Hadith* literature consulted comprised of the works of Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and the *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. Most of the *ahadith* studied complimented and confirmed each other, however, there are some *ahadith* that contradicted each other, even by same scholar.

4.2 Length of Garment

According to Imam Bukhari, Abu Hurairah (R.A.) reported that, the Prophet (S.A.W.) said, *'The part of the Izar (pants) which hangs below the ankles is in the fire'* (Bukhari. 1994:946). This Prophetic tradition relates to men wearing a trouser that touches the floor. Some scholars, like Muslim, have taken the literal meaning of this *hadith* and claimed that the trouser must be on or above the ankles to be acceptable.

Muslim quotes Ibn 'Umar (R.A.) as *'Allah's Messenger (May peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Allah will not look upon him who trails his garment out of pride'* (Muslim. 1980:1148). This refers to part of the lower garment of either males or females. The ancient tradition of wearing long length robes by the elite upper class in order to show their status was not acceptable in Islam.

Muslim further quotes another *hadith* on the authority of Ibn 'Umar: *'I happened to pass before Allah's Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him) with my lower garment trailing (upon the ground). He said : "Abdullah, tug up your lower garment". I tugged it up, and he again said : " Tug it still further", and I*

tugged it still further and I went on tugging it afterward, whereupon some people said : “ To what extent ?” Thereupon he said: “To the middle of the shanks’ (Muslim. 1980:1149)

Abu Dawud says that Abu Juray Jabir bin Salim narrated a lengthy *hadith* that contained the following words of the Prophet (S.A.W.): ‘... *Have your lower garment halfway down your shin; if you cannot do it, have it up to the ankles. Beware of hanging down the lower garment for it is conceit and Allah does not like conceit.....’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1140).*

Another *hadith* mentioned in Abu Dawud’s work is one reported by Abu Hurairah (R.A.) : ‘A man was praying with his lower garment hanging down. The Apostle of Allah (May peace and blessings be upon him) said to him: “Go and perform ablution.” He then went and performed ablution. He then came and he said : “Go and perform ablution.” Then a man said to him: “Apostle of Allah, what is the matter with you that you commanded him to perform ablution and then you kept silence?” He replied: “He was praying while hanging down his lower garments, and Allah does not accept the prayer of a man who hangs down his lower garment’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1140).

An interesting *hadith* also mentioned by Abu Dawud is one narrated by Ibn Umar (R.A) that the Apostle of Allah (May peace and blessings be upon him) said: *'If anyone trails his garment arrogantly, Allah will not look at him on the Day of Resurrection.'* Then Abu Bakr said : *"One of the sides of my lower garment trails, but still I remain careful about it."* He said: *"You are not one of those who do so conceitedly'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1140).

The length of the garment has been a very controversial issue in the Muslim world. There are scholars who hold the view that the garment must be above the ankles for the individual's prayer to be accepted. There seems to be some wisdom in this view as this will ensure that the clothes remain clean and pure at all times.

However, the group which subscribes to the contrary view, base their arguments on the fact that most *ahadith* regard the actual dragging of garments on the floor as unacceptable. Thus, it is permissible to wear a trouser with its length going below the ankles but without touching the ground.

The basic idea accepted by Muslims today is that wearing a long robe or trouser that sweeps the floor is not permissible. Firstly, it is unhygienic and secondly it is a sign of arrogance as mentioned in the *ahadith*.

4.3 Wearing of Silk

The prohibition on wearing of silk by men in Islam is clarified by Imam Bukhari in the following *hadith* on the authority of ‘Umar (R. A.) : The Prophet (S. A. W.) said : *‘There is none who wears silk in this world except that he will wear nothing of it in the Hereafter’* (Bukhari. 1994:947).

Bukhari also relates from Abu Hanifa (R.A.) that *‘The Prophet (S.A.W.) forbade us to drink out of gold and silver vessels, or eat in it, and also forbade the wearing of silk and dibaj’* (Bukhari. 1994:947).

Muslim presents the Prophetic tradition on the prohibition of wearing silk in a *hadith* narrated by ‘Abdullah bin ‘Ukaim that *‘the Prophet (S. A. W.) did not allow his followers to drink in gold and silver vessels, and he also did not allow them to wear brocade or silk, because he said that those things were meant for*

the disbelievers in this world, but they are meant for the believers in the Hereafter and on the Day of Resurrection' (Muslim. 1980: 1140).

Bukhari quotes from 'Umar (R.A.) that *'Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) had forbidden the use of silk (clothes by men) except this much, then he pointed with his index and middle fingers. To our knowledge, by that he meant embroidery*' (Bukhari. 1994:947).

Similar *ahadith* have also been reported by Muslim who adds the permissibility for women to adorn silk . *'Ali reported : 'A silk cloak was presented to Allah's Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him), and he sent it to me and I wore it, but then found some sign of disapproval on his face, whereupon he said : "I did not send it to you that you wear it, but I sent it to you that you might make out head dresses for you women*' (Muslim. 1980:1142).

Abu Dawud quotes similar *ahadith* with different chains of narrators wherein he mentions the permissibility of wearing silk embroidery or edging: *Tbn 'Abbas said: 'It is only a garment*

made wholly of silk which the Apostle of Allah (may peace and blessings be upon him) forbade, but there is no harm in the ornamented border and the wrap' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1133).

There is a general consensus among scholars allowing men to wear silk under specific circumstances. Muslim quotes on the authority of Anas bin Malik that the Prophet (S. A. W.) had granted concession to 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf and Zubair bin Awwam to wear a silk shirt during the journey and because of a skin disorder that they both suffered from at that time (Muslim. 1980:1147).

A similar hadith reported by Abu Dawud serves to confirm the concession allowed on wearing silk during an illness (Abu Dawud. 1985:1134).

It is thus evident that although it is permissible for women to wear silk, its adornment by men is forbidden in Islam. Muslim men are allowed embroidery in silk on their garments but this must be kept to a minimum. Men are permitted to wear silk only if they are suffering from a skin ailment which prevents them from wearing any other cloth.

4.4 The beard

Bukhari is very clear on the issue of the beard: *'Narrated Ibn Umar (R.A.) : Allah's Messenger (S.A.W) said, "Do the opposite of what the pagans do, cut the moustaches short and leave the beard (as it is)'* (Bukhari. 1994:949).

Abu Dawud relates that 'Abdullah bin Umar said: *'The Apostle of Allah (May peace is upon him) commanded to clip the moustache and grow the beard long'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1232).

According to Prophetic tradition, Muslim men must grow their beards long but keep their moustaches neatly trimmed. It was the clipped moustache and long beard that helped people to recognize a man as a Muslim since this was different from the way the non-Muslims kept their beards during that time.

4.5 Shoes

Both Muslim and Abu Dawud relate the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s recommendation regarding sandals: *'Jabir reported. " I heard Allah's Apostle (May peace be upon him) saying during an expedition in which we also participated: 'Make a general*

practice of wearing sandals, for a man is riding as it were when he wears sandals' (Muslim. 1980:1153). This implies that wearing sandals ensures easier movements and protects the feet as if the wearer is riding on an animal.

Bukhari relates: '*Narrated Anas (R.A.) : He was asked, "Did the Prophet (S.A.W.) use to offer the Salat (prayers) with his shoes on?" He said "Yes"*' (Bukhari:1994: 948). Although this seems not the norm, this serves to indicate that the Prophet (S.A.W.) also wore shoes or boots.

The method of putting on and removing shoes is clearly described in *hadith* literature. The procedure to be followed is that the right shoe must be put on first and then the left one. When taking off the shoes first the left one must be taken off then the right one.

4.6 Saffron-dyed or Yellow clothes

A contradiction exists in reports pertaining to the permissibility of wearing yellow coloured clothing. According to Abu Dawud, it is permissible as mentioned in the following *hadith* : '*Zaid bin Aslam said : Ibn 'Umar used to dye his beard with yellow colour so much so that his clothes were filled (dyed) with yellowness. He*

was asked : 'Why do you dye with yellow colour ?' He replied: 'I saw the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) dyeing with yellow colour and nothing was dearer to him than it. He would dye all his clothes with it, even his turban' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1134).

On the other hand, Muslim states that *'Ali bin Abu Talib reported: Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) forbade wearing of silk and yellow clothes, and the gold ring, and the reciting of the Qur'an in ruku (state of kneeling in prayer)' (Muslim. 1980:1146).* He further argues that *'Abdullah bin Umar bin al-As reported: Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) saw me wearing two clothes dyed in saffron, whereupon he said: These are the clothes (usually worn by) the non-believers, so do not wear them' (Muslim. 1980:1146).*

Bukhari subscribes to the ruling that yellow-coloured clothing is not permissible in the simple *hadith: 'Narrated Anas (R.A.): The Prophet (S.A.W.) forbade men to use saffron' (Buhkari.1994: 947).*

It can thus be concluded that although Imam Abu Dawud claims that the Prophet (S.A.W.) wore yellow clothes, we have other evidence that he forbade it – especially those clothes that were dyed with saffron. This creates a conflict that may be resolved by the wearer’s own reasons behind wearing the garment.

4.7 Red clothes

According to Abu Dawud, red clothing was not favoured by the Prophet (S.A.W.) for men but allowed women. *‘Amr bin Shuaib on his father’s authority told that his grandfather said: ‘We came down with the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) from a valley. He turned his attention to me and I was wearing a garment dyed with a reddish-yellow dye. He asked : ‘What is this garment over you ?’ I recognized what he disliked. I then came to my family who were burning their oven. I threw it (the garment) in it and came to him the next day. He asked : ‘Abd Allah, what have you done with the garment ?’ I informed him about it. He said : ‘Why did you not give it to one of your family to wear, for there is no harm in it for women’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1135)*

There are numerous other *ahadith* that support this view. Thus, it can be concluded that Muslim men are not allowed to wear red, whereas Muslim women may use this colour.

A *hadith* to the contrary reported by Abu Dawud on the authority of ‘Amir (R.A.) says *‘I saw the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) at Mina giving a sermon on a mule and wearing a red garment....’* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1136).

Although totally contradictory to the previous *ahadith*, this hadith has been accepted by many scholars like Shafi’ and Malik, who claim that *ahadith* relating to the prohibition of wearing red are weak.

Bukhari strengthens this view by quoting a *hadith* narrated by Al-Bara (R.A.) *‘The Prophet (S.A.W.) was of modest height. I saw him wearing a red suit and I did not see anything better than him’* (Khan,M. 1985:493). This implies that though many scholars believe that men should not wear red, likewise, there are many scholars who hold the view that red is permissible for men. Some maintain that this should be left to the discretion of the individual.

4.8 White garments

It is evident that the Prophet (S.A.W.) loved to wear white clothing. Imam Abu Dawud has the following *hadith* in his compilation: *'Ibn 'Abbas reported the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) as saying: Wear your white garments for they are among your best garments, and shroud your dead in them....'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1134).

The Prophet (S.A.W.) made white the official colour to be worn on the two important religious pilgrimages to Mecca. White signifies purity and cleanliness and to every Muslim being in a state of external purity at all times is vital, as this is a constant reminder to be pure and clean inside. Wearing white is a subconscious means of achieving spiritual purity.

According to Tirmidhi, "Samurah bin Jundub (R.A.) says: *'Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said: 'Wear white clothing because it is more taahir and clean, and also clothe your dead in it'* (Tirmidhi. 1992:66).

4.9 Wearing Gold and Silver Jewellery

The Prophet (S.A.W.) permitted the use of silver by both men and women. He did not allow men to wear gold as *'Abu Hurairah (R.A.) reported the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) as saying : 'If anyone wants to put a ring of fire on the one he loves, let him put a gold ring on him; if anyone wants to put a necklace of fire on one he loves, let him put a gold necklace on him and if anyone wants to put a bracelet of fire on one he loves, let him put a gold bracelet on him. Keep to silver and amuse yourselves with it' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1176).*

Muslim supports this *hadith* with one of his own: *'Abu Hurairah reported that Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) forbade the wearing of gold signet ring' (Muslim. 1980:1150).*

Bukhari quotes the following *hadith* *'Narrated 'Abd-Allah (R.A.); Allah's Apostle (S.A.W.) wore a gold or silver ring and placed the stone in the palm of his hand. The people also started wearing gold rings like it. But when the Prophet (S.A.W.) saw them wearing such rings, he threw away that golden ring and then wore a silver ring' (Khan,M. 1980:502).*

Wearing gold as an ornament is totally forbidden for men in Islam. However, if an individual needs to use gold for medical reasons, he is allowed to do so. This is clarified in a *hadith* by Abu Dawud : *'Abd al-Rahman bin Tarafah said that his grandfather, Arfajah bin Asad who had his nose cut off at the battle of al-Kilab got a silver nose, but it developed a stench, so the Prophet (may peace be upon him) ordered him to get a gold nose'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1175).

4.10 The favourite garment of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

The Prophetic tradition commonly narrated by Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud is reported on the authority of Anas bin Malik, who said that the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s most beloved garment was the striped ornamented cloak from Yemen. Green in colour, these *hibara* (green cloaks) were made of the best cloth in Arabia.

“Narrated by ‘Aishah (R.A.): *'Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) passed away, he was covered with a Hibara Burd (green square decorated garment)'* (Bukhari. 1994:946).

4.11 Wearing a turban by Muslim men

It is traditional among Muslim men in certain countries to wear a turban which was derived from the practice of the Prophet (S.A.W.). According to Abu Dawud, Jabir has reported that the Prophet (S.A.W) wore a black turban when he conquered Mecca (Abu Dawud. 1984:1137).

He is more specific in the following *hadith* when he says '*Ali bin Rukanah quoting his father said : "Rukanah wrestled with the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the Prophet (S.A.W.) threw him on the ground. Rukhana said : 'I heard the Prophet (S.A.W.) say: 'The difference between us and the polytheists is that we wear turbans over caps'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1137).

This obviously refers to the physical appearance of a person and his recognition as a Muslim, and not a polytheist, as Muslims wore turbans while polytheists did not. Another *hadith* reporting that the Prophet (S. A. W.) wore are reported by Imam Tirmidhi as well '*Amr bin Hurayth (R.A.) says: "I had seen Rasulullah (S.A.W.) wear a black turban'* (Tirmidhi. 1992:109).

4.12 Type of cloth to be used

Muslim quotes a *hadith* regarding the type of cloth favoured by the Prophet (S. A. W.): ‘*Abu Burda reported: I visited ‘Aisha (R.A.) and she brought out for us the coarse lower garment (of Allah’s Messenger) made in Yemen and clothes made out of Mulabba cloth, and she swore in the name of Allah that Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) died in these two clothes’* (Muslim.1980: 1147).

Tirmidhi also quotes this same *hadith* with a slight variation in words (Tirmidhi. 1992:114).

Mulabba is a type of rough, coarse cloth that was used by those who could not afford a softer fabric. The fact that the Prophet (S.A.W) used such cloth, despite being the ruler of Arabia, emphasizes that Muslims must lead a simple austere life free from extravagance and indulgence.

Abu Dawud quotes a similar *hadith* by ‘Utbah bin Abd al-Sulami quoted by Abu Dawud: ‘*I asked the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) to clothe me. He clothed me with two coarse clothes of linen’* (Abu Dawud.1985:1127).

There is much wisdom in keeping one's clothes simple as it is a very effective way of eliminating pride and vanity from the heart.

4.13 Pride with clothes and imitating others

Islam is very strict with forbidding people from showing their pride and status through the clothes they wear. It is clear in many *ahadith* that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was not a proud and extravagant person and certainly did not propagate this attitude. *'Abu Hurairah reported that Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) said that there was a person who used to walk with pride because of his thick hair and fine mantles. He was made to sink in the earth and he would go on sinking in the earth until the last hour would come'*(Muslim. 1980:1151).

Imam Malik quotes : *'Abu Hurairah reported that the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) declared: 'On the Day of Judgement, the Lord will not look towards the man who trails his cloth by way of pride'* (Malik. 1985:382)

A *hadith* reported by Abu Dawud regarding the imitating of others which is prevalent in Muslim societies is: *'Ibn 'Umar reported the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) as saying:*

He who copies any people is one of them' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1127). Today, in our society, Muslims have a tendency to follow the latest fashion trends dictated to us by the West. These new fashion ideas are totally in contrast with Islamic *hijab*. Yet Muslims prefer to follow these trends more and more faithfully each day. The reason for this is buried in their pride and desire to look the best and most modern. Once again this is in conflict with Islamic requirements of being simple and not extravagant.

4.14 Wearing the best of clothes

While discouraging pride and extravagance, Islam encourages the wearing of the best clothes one can afford. *Abu al-Ahwas* quoted his father as saying : *'I came to the Prophet (May peace be upon him) wearing a poor garment and he said (to me): 'Have you any property ?' He replied: 'Yes'. He asked : 'What kind is it ?' He said : 'Allah has given me camels, sheep, horses and slaves'. He then he said : 'When Allah gives you property, let the mark of Allah's favour and honour to you be seen'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1135).

Leaving no allowance for being miserly or selfish, Islam requires that an individual use the resources that he has been

provided by Allah. It is not correct for anyone who can afford an item not to buy it from fear of spending too much money unless if he/she knows that such an item is not needed and is an extravagance. Islam promotes moderation in all actions and the way a Muslim dresses has to indicate this.

4.15 How much of the body can be displayed

The popular and much quoted hadith that answers this question appears in most hadith literature: *‘Aisha said: Asma’, daughter of Abu Bakr, entered upon the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) wearing thin clothes. The Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) turned his attention from her. He said : O Asma’ when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to her face and hands’* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1145).

It is clear that Muslim women must not expose their bodies except their face and hands. This allowance is not accepted by some scholars, like the followers of the Wahhabi sect, as they believe that even the face and hands of a woman must be concealed. Again, they base their views on other *hadith* literature

that they deem to be more authentic traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

Abu Dawud quotes the following hadith : *'Dihya bin Khalifah Al-Kalbi said: 'The Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) was brought some pieces of fine Egyptian linen and he gave me one and said : 'Divide it into two; cut one of the pieces into a shirt and give the other to your wife for a veil.' Then when he turned away, he said: 'And order your wife to wear a garment below it and not to show her figure' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1148).*

These *ahadith* clarify that a Muslim woman has to wear a veil that is on her head but need not cover her face and hands. Furthermore, she must wear another lower garment that does not show her shape. This is the basic requirement for Islamic dress that has been advocated by the *Qur'an* as well.

Hadith literature also presents the concessions of dress on a woman in the company of a *Mahram*: *'Anas said: 'The Prophet (May peace be upon him) brought Fatima a slave which he donated to her. Fatima wore a garment which, when she covered her head, did not reach her feet, and when she covered her feet*

by it, that garment did not reach her head. When the Prophet (May peace be upon him) saw her struggle, he said : ‘There is no harm to you : here is only your father and slave’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1145).

4.16 Men and women imitating each other

‘Ibn‘Abbas said: ‘The Prophet of Allah (May peace be upon him) cursed women who imitate men and men who imitate women’ (Abu Dawud. 1985: 1143).

This is a simple but clear *hadith* on the attitude that men and women must adopt. There is no room for similarities in dress among men and women in Islam. The concept of “unisex” does not exist and is not allowed.

‘Ibn Abi Mulaika told that when someone remarked to ‘Aisha that a woman was wearing sandals, she replied: The Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) cursed mannish women’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1143). Islam encourages women to be beautiful, graceful and feminine. Allah has created women to be soft and gentle and this must be displayed in their dress and attitude.

Bukhari quotes the following *hadith* : “The Prophet (S.A.W.) cursed effeminate men (those men who are in similitude (assume the manners of women and those women who assume the manners of men) and he said, ‘*Turn them out of your houses*’ (Bukhari. 1994:948). Although this may seem harsh if looked at purely from a dressing point of view, Islam’s strictness with regard to a man being and acting his role in society is evident. The same applies to women. Each sex has clearly defined roles to play and the visible way to show this is in the way each dresses.

4.17 Hijab requirements with regard to the hair

‘Abu Hurairah reported the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) as saying: He who has hair should honour it’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1159).

Islamic teachings advocate that the hair must be kept short, neat and clean at all times. There is a concept that women are not allowed to cut their hair and that the long hair of a woman will be used to cover her modestly on the Day of Resurrection. However, this view is not favourable to many young ladies today.

'Sa'id bin Jubair said: "There is no harm in fastening the hair with silk or woollen threads' (Abu Dawud. 1985:1161). Women are permitted to use pretty ribbons and threads to fasten their hair, but this form of beautification must be covered by a veil when leaving her house.

With regard to the dyeing of hair, the Prophet (S.A.W.) was very explicit : *'Narrated Abu Hurairah (R.A.) : 'The Prophet (S.A.W.) said , 'Jews and Christians do not dye their hair so you should do the opposite of what they do' (Bukhari. 1994:949).*

Muslim also quotes the same *hadith* to justify the dying of the hair. He also quotes that: *'Jabir bin 'Abdullah reported that Abu Quhafa was led to the audience of the Holy Prophet (S. A. W.) on the day of the conquest of Mecca and his head and beard were white like hyssop, whereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: Change it with something but avoid black'* (Muslim. 1980:1156). It is generally known that Islam allows the dyeing of hair. The colour that is used must be other than the natural colour of the individual.

4.18 The use of Henna

‘Aisha told that when Hind, daughter of ‘Utbah, said: ‘Prophet of Allah accept my allegiance’ He replied: ‘I shall not accept your allegiance till you make a difference to the palms of your hands; for they look like the paws of a beast of prey’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1159). Although the Prophet (S.A.W.) disliked Hind for her heinous actions against Hamza (R.A.) in the battle of Uhud, his distaste for a woman not having henna on her hands is indicated in this hadith.

The following *hadith* confirms this: *‘Aishah said: “A woman made a sign from behind a curtain to indicate that she had a letter for the Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him). The Prophet (May peace be upon him) closed his hand, saying ‘I do not know this is a man’s or a woman’s hand’. She said : ‘No, a woman’. He said : ‘If you are a woman, you would make a difference to your nails’, meaning with henna’ (Abu Dawud. 1985:1160).*

From these *ahadith* it is evident that women must use henna to promote their femininity. Having henna on the hands helps one to

be identified as a Muslim woman as much as wearing the scarf on the head.

4.19 The prohibition of men using just one garment

The disapproval of men wearing just one lower garment to cover the entire body is clarified in the following *hadith*: *'Jabir said: The Apostle of Allah (May peace be upon him) forbade that a man should wrap himself completely in a garment with his hands hidden in it, or sits in a single garment with his hands around his knees'* (Abu Dawud. 1985:1139).

This restriction makes sense since using just one cloth to cover the entire body is insufficient. The risk of exposing oneself is very high. *'Jabir reported that Allah's Messenger (May peace be upon him) forbade that a man should eat with the left hand or walk with one sandal or wrap himself completely leaving no opening for arms (to draw out) or support himself when sitting with a single garment wrapped round his knees which may expose his private parts'* (Muslim. 1980:1155).

4.20 Conclusion

As regards the case of whether or not the Prophet (S.A.W.) wore red or yellow clothes, it is difficult to come to a final conclusion. Similarly, there are many other issues that people debate. One of the more serious, in South Africa, being the length of a man's lower garment and the length of his beard.

The way a Muslim dresses is a matter of personal judgement after taking into account the *Qur'anic* and *Hadith* injunctions. It should, in this day and age, not be the criterion used to judge a person's piety. There are more serious issues that need to be addressed in modern society.

Chapter Five

Views of Muslim Scholars

CHAPTER FIVE

VIEWS OF MUSLIM SCHOLARS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the views of various writers on the issue of Islamic dress. A great number of these scholars promote a dress code that is strict and rigid based on *ahadith* and interpretation of *Qur'anic* verses. Others justify a less restrictive view by quoting other *ahadith* and presenting a different view on the *Qur'anic* verses.

These scholars, however, agree that the basic requirement for a woman's dress is that she should have a loose, non-transparent outer covering and a proper head-covering. The debate on whether or not her face and hands should be covered is an on going one and it is this argument which is brought to the fore in this chapter.

5.2 Views expressed by Islamic Scholars

The views of the first scholar I have chosen to discuss is Abdul Rahman Doi, the author of '*Women in Shari'ah*', wherein he

claims that although the rules of modesty apply to both men and women, *'on account of the difference between men and women in nature, temperament and social life, that a greater amount of veiling is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress'* (Doi,A.R.1989:13). Although he does not explain what these differences are in detail, he goes on to elaborate on how women should dress and emphasizes that women should wear dresses that are loose fitting and do not display their shapes and that women should not appear without modest dress in the presence of anyone *"except their*

- *husbands*
- *relatives living in the same house with whom a certain amount of informality is permissible*
- *women, that is in the strict sense, their maid-servants who are constantly in attendance to them, but in a more liberal sense, all believing women*
- *old or infirm male servants and*
- *infants or small children who have not yet a sense of sex"*

(Doi,A.R.1989:14)

Doi quotes various *ahahith* which state that a woman must cover her whole body excluding the face and hands and she must not wear a dress that shows the shape of her body (Doi,A.R.1989:15).

However, he promotes the views of '*some scholars like Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani that because modern times are particularly full of fitnah (mischief), women should go as far as to cover their faces because even the face may attract sexual glances from men* (Doi, A.R. 1989:15).

Thus, he concludes according to the *ahadith*, '*it suffices too cover the body leaving out the face and hands up to the wrist joints... with the face uncovered*' (Doi,A.R. 1989:19). However, he continues that if a woman prefers to wear a face – veil by choice, she should not be discouraged as "*this may be a sign of piety and God-consciousness*" (Doi,A.R. 1989: 24).

Doi goes on to explain the situation regarding elderly women. He quotes *Surah* 24 verse 60 :

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا يَرُجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ
يَضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ

سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

'Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but It is best for them to be modest: and God is one who sees and knows all things'

(Ali, Y. 1946:916)

He stresses that only women who may be looked at with respect and veneration are entitled to make use of this concession. If *'a woman is old but still has sexual desires, it is not lawful for her to take off her over garments'* (Doi, A.R. 1989:15).

He explains the concept of hijab as a physical separation between men and women by quoting *Surah 33* verse 53.

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى
طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَظِيرِينَ اِذْنُهُ وَلَٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ
فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَنْسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِىَّ
فَيَسْتَحْيِ مِنْكُمْ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِ مِنْ الْحَقِّ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَعًا
فَسَاَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ
لَكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْا اَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا اَبَدًا
اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمًا ﴿٥٣﴾

'O ye who Believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses,-until leave is given you, for a meal (and then) not (as early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter: and when you have taken your meal, disperse without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys The Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth.

And when ye ask (his Ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that ye should annoy God's apostle or those ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly, such a thing is in God's sight an enormity'
(Ali, Y. 1946:1124)

Doi uses this verse to justify for the seclusion of women from society. Men and women cannot meet and mingle with each other in public or in private. Even looking at each other with a second glance is prohibited. Islam does allow a first glance, but totally forbids a second look or a stare. He quotes various *ahadith* to support this viewpoint and concludes with the thought that since men are not allowed to touch another woman's body, the practice of shaking hands when meeting should be stopped. He calls upon the Muslim scholars to stop this un-Islamic practice in our society (Doi, A.R. 1989:21).

Doi believes that women should focus on their homes and families. Their main duty is to provide a perfect home for their family. They

should not go out of their homes unless it is absolutely necessary. He does allow women to dress the way they desire while they are indoors. He makes a distinction between a woman's beautification and her exposing her body. He maintains that a woman, even in her own home can beautify herself without revealing her body. However, he does excuse a woman from displaying her beauty if she is unable to cover it even with the required clothes. He gives the example of women having a good stature, physical build or gait, or women uncovering their hands or face which may be very attractive (Doi,A.R. 1989:23).

Doi strongly prohibits women from going to public baths and swimming pools as these places require the exposing herself by wearing a swimming costume. Dance-halls and gymnasiums are also forbidden as they place a similar restriction on the type of clothes that may be worn.

Doi discourages women from entering a mosque and goes on to quote various *ahadith* to support his view. However, he quotes *ahadith* which support the fact that women prayed in mosques during the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s time, but claims that it is better for women to pray at home, as they fail to adhere to restrictions regarding dress and conduct. He maintains that in this day and age, if women are to be

allowed into the mosque, aside from creating awareness for salaah, women must wear a large sheet to cover their bodies, wear simple clothes, no perfume and avoid displaying their ornaments (Doi, A.R. 1989:25).

Although Doi is very thorough in clarifying the Islamic dress code, Fatima Mernissi, a popular contemporary scholar, provides a different view in her book *Women and Islam : An Historical and Theological Enquiry*. She defines the concept of '*Hijab*' as a physical barrier between two men and not as traditionally understood as a separation between men and women. She justifies this viewpoint by explaining that '*the descent of the hijab is an event dating back to the verse 53 of surah 33 which was revealed during the year 5 of the Heijra (sic)*'. (Mernissi, F. 1991:85). According to Mernissi, the *Hijab* descended on this occasion on two levels. The first being a revelation to the Prophet (S.A.W.) from Allah in an intellectual realm; and the dropping of a cloth or curtain that the Prophet (S.A.W.) draws between himself and Anas ibn Malik, who was at the entrance of his nuptial chamber at the time of revelation. This was done in order to provide privacy to the newly wedded Prophet (S.A.W.) and his wife. Mernissi sees Anas ibn Malik as a symbol of a community that had become too invasive into the life of the Prophet (S.A.W.) who was too

polite to tell them otherwise. *'The hijab came to give order to a very confused and complex situation'* (Mernissi, F. 1991:92).

Mernissi investigates the resurgence of the *hijab* towards the end of the 20th century in great detail. She believes that the veil was imposed on women as a means of protecting them from the increasing influence of the West. A woman's body is a symbolic representation of the community and it is this same perspective that was adopted by the Prophet (S.A.W.) in the year 5 A.H. Mernissi is astonished at the disproportion between the incident of the revelation of the verse and the response it evoked. She acknowledges that even though this verse came down merely to indicate a division of Muslim space into private and public, it has evolved into a separation of the community with segregation between the sexes. (Mernissi, F. 1991:180)

She goes on to describe the circumstances in Medina causing the revelation of *Surah* 33 verse 59.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ
جَلْبَابِهِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

O Prophet ! Tell thy 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 God is oft forgiving, most merciful.

(Ali, Y. 1946:1126)

Women in Medina were being harassed in the streets and were openly solicited by men who saw them as objects of pleasure. Every woman was a victim and the excuse of these harassers was to claim confusion about the identity of the women they approached. The Prophet (S.A.W.) had to ensure the safety of every Muslim woman in Medina. Allah (S.W.T.) revealed the verse (*Qur'an:33:59*) which made Muslim women recognizable by pulling their *jilbab* over themselves. Although no new forms of clothing were introduced, the mere wearing of one already in use in a different way made a huge distinction between Muslim and Non-Muslim women. (Mernissi, F. 1989:185)

Mernissi reflects that that *hijab* was a silent message that women are vulnerable and defenceless. It is a means of counteracting sexual advances from men in a society where adultery was permitted. Pre-Islamic Medina was a place where many different types of ‘marriages’ took place. Sex was freely available to men. Women could not refuse a suitor as this was simply not accepted. Women were forced into prostitution and slavery. The new Muslim leadership was faced with having to change these horrendous ideas in a way that would not erupt into a civil war. *‘The emergence of women’s free will was something that the organization of society had to take into account’* (Mernissi, F. 1991:184).

According to Mernissi, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) had a dream of a society where women could move around freely because of the faith of the Muslims. However, the customs of the hypocrites who treated women as chattels were the ones adopted by the society of Medina. Once the *hijab* was placed on Muslim women, the female population was divided into two categories: free women against whom violence was prohibited and slaves towards whom the attitude did not change. Although the Prophet (S.A.W.) did not like this situation, he had to go along with it to keep Medina from falling into a civil war. This meant that the veil that was meant to protect women in the streets was to

remain with them through the centuries and throughout the world; no matter what the security situation of a city was. Mernissi calls this ‘*a civil war that would never come to an end*’ (Mernissi, F. 1991:191).

Although there have been women in history which have rejected the *hijab*, they have not achieved much success. Mernissi goes into much detail describing women’s rights. She discusses the Prophet (S.A.W.)’s attitude towards women. She highlights a very liberal-minded woman: Sukayna, the great-granddaughter of the Prophet (S.A.W.), daughter of Husain (R.A.). She was a woman that defied the restrictions placed on Muslim women at that time. She never pledged obedience to any of her many husbands and never acknowledged that men had the right to polygamy. However, there have been many attempts according to Mernissi’s personal experiences, to obliterate the memory of Sukayna, she stands out as an exception to the rule. Other ladies like the prophet (S.A.W.)’s wives, Ayesha (R.A.) and Umm Salama (R.A.) are also mentioned by Mernissi because of their resistance to be a submissive, marginal creature that only goes out into the world timidly in her veils (Mernissi, F. 1989:195).

Mernissi concludes by asking why the memory of these strong women seems so unreal, while the image of the Muslim woman in the eyes of

the West is that of a seductive slave that must not be seen or heard. She answers this question by suggesting that only if Muslim men became more liberated in their views, the role of women will change. She encourages women to speed up this process through daily pressure for equality (Mernissi, F.1989:196).

In the book '*Hijab - The Islamic Commandments of Hijab*', Dr Mohammed Ismail Memon Madani explains the *Islamic* requirements for *hijab* in great detail. He promotes the idea that the verse of *hijab* (Qur'an 33:53) was mandated for all women of Islam, even though just the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) were being addressed. He justifies this viewpoint by quoting the *Qur'anic* verse (65:1):

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا
 الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا
 أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَحِشَةٍ مُبَيِّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ
 فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهُ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا



*'O Prophet ! When you do divorce
 women, divorce them at their prescribed*

periods, and count (accurately)) their prescribed periods: and fear God your Lord: and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they leave except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness, those are the limits set by God: and any who transgresses the limit of God, does verily wrong his (own) soul: thou knowest not if perchance God will bring about thereafter some new situation' (Ali, Y. 1946:1562)

He says that although Allah is addressing the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his wives, the command holds for all Muslims. He applies the same reasoning to *Qur'anic* verse (33:53).

He also quotes Sa'id Qurtubi: *'This verse provides the permission to ask, from behind a screen (hijab), the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) for any necessary thing, including any matters of religion. And all Muslim women would be bound by the same rule. Besides this verse, other principles of Islamic doctrine also tell us that a woman (for her*

honour) deserves to be hidden - her body as well as her voice'
(Madani, M.I. 1987:5).

Madani drives his point home strongly by quoting Ibn Kathir: *'These are the etiquettes Allah taught the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and since all of the Muslim Ummah are required to follow their example, these Commandments are applicable to all Muslim women'* (Madani, M.I. 1987:13).

Madani interprets the *jilbab* as a covering over the face and head. By quoting well known scholars, like Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn Kathir, he emphasizes that the *jilbab* is a separate sheet of cloth that a woman has to draw over her clothes to hide herself from view in such a way that her whole body, head and face is covered by this one cloth - leaving only one eye open. He quotes Ibn Jarir as, *'In this verse, Allah (S.W.T.) is commanding the Prophet (S.A.W.) to ask his wives, his daughters and all Muslim women that they should not dress like slave girls leaving their heads and faces uncovered when they come out of their homes. Instead, they should cover themselves with a cloak covering their faces so that nobody will stand in their way and everyone will know that they are respectable folks'* (Madani, M.I. 1987:19).

Madani makes an interesting claim that famous *Qur'anic* interpreters in the Arab world, '*...are the followers of all the four schools of thought. Thus, regardless of whether they are Hanafi, Shafi, Hambali or Maliki, all include the hiding of the face in the commandment of hijab without any disagreement*' (Madani, M.I. 1987:20).

He goes into great detail about when and how *hijab* must be worn. He is very emphatic about the face being part of a woman's body that must be covered. He quotes many *ahadith* that explain the necessity of wearing full *hijab* even at the times of distress and during medical treatment. He even recommends '*wearing a hat with a projected flap around and wearing a veil on top of it in a way that the veil does not touch the face*' (Madani, M.I. 1987:46).

He makes no concession for ladies when they are in the presence of their in-laws; even if they are from the same household. He believes that women may not go out unless absolutely necessary. '*There is so much emphasis placed on women to stay in their homes that their open participation in the important worship like salat (sic) and necessities like funerals and burials is not considered desirable*' (Madani, M.I. 1987:54).

Madani categorizes *hijab* into two areas : Remaining at home and by *burqa*, which means the covering of the body with a cloth. He substantiates his argument that women should stay at home, by quoting many *ahadith* from Bukhari. However he says, ‘ ...when a woman has to come out of her home under necessity, she is required to emerge wrapped in a long sheet of cloth from head to toe which does not reveal any part of her body’ (Madani, M.I. 1987:95).

Presenting a different view is a contemporary South African writer, R. Vania, of ‘*Purdah and other controversial issues : An alternative perspective.*’. Vania believes that it is permissible for males and females to interact ‘as long as there is no fear of evil prompting’ (Vania, R. 1997:7). He justifies this statement by quoting the *Qur’anic* verse (3:61):

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ
 أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ
 فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together, our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: then let us earnestly pray and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!" (Ali, Y. 1946:138)

This verse clearly shows that at certain times, men and women from different groups may get together to perform certain respectable actions and ceremonies. Vania feels that *the 'cause of Islam will be better served if we teach our young men and women to honour themselves and one another'* (Vania, R. 1997: 8).

Vania refutes *ahadith* that enjoin the covering of a woman's face as defective and he quotes a *hadith* in *'Sahih Al-Bukhari (vol 4, no 319)* which reads: *'Narrated Anas bin Malik that he and Abu Talha came in the company of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and Safiya was accompanying the Prophet (S. A. W.), who let her ride behind him on his she-camel. During the journey, the she-camel slipped and both the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his wife fell down. Abu Talha (the sub-narrator) thinks*

that Anas said that Abu Talha jumped from his she-camel and said : 'O Allah's Apostle ! May Allah sacrifice me for your sake. Did you get hurt?' The Prophet (S.A.W.) replied, 'No but take care of the lady.' Abu Talha covered his face with his garment and proceeded towards her and covered her with his garment, and she got up' (Vania, R. 1997:11).

Vania questions why this *hadith* does not form the basis for men covering their faces in the presence of women, just like the men from the Touareg tribe of the Sahara Desert.

He goes on to describe the headband that pre-Islamic Arab women used to wear. It was tied in a knot behind the head exposing the bosom. He also promotes the concept of using this head covering to cover the bosom or wearing another cloak over the clothes to ensure the whole body is covered.

Regarding *Surah* 33 verse 53, in which the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives have to be addressed from behind a veil, Vania maintains that this is an injunction only on the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives because they occupy a unique position in Islam. To further substantiate this point, he quotes *Surah* 33 verse 50:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ الَّتِي ءَاتَيْتَ أَجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ
يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ
خَالِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَدْلَتِكَ الَّتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ وَأُمَّرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِن وَهَبَتْ
نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَنْكِحَهَا خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِنْ دُونِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥٠﴾

O Prophet ! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom God has assigned to thee and daughters of thy paternal uncles and Aunts and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from, Mecca) with thee and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her; this only for thee and not for the

Believers (at large); we know what we have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands posses : in order that there should be no difficulty for you and God is oft forgiving most merciful. (Ali,Y. 1946:1121)

Vania emphasizes that there is no evidence for the purdah-system or even the face cover in the *Qur'an*. He further maintains that there is no explicit command for even the head cover. *'It is required that both sexes behave with modesty, respect and dignity with each other.'* and that *'Tight-fitting or see-through clothing is unacceptable'* (Vania,R. 1997:18). He even derides the wearing of plain black by Muslim women who have sought to justify it as an Islamic uniform. To emphasize, he quotes the *Qur'anic* verse (7:31):

﴿يَبْنَىٓ ءَاۤءَمَ خُذُوۡا زِيۡنَتَكُمْ عِنۡدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوۡا
وَأَشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوۡا إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيۡنَ﴾ (٣١)

O children of Adam ! wear your beautiful

*apparel at every time and place of
prayer:eat and drink: but waste not by
excess, for God loveth not the wasters.*

(Ali,Y:1946:347)

Famous British writer, Dr. Jamal A. Badawi, wrote a book called '*The Muslim Woman's dress according to the Qur'an and Sunnah*'. Here, he simply and clearly defines the basic requirements of a woman's dress as being loose and not see-through. He motivates this as an obvious way to hiding a woman's body. '*Even moderately tight clothes which cover the whole body does describe the shape of such attractive parts of the woman's body as the bust line, the waist, the buttocks, the back and the thighs. If these are not part of the natural beauty or zeenah what else is?*' (Badawi, J.1980:7).

Although he recommends the wearing of a cloak over the woman's undergarments, he declares that if a woman's clothing meets the '*Islamic standards*', it suffices (without a cloak) even for the validity of prayers (Badawi, J. 1980:7).

Badawi explains the concept of a woman's *zeenah* as her natural, bodily beauty on the one hand and her artificial adornment such as

jewellery and clothes. For this reason, he says that a woman's dress should not be such that it attracts the attention of the male. He also quotes *ahadith* that a woman's face and hands could be allowed to stay open (Badawi, J. 1980:8).

Interestingly, Badawi translates *juyubihinna* from (*Qur'an:33:59*) to be the plural form of the Arabic word *jaib* which is a derivative of *jawb* meaning 'cutting' (Badawi, J. 1980:8). He says that this refers to the neck slit of a woman's dress. Badawi therefore includes the woman's neck and bosom in what needs to be covered by the head cover. He also includes a few additional requirements for both men and women:

- The dress of either sex must not imitate the opposite sex.
- Dress should not be similar to the unbelievers. It should be such that it identifies a person as a believer.
- Dress should not be so extravagant and expensive that it may be used as a status symbol (Badawi, J. 1980:8).

In conclusion, Badawi calls upon husbands, fathers and mothers to teach, show and help to fulfil the will of Allah (S.W.T.), since it *'is not coercion, or force which is likely to bring about obedience to*

Allah (S.W.T.). It is but, the love of Allah (S.W.T.), the acceptance of his guidance as the supreme Truth, even if it is contrary to one's personal opinions, that will bring about change' (Badawi, J.1980:11).

Another famous writer, Afzalur Rahman, in the '*Role of Muslim women in Society*', expresses views that take women's different geographical, cultural, social and economic situations into account before prescribing their mode of dressing.

He quotes the *Qur'anic* verse (33:33) :

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَأَتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ
الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of former times of Ignorance; and establish regular prayer, and give regular charity; and obey God and His Apostle. And God only wishes

*to remove abomination from you, ye
members of the Family, and to make you
pure and spotless. (Ali, Y.1946:1115)*

Afzalur Rahman claims that this verse, when specifying the conduct of the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives refers specifically to them because of the situation they found themselves in and not to the rest of the Muslim women in Medina. *'In no way could this obligatory duty of the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) be forcibly thrust upon other Muslim women as a compulsory duty'* (Rahman, A. 1986:422). However, he goes on to say that, should women adopt the dress code, that has been prescribed for the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives, as their own choice, it is considered as an *'act of charity and a noble gesture on their part'* (Rahman, A. 1986:422).

Rahman quotes the *Qur'anic* verse (24:31):

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا
 يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا^ط وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ^ط
 وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ
 أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي
 أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي
 الْأَرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ^ط
 وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى
 اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

*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 that they should not display
 their beauty except to their husbands,
 their fathers, their husband's fathers,
 their sons, their husband's sons, their*

brothers or their brother's sons or their sister's sons, or their women, or their slaves whom their right hands possess or male servants free of physical needs or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; 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 God that ye may attain Bliss.

(Ali, Y. 1946:905)

Afzalur Rahman says that should there have been a need for women to cover their faces, it would not have been necessary to add these few words in the end of this verse. *'He could have simply commanded them to cover their faces with a veil* (Rahman, A. 1986:422). He questions who has the authority to go beyond the scope of the *Qur'an* and prescribe the full *hijab*, which was only obligatory to the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives. He maintains that the imposition of the face veil has come about through later customs and traditions followed by women in the early *Islamic* era.

Wahiduddin Khan, in his translation of Muhammad Nasiruddin Al-Albani's, '*Hijab al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah fil Kitab was-Sunnah*', quotes Al-Albani as recommending that the woman's face does not need to be covered based on several *ahadith* and *Qur'anic* verses. Al-Albani also states that the clothing of a woman should not be a source of attraction, nor must it be tight-fitting or see-through. He also excludes perfume and imitating men and disbelievers in dress (Khan,W.1995:138).

Khan also quotes Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, from his '*Attafsir al-Uthmani*', when commenting on Surah 24 verses 31: '*Men are forbidden to set eyes on them. Perhaps this is why, before exempting women from covering their face and hands (verse 31), men are commanded to lower their gaze and guard their modesty in verse 30. Thus, the permission to unveil a part of the body does not give licence to others to set their eyes on them*' (Khan,W. 1995:149).

Syed Mutawalli Ad-Darsh, author of '*Hijab or Niqab:An Islamic Critique of the face-veil.*', believes that the *purdah* system is not Islamic and calls it a purely non-religious Arab custom. He believes that women in early Islam were not totally confined to their homes because they came out during times of economic, social and religious

necessity. However, when they did come out, they did so, dressed in a way that did not draw attention to themselves. Furthermore, Ad-Darsh believes that when the *Qur'an* (33:33) states that women should remain in their homes, it is referring to pre-Islamic Arabia when women moved about freely and mixed with strangers. The aim of this verse was to get women to behave more modestly and pay more attention to their duties at home (Ad-Darsh,S.M. 2003:40).

Ad-Darsh goes on to discuss the word *jilbab* in great detail quoting Alusi, author of '*Ruh al-Ma'ani*' who believes *jilbab* is a long loose gown which covers a woman's body from the neck to the feet (Ad-Darsh, S.M.2003:41).

Ad-Darsh defines four basic points regarding *hijab* :

- Women in *pre-Islamic* Arabia were being molested and harassed in the streets.
- Women did not cover themselves adequately.
- These conditions prevailed during the early days of Islam.
- Islam enjoined on women to put on an over garment to avoid being harassed and be recognized.

'Now, if the social morality of any country has advanced to the stage where women coming out of their homes are not interfered with or teased, then the first ground on which women were ordered to wear a long over garment disappears' (Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:41).

Ad-Darsh maintains that, even in modern countries, women must be prevented from displaying and exhibiting their bodily charms despite the historical context. For this reason, it is still necessary to cover the ordinary clothes with a long over garment.

He goes on to quote many *ahadith* that claim that the covering of the hands and the face is not necessary. However, *'barring the face, the hands and the feet, all other parts, including the neck, should be completely covered and a long over garment put on which leaves no part of the body exposed'* (Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:45).

Ad-Darsh provides a thorough discussion on the opinions offered by commentators like al-Tabari, al-Baghawi, Ibn Kathir and al-Jalalayn. Each of these express conflicting views about the need to cover the hands and face, but Ad-Darsh points out that *'it seems that the mufasssirun generally agreed on uncovering the face and hands, but*

they disagreed on whether non-Mahrams are allowed to look at them'(Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:48).

Ad-Darsh also discussed the rules and regulations employed by jurists like al-Qurtubi and al-Jassas. He concludes that after detailed scrutiny of their works, *'the majority of mufasirun, in fact, do not regard the face and hands as awrah'* (Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:53)

Ad-Darsh has also analysed several books of *hadith* and *fiqh* on this topic. He mentions that in one of the great Hanafi textbooks, *'Bad al-Sana' ifi tartib al-Shar'ia'* by al-Kasani, Imam Abu Hanafi allows women to leave the hands and face uncovered while the rest of her body must be clothed. Women, on the other hand, are forbidden to look at what is between the navel and the knees of a man as this is part of his *awrah*. Abu Hanifa also stated that it is not necessary to cover the two feet. Imam Malik views it as permissible to leave the face and hands exposed.

Ad-Darsh quotes al-Nawawi from his explanatory notes of Imam Shafi's *'Sharh al-Muhaththab'* *'as for the free woman, her awrah is her whole body except the face and two hands.....'* (Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:96).

The book of Imam Hanbali, '*Al-Mughini*', compiled by Qudamah mentions that a man must cover the area between the navel and the knee. It is allowed for a woman to keep her face and hands uncovered – just as she is allowed to do so during prayers. Most *Hanbali* scholars agree that the face may be uncovered. However, some disagree on whether or not her hands should be covered.

Ad-Darsh concludes that even though the consensus of all Muslim scholars is that a Muslim woman must cover her body, the majority of them are of the opinion that it is not obligatory to cover the face and hands. Those who advocate the use of the face veil base their opinions on rules provided for the members of the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s household. He says, as a final word, that *Islam* protects the '*dignity and honour of the Muslim woman, at the same time, she is given the practical opportunity to go about her daily life in education, in work, in participation in public life, in a decent, proper and relaxed manner*' (Ad-Darsh, S.M. 2003:105).

5.3 Conclusion

The issue of a woman's dress has been debated a great detail over the past centuries. However, almost all documented discussion on this

issue has been that of males. There is very little or no records of what women feel on this issue and whether they agree with the respective views or not.

The fact that there seems to be a consensus that the basis of Islamic *hijab* is that women must wear a separate loose outer covering that does not reveal the shape of her body as well as a head covering that covers the entire ear-neck and bosom area. Going further and covering the hands and face, although not in the *Qur'an*, is a common practice among Muslim women in the Middle East. It is a growing trend for some women in South Africa. It is a step taken by women that further testifies to the extent of their desire to please Allah (S.W.T.). They do not see it as repressive or restrictive, instead, it is a way to show their higher level of piety and their devotion to the laws of Islam.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Allah (S. W. T.) chose the day of the marriage of the Prophet (S.A.W.) to Zaynab bint Jahash, during the fifth year after *hijrah*, to legislate the proper conduct of the public towards the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s household. The *hijab* verse, revealed by Allah (S.W.T.), on this occasion served as a guideline for all people on how to address the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and to shield them from the eyes of all the visitors to his home.

Many Muslim interpreters state that the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s wives took an active role in the community of *Medina* until the *hijab* verse was revealed. These ladies were living in quarters that were mere extensions of the masjid, which was the centre of public activity. The *hijab* verse thus served as a means to provide domestic comfort and privacy to the females in the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s household.

The *hijab* has been seen as a protective device especially during the political strife during 5 A.H. Although this verse ensured that the

women in the Prophet (S.A.W.)'s household obtained physical security and privacy, it also implied the seclusion of these women and their removal from society.

Soon after the revelation of the *hijab* verse, Allah (S.W.T.) commanded Muslim women to cover themselves with their *jilbab* so that they may be recognized as Muslim women and not be harassed in the streets. This piece of legislation differed from the *hijab* verse, in that, it firstly referred to women appearing in public, who were not secluded in their homes. Secondly, it applied to all Muslim women, not just the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

This dissertation has dealt with the concept of *hijab* on two levels. The first being the literal meaning and use of the word in the *Qur'an* including its use during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.). The second level discussed is the evolution of the concept of *hijab* throughout time, resulting in a different concept of *hijab* today.

6.2 Chapter One – Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the concept of *hijab*. There is a scarcity of literature available on the issue of *hijab* today. This is the motivation for choosing to undertake research on this aspect. It

presents motivation for choosing this topic, the literature available, the concepts of *hijab* and a brief introduction to each chapter.

6.3 Chapter Two - An Historical Background of *Hijab*

Chapter Two presents a detailed history of the dress code implemented by ancient Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. Many similarities between the dress code adopted by these ancient civilizations and the dress code prescribed by Islam are noted. It is observed that the long loose-fitting dress with a head covering of some sort was favoured by the women of these civilizations. The covering of the head was seen to be favoured by the upper class and aristocratic women such as Queen Nemes and Isis, Queen of the goddesses, because it was a symbol of their status.

Men also favoured the long loose-fitting dress-like outfit with a symbolic head covering. Kings and rulers were in favour of sporting a beard. This is an image of Islamic dress as prescribed by the *ahadith* of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

The origin of the Islamic dress code during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the beginning of seclusion of women in the early Islamic era is also explored in this chapter.

Developments regarding the veil during the Middle Ages through to the nineteenth century are outlined here. Many new viewpoints from scholars are discussed. Some, like Al-Mawdudi and the scholars from the ‘Abbasid Dynasty, were in favour of the total seclusion and covering of the face and hands of women. Others, like Qasim Amin, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Reza Shah Pahlavi forced women to abandon the veil and go out of their homes without any *hijab*. During this time, *hijab* took on a new symbolic gesture. It became a means of judging a woman’s piety and devotion to her religion. It was a tool used by many to show their progress towards a more modern perspective of a more liberal Islam.

When explaining the current concept of *hijab* chapter two looks at the way of dressing in many important Islamic and Non-Islamic countries like: Afghanistan, Iran, Jerusalem, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and South Africa.

Hijab is used in the modern world as a means of showing affiliation towards a certain school of thought. In its attempt to globalize the world, the West has unwittingly caused a strong inclination for women to adorn the *hijab* so that they may be identified as Muslims who are proud of their religion. These women show their

unwillingness to compromise their religion by sticking strictly to wearing the *hijab*, which today is symbolized by merely covering the head with a scarf.

6.4 Chapter Three – Islamic Dress code according to the *Qur'an*

Chapter three deals with the literal meaning of the word *hijab* as it is used in the *Qur'an*. The word is used in eight different verses of the *Qur'an* which were explained in detail through the translations and interpretations of prominent scholars like: Ibn Kathir, Abdulla Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, Mohsin Khan, Rodwell and Palmer.

Other *Qur'anic* concepts related to the issue of *hijab* were also discussed. Both the lexical and traditional use of words like *akinna*, *khimara*, *juyubihinna*. *Jalabeebihinna* and *yudneena* were explained in great detail.

6.5 Chapter Four – The dress code in Prophetic tradition

This chapter deals with the concept of *hijab* as recorded in the books *ahadith* by various scholars. It provides a good description of the dress code prescribed by the Prophet (S.A.W.) himself.

The books of scholars such as Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Malik have been consulted.

Details regarding the length of a garment, wearing of silk, growing a beard, type of shoes and the colour of clothes are examined and clearly outlined in this chapter.

The Prophet (S.A.W.)'s recommendations relating to the wearing of gold and silver jewels are also described. Concepts relating to his favourite garment and the type of cloth he preferred are discussed together with his dislike for showing off with expensive clothes and imitating others with dress.

The Prophet (S.A.W.)'s recommendation that Muslims should wear the best of clothes, without pride and extravagance, is explored through the recordings of various different scholars.

The chapter discusses in great detail about how much of the body of both men and women must be covered. It highlights and clarifies the requirements regarding the hair, its colouring, cutting and even covering.

Then the views of the Prophet (S.A.W.) regarding the dress code of all Muslims regardless of age, nationality, race or gender are explained.

6.6 Chapter Five - Views of Muslim Scholars

The diverse views expressed by contemporary scholars are discussed in this chapter. Firstly, the views of Abdur Rahman Doi are discussed in detail. He subscribes to the idea that women need not cover their faces and hand according to the laws of Islam, but if a woman wanted to adopt the hijab on her own, and then it bore testimony to her faith and devotion to her religion.

Then the views of Fatima Mernissi are discussed. She maintains women were required to adorn the veil as a means of protection from Western influence. Furthermore, she explicates in great detail why the *hijab* was imposed on women during the time of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and its imposition on women by various leaders for different political reasons.

Mohammed Ismail Madani holds the view that the rules pertaining to *hijab* was not specific to the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W.) but included all Muslim women. He maintains that a woman must be covered fully, from head to foot, leaving only one eye open.

Furthermore, a woman's place is at home and she should not venture out unless it is absolutely necessary. He advocates that should the women leave their homes, they must ensure that they are completely covered.

The contemporary South African writer, Rashid Vania, presents a different view. He does not believe that the veil should cover a woman's face. He maintains that women should be more careful about how they conduct themselves in the company of males, instead of stressing on their dressing. He then quotes *ahadith* to support this viewpoint. However, he does mention that women should cover their heads with a scarf and wear a loose-fitting cloak over their clothes. His views and justifications are discussed in greater detail.

Thereafter, the views of British writer, Jamal Badawi, are discussed. He maintains that a woman need not cover her face and hands but that her clothes should be loose enough not to show the shape of her body. The head and chest must be covered simply because it helps to identify her as a Muslim woman.

Then the views of other scholars like Afzalur Rahman, Wahiduddeen Khan and Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh who express similar views are discussed.

6.7 Final Conclusion

After research and examining the writings of various Muslim scholars from different eras, it may be concluded that even though the issue of women's dress has been extensively discussed and debated, no uniform consensus has ever been reached.

There are those who, on the one extreme, have the conservative view that women must cover their bodies totally, leaving only one eye open. Then there are those who, on the other extreme, believe that a woman's dress is of no significance. As Muslims, we have to decide, through deep reflection, what suits us, as individuals living in modern society, without compromising our religion. This is a huge task and a daily battle fought on every level with every decision taken.

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