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## THE VEIL IN ISLAM: AN OVERVIEW

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<b>Article History</b> Published Online:	In Islam, there is recognition of women's dignity and rights. in order to protect their chastity and establish their dignity. In order to achieve this, Islam has imposed veil on believing women. In many cultures veil or " <i>hijāb</i> " is a symbol of dignity of a women and a mean of defending women's chastity.
<b>Keywords:</b> ➤ Hijab ➤ Women Rights ➤ women	Veil is an essential provision of Islam to be observed at all times, on the basis of the irrefutable evidence of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Systeme of Veiling has three benefits. Firstly, it protects the moral character of men and women and blocks the free and unrestricted intermixing between men and women. Secondly, by separating the work places of men and women, they guarantee the responsibilities that nature has placed on them without any hindrance. And thirdly, the family system is secure and strong.

Islam is a universal, eternal and complete system of life. In Islam, there is recognition of women's dignity and rights. Therefore, there is a comprehensive program in order to protect their chastity and establish their dignity. In order to achieve this,



Islam has imposed veil on believing women. In many cultures veil or “*hijāb*” is a symbol of dignity of a women and a mean of defending women’s chastity. *Hijāb* together with covered dress gives a modest appearance. This prevents one from putting lustful gazes that could happen if beauty of a woman is revealed. So, wearing hijab can be a simple yet effective way of avoiding sins (or precursors of sins) for both men and women. This makes it easy to attain purity of heart and mind. In this regard, Allah says in Qur’an -

ذِكْمِ اطْهَرِ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَ قُلُوبِهِنَّ

“*That is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts*”.<sup>1</sup>

Islam has imposed the observance of the veil mainly for the purpose of eliminating obscenity and avoiding social. Islamic principles are not for any injustice or discrimination against women. On the contrary, in order to preserve their sanctity and chastity of society, it is made necessary for believing women to fully practice this provision. In another place Allah says -

— انما يريد الله ليذيب عنكم الرجس اهل البيت ويطهر كم تطهيرا

“*Allah only intends to keep (all sorts of) filth away from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to make you pure through a perfect purification.*”<sup>2</sup>

The provision of the veil keeps the human society pure. In order to protect the youth and young generation of the present society in particular and to ensure the safety of women, it is important that the rules and regulations laid by the Qur’an are properly followed.

### **Islamic Provision of the Veil:**

Veil is an essential provision of Islam to be observed at all times, on the basis of the irrefutable evidence of the Qur’an and



Sunnah. There is a clear obligation of veiling like the provisions of Prayer, Fasting, Hajj, and Zakat. The Qur'an says:

و اذا سالتنموين متعا فسالوين من وراء حجاب. ذلكم اطهر لقلوبكم وقلوبهن

*“And when you ask anything from them (the blessed wives of the prophet), ask them from behind a curtain. This is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts.”<sup>3</sup>*

It is a demand of faith to follow this provision. There is no excuse to take this provision lightly.. Because no Muslim has the right to oppose the clear provisions of Islamic law set by Allah. In this connection Allah says:

و ما كان لمؤمن ولا مؤمنة اذا قضى الله ورسوله امرا ان يكون لهم الخيرة من امرهم ومن يعص الله ورسوله فقد ضللا مبينا

*“It is not open for a believing man or woman, once Allah and His messenger have decided a thing, that they should have a choice about their matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he indeed gets off the track, falling into an open error.”<sup>4</sup>*

### The Importance of the Veil:

Regarding the importance of the veil, Allah says:

يا ايها النبي قل لازواجك وبناتك و نساء المؤمنين يدنين عليهن من جلبيبهن ذلك ادنى ا يعرفن فلا يؤذين و كان الله غفورا رحيمًا

*“O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them. That will make it more likely that they are recognized, hence not teased. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful”.<sup>5</sup>*

In this verse, the importance of walking with veil has been mentioned. If one walks with the veil, everyone would understand that they are decent and virtuous women; as a result, generally no one would harass. On the contrary, it is likely that those women who walk without a veil, could become easy targets of various forms of crimes including eve-teasing and in worst case, even



rape. Therefore, veil is an effective tool in protecting the chastity and dignity of a woman from the evils of society.

Special emphasis has also been laid on the subject of veil in Hadith. It has been narrated from Hazrat ‘Abdullāh (RA) that the prophet (SAW) said:

"المرءة عورة فاذا خرجت استشرفها الشيطان"

*A woman must be concealed, when she goes out, Shaitan seeks to tempt her.*<sup>6</sup>

Similarly prophet (SAW) said in another Hadith,

"المرءة عورة فاذا خرجت استشرفها الشيطان و اقرب ما تكون من رحمة الله و هي في قعر بيتها"

*A woman must be concealed when she leaves the house, Shaitan waits for her. And she is closest to the mercy of Allah when she is inside the house.*<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, it is good for a woman to stay inside her house and not to leave without any necessity.

It should be understood that the burden of protecting women from evils of men has been given to women themselves by observance of veil. In Islam, the responsibilities are divided between men and women, so men have been given burden of other things like earning for the cost of running the entire family. For this reason, it is necessary that men go out of the house to earning. Whereas, it has been advised that it is better for a women to stay at home. Thus, there is a gender segregation between non-mahram men and women thereby protecting the entire community from sins.

There is a natural attraction between men and women. Men can easily get attracted by beauty of a woman, and in some cases can break the rules laid by Allah to fulfill his lusts and desires. At times, a woman can also provoke a man or enjoy the attention given to her by men. And on top of this, *Shaitan* is always looking for any opportunity to whisper men and women into committing



sins. So anything that can excite lustful desires is also to be avoided. This includes the sweet melodious voice of a woman. In this connection Allah has forbidden a woman to speak softly to a *non-mahram* man so that no man with a “sick heart” may have any temptations about her. Allah says:

يا نساء النبي لستن كاحد من النساء ان اتقين فلا تخضعن بالقول فيطمع الذي في قلبه مرض و قلن قولا معروفا

“O wives of the prophet, you are not like other women, if you observe *taqwa* (righteousness), so do not be too soft in your speech, lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words.”<sup>8</sup>

Allah almighty has commanded the believing men to lower their gaze from stranger women and similarly the believing women to lower their gaze from stranger men. Allah says:

قل للمؤمنين يغضوا من ابصارهم ويحفظوا فروجهم ذلك ازكى لهم ان الله خبير بما يصنعون

“Tell the believing men that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts; it is more decent for them. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what they do”.<sup>9</sup>

The prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

فزنا العينين النظر، و زنا اللسان النطق، والنفس تمنى و تشتهى والفرج يصدق ذلك او يكذب

Looking at “non- mahram” (with lust) is zina (adultery) of eye and adultery of tongue is to speak to “a non-mahram woman” (with lust). The heart desires and longs, and the private part confirms it or denies it.<sup>10</sup>

So when it is *harām* for a non-*mahram* man and a woman even to see each other, how could it be permissible for them to personally meet and walk around?

It is narrated on the authority of Hazrat Uqbah bin Amir al-Juhani, prophet (SAW) said:

اياكم و الدخول على النساء" فقال رجل من الانصار: يا رسول الله، افرابت الحموة؟ قال: "الموت"



*“Avoid going to (non-mahram) women. An Ansari people said: O messenger of Allah; What do you say about husband’s brother (dewar)? The prophet said: Husband brother is death”<sup>11</sup>*

Considering in this Hadith, how dangerous it could be for an ordinary man and woman to mix even with husband brother. It is called as dangerous as “death” for a woman.

It is narrated on the authority of Ibn-Abaas (RA) that the messenger of Allah (SAW) said in his sermon:

لا يخلون رجل بامرأة، الا و معها ذو محرم، ولا تسافر المرأة الا مع ذي محرم"فقام رجل، فقال: يا رسول الله، ان امراتي خرجت حاجتة، و انى اکتتبت فى غزوة كذا وكذا، قال: انطلق، فحج مع امراتك

*“No man should be alone with a woman and (in the same way) a woman should not travel without a mahram” Then a man stood up (after hearing this saying of messenger) and said: O messenger of Allah; My wife goes for Hajj and I am registered for such and such battle. The prophet(SAW) said: Go and perform Hajj with your wife.<sup>12</sup>*

#### **Benefits of the veil:**

If we truly understand the rule of the veil in Islam, we can realize its three benefits. Firstly, it protects the moral character of men and women and blocks the free and unrestricted intermixing between men and women. Secondly, by separating the work places of men and women, they guarantee the responsibilities that nature has placed on them without any hindrance. And thirdly, the family system is secure and strong. The system of Veil guarantees a smooth chaste life between a husband and a wife. As a result, trust between husband and wife flourishes.

#### **Disadvantages of not wearing a veil:**

While the practice of rules associated with veil helps in establishment of mutual trust and modesty, a family / society without veil could be vulnerable in respect of such trust and chastity. Women in our societies have been influenced life styles of western cultures. Such women have ruined their religion and



faith. The Western society is facing a crisis today, in the name of sexual freedom. It is well–documented that eve-teasing and sexual violence is in increase. The reality of this is clearly visible in today’s unveiled society.

In the modern environment women are dragged/ lured from their own separate workplaces and brought down to men’s workplaces. Then the women are left with no choice but to compete with the men by sacrificing their own feminine characteristics and individuality. As a result, personal and family life is disrupted with frequent ugly incidents reported so often in media.

Above all, the greatest loss of not observing veil is that it causes displeasure of Allah.

#### **Islamic Precepts:**

##### **The persons from whom a woman must Veil:**

It is important for a woman to not only stay away from the company of *non-mahrams* but also it is obligatory for her to veil herself from them. Those with whom marriage is valid are called *non-mahrams*. It is not permissible to meet them unnecessarily.

In order to protect the chastity of a woman, it is also important that her *mahrams* (close relatives of opposite gender with whom marriage is not valid) do not disclose of her beauty to others. The information of physical beauty of a woman can incite a man, specially with lustful desires, to commit crime against her. In this connection, the beauty of a woman should also be protected from all such women who could possibly disclose this to her *non-mahrams*. So it is also made obligatory for a Muslim woman to veil herself with non Muslim women. This is because a woman without faith in Islam cannot be forced to keep the news of beauty of a believing woman as a secret on the grounds of faith. She



might have her own rules different than Islamic principles and so cannot be trusted.

### **Permissible persons for a woman to meet without strict rules of Veiling:**

It is permissible for a woman to meet her *mahram* men without strict rules of veiling. Those close relatives with whom marriage is not permissible for a woman rather *harām* forever, are called *mahram*. The permanent *mahrms* of a woman include:

- All direct ancestors like father and grand-father
- All direct descendants like son and grand-son
- Siblings (real and step-brothers)
- Immediate siblings of parents, grandparents and further antecedents
- Descendants of siblings
- All children prior to attaining puberty

In-law *mahrms* (with whom one becomes mahram by marrying someone) include:

- all the ancestors of one's spouse
- all the descendants of one's spouse
- all who marry a direct ancestor
- all who marry a direct descendant

Milk- suckling mahrams (by virtue of breastfeeding by a foster mother) include:

- foster father and further male ancestors
- foster siblings

It is also permissible for a woman to meet without strict veiling with old men (say, of eighty years old) who have absolutely lost all desires and sexual attachments to women folk.

In the view of Islam there are some conditions for woman's veil and dress. These are briefly outlined below.





- A veil mentioned in Islam includes not only hijāb but is observed in full body clothes worn by a Muslim woman. That is, the garment should cover her whole body. Therefore, it is *harām* to wear a garment that exposes a woman's hair, neck, chest, abdomen and back.
- The dress should not be very beautiful and eye-catching. e.g., it is not recommended to wear a brightly coloured and decorated *burqa*'.
- The dress should not be so thin that it becomes transparent because in this condition men will be attracted.
- It should not be of tight-fitting, because this can reveal the curves of the body and can be a cause for attraction.
- It should not be exactly similar to men's clothes, because it has been prohibited.

لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المتشبهين من الرجال بالنساء والمتشبهات  
من النساء بالرجال

*The messenger of Allah cursed men who copy women and cursed women who copy men.*<sup>12</sup>

- It should not be glamorous and stylish, because it is the dress of unruly and immodest non-Muslim women. And the beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said :

من تشبه بقوم فهو منهم"

*Anyone who imitates a nation belongs to that nation.*<sup>13</sup>

- Perfume should not be used in clothes when it can reach non-*mahrms* because in this condition men will be attracted.

### Conclusion:

Allah has made the provision of the veil obligatory in order to protect the honour, dignity of women and establish a society with moral values. The veil is a beauty and protection for believing



women. It helps in preventing harassment and sexual violence. A believing woman is expected observe the conditions of veiling and wear modest dress especially when going out of home. A believing woman is required to abstain herself from those with whom she is forbidden to meet, and does not speak in a charming and melodious voice. She also should not be alone with a non-*mahram* man, and should not go out of house unnecessarily. Both men and women are not permitted to gaze at any non-*mahram*, rather are required to lower their gazes. Just as it is obligatory for women to wear veils, it is also obligatory for men to allow them to wear veils. As for men who are the guardians of women, it is obligatory for them to keep their women in veil.

### Notes and References

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