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Islamic Voice

JUNE 1999

MONTHLY * Vol 13-06 No:150 * JUNE 1999/RABI-AL-AWWAL 1419H
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WOMEN IN ISLAM

[Veil a Symbol of Chastity, Nobility of Women](#)

Veil a Symbol of Chastity, Nobility of Women

By Farid Ahmed

The literal meaning of the Arabic word (Aurat) is something concealed and hidden. The Islamic Shariah requires all believing women to cover their whole body by a veil and protect their honour and chastity. Islam enjoins upon Muslim women to feel themselves at ease while remaining within the four walls of their homes. But in case they have to go out for some necessity, they must fully cover their bodies by a veil. A woman who goes out veiled in the true Islamic sense is no doubt Paradise for herself. On the other hand, a woman who moves about unveiled, would prove to be a curse for all her close relatives.

Clearly the Niqaab (Face Veil) is from the Practice of the Female Companions and Not Simply Arabian Culture. Niqaab is a beautiful aspect of the Muslim woman's dress and it is in no way a hindrance to the true Da'wah of Islam.

Allah's Messenger (Pbuh) is reported to have said: *"A shameless and immodest woman who moves about unveiled, would cause divine torment for her father, brother, husband and son as these had been responsible for her (conduct) in the world."*

Injunctions on 'Veiling'

Allah (SWT) says: *"O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies. (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:59)*

Again, Allah (SWT) says in Surah Nur: *"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do."* (Surah An-Nur 29:30)

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent and to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. Their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms, etc.) and not to reveal their adornment. (Surah An-Nur 29:31)

When the verses concerning veiling descended, the wives of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (Pbuh) and women relatives of the Companions prepared their veils during the night by cutting down their bed sheets etc. And when they all went out so veiled next morning, the unbelievers were stunned on this change.

Also, when the other Ayah tells the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like palms of hands or one eye or both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, etc.), and to draw their veils all over Juyubihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms, etc.) Surah An-Noor (24:31) was revealed, 'Aisha (R.A) narrated: *"May Allah bestow His Mercy on the first Muhajirat (emigrants),— they all (i.e. the women) tore their material and covered themselves with it."* [Saheeh Al-Bukhari].

Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalane, who is known as Ameer Al-Mu'mineen in the field of Hadith, said that the phrase, *"covered themselves", in the above Hadith means that they "covered their faces"*. [Fath Al-Bari].

Arguments against veiling - their analysis

A major argument being advanced by certain men and women these days is that piety and chastity should lie at heart and in the eyes. Therefore, veiling of face is not important. I would like to ask these people whether the wives of the Holy Prophet (Pbuh) and the Companions (RA) were devoid of modesty and shame at heart and in eyes (God forbid)? Are the present day women more chaste than the Mothers of the Believers, and for that reason, they have greater confidence in themselves and don't feel the necessity for veiling themselves?

Regardless of whatever be your opinion, I would say that there is no doubt concerning the benefits of Niqaab, and the scholars do not differ in this regard. In fact, today we hear many cries against the Niqaab for many reasons which do not make much sense. For example, the argument that Niqaab is counterproductive to Da'wah in non-Muslim lands. After having established that the Niqaab is indeed an authentic part of Islam, we must then conclude that to hide it is what is counterproductive to Da'wah.

Remember, no one would dare think that the Sahabah spread Islam throughout the lands of the earth by concealing the practices they learned from the Messenger of Allah (Pbuh); thus, as 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab (t) declared: *"Let the Sunnah go forth and do not stop it with opinions."*

Veiling During Hajj

Another argument put forth is that if veiling is obligatory for women, why do they go bare-faced during Hajj?

Here it may be clarified that even during Hajj, the women are NOT exempt from the obligations of veiling. It is in fact a wrong notion that the women on pilgrimage have the concession to move about bare-faced. The correct position in this regard is that Allah's Messenger (Pbuh) prohibited women from pulling down a special type of face-cover as was customary among Arab women who used to tie a cloth on their face and forehead. However, pulling head cover down to the chin is not prohibited. The fact remains that even during Hajj, veiling is obligatory for women as in normal life.

Read this very strong thoughtful history, Our mother 'Aisha (R.A) said: *"Pilgrims were passing by us while we were with the Prophet of Allah (Pbuh). When they came close to us we would draw our garments from the head to cover the face."* [Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah. Ad-Daraqutni reports a similar Hadith on the authority of Umme Salamah (R.A). Thus, we see that covering the face was a priority of the Sahabiyat and it is certainly a characteristic of the women who opt to follow their righteous path.

Bare-Faced : A Symbol Of Ignorance Or Progress?

Veiling of women is generally considered a sign of backwardness while women's bare-facedness is taken as a symbol of progress. On the other hand, it is a historic fact that prior to the advent of Islam, bare facedness of women was the sign of ignorance. In that era, men and women did not bother much moving about stark naked. The same is happening in the West now a days.

This only indicates that bare-facedness of women is a return to the era of ignorance and not a token of advancement.

The women folk these days are keen for progress and they love modern ways of life. How can they accept the obligation of veiling that prohibits their unhindered and free mixing up with men. Islam teaches modesty and segregation of women from men. It does not permit free movement of women outside their homes. Therefore, there is no room for such advancement in this religion. An advanced and modern lady needs hours for make-up before she feels herself fit for moving around in the company of men. She must dress herself up well and use best perfumes to be able to attract people. She has also to carry with herself necessary kit for overcoming the make-up losses from time to time. It is her utmost desire to beautify her face that is the central point of others attention. But Allah's Messenger (Pbuh) says: *"Bare-faced, shameless women, while moving about in the streets, serves as ropes of Satan, and with their help, Satan ties up men and pulls them towards himself."*

According to a Hadith recorded by Tirmidhi, Allah's Messenger (Pbuh) said: *"A woman who moves about flirtatiously amidst strangers would not see any light during the darkness of the Day of Judgment."* The Holy Prophet Mohammed (Pbuh) also said: *"The women who look naked even after putting on clothes are cursed by Allah."*

And the Holy Prophet (Pbuh) said, *"The eyes too commit adultery. Their adultery is gazing (at women and obscene actions)."* Unfortunately, these days, we find more women in our bazaars than men. It is, therefore, difficult for men to lower their eyes in the streets. Although the men folk are sinful on this account, the women moving about in streets are greater sinners because it is their bare-faced movement that is the actual cause of the sinning of men.

Allah enjoins the believing women in the Qur'an:

"You should stick to your homes."

This verse however does not mean that the Muslim women are not to go outside the house as and when necessary. But they are to go out veiled properly and in accordance with the conditions laid down by the Shariah.

The Holy Prophet (Pbuh) is reported to have said, *"He who casts an evil eye on the beauty of a stranger (not related) woman, on the day of Judgment, melted glass will be poured into his eyes."* (Fathul Qadeer)

A question validly arises here. Are not the women folk responsible for such horrifying punishment to the men? Nowadays, young girls and women go to schools and colleges and also the bazaars. They are there frequently and certainly not for some noble cause. They are aware of the presence of youngsters who roam about in the streets and roads, in search of their prey. With this in view, noble girls and women do not go out of their homes and whenever they have to move out of necessity, they go fully veiled. Strangely enough, it is a common sight in the bazaars that while the aged mother is fully veiled herself, the young daughter accompanying her goes bare-faced and unveiled. Because of this, not only is the daughter sinful, but her parents become greater sinners.

Allah's Messenger (Pbuh) is reported to have said, *"Whoever brings up his daughter in accordance with Islam and whosoever to them Islamic teachings, on the Day of Judgment, he and I would be close to each other like two fingers of my hand."* Unfortunately, most of the parents these days don't bother about imparting Islamic education to their children.

In short, the Qur'anic injunctions regarding veiling of the women are crystal clear. According to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, only chaste women, observant of the obligation to veil, are true Believers. They are the protectors of their chastity and honour and strictly follow other Islamic injunctions. The women who lack these qualities, are not true Believers.

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