

Religious Dress between Islam & Other Religions: A Comparative Historical Study`

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Abstract

We should be aware of the fact that Hijab or Veil as a term referring to specific values has been historically familiar among Eastern Societies for a long time and still up-to-date regardless of any viewpoint related to religion or belief. Simply, because it is a moral behaviour shared by all types of nations, whether monotheistic or polytheistic, civilized or primitive, but it might differ from one place to another. It should be noted therefore that Hijab is not a convention invented by Islam. It was common indeed amid the Greek, moving from there to other communities including the Hebrews at the time of Abraham up to the rise of Christianity. Our current study focuses on tracing the history of Hijab or Veil and its development, conducting meanwhile a comparative analysis between Hijab in Islam and in other religions.

Keywords: Hijab, Veil, Religious Clothing / Dress,

Introduction

Type of dress as well as adornment have constituted an essential aspect in identifying women's attitude in society. This is simply attributed to the fact that clothing has been considered as part of life requirements, associated with human existence since the outset of Man. God Almighty says, "Thus Satan brought about their fall by deceit, and when they tasted of the tree, their shame became visible to them, and both began to cover themselves with leaves from the Garden",¹ and His saying, "O children of Adam. We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the finest of all is the garment of piety. That is one of the signs of Allah that perhaps they shall remember"². Dress, as a matter of fact, is an essential value, which characterizes civilized communities, whereas we find primitive tribes in a state of almost nakedness, i.e. with no cover on their bodies.

It is quite common that "Hijab or Veil" is the term that is widely used by researchers. However, we would prefer in the current study to utilize the concept of "Clothing or Dress" instead of "Hijab or Veil" since the former is more comprehensive than the latter. Besides, the word "Hijab" has been stated in the Quran in several places where it refers to different meanings other than women's clothing. It is remarkable to note that there is only one verse in the Quran, in which the term "Hijab" has the meaning of a woman's dress, and it is often known as the "Verse of Hijab". God Almighty says, "O you who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless you are permitted for a meal, not so early as to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, go inside. Then, once you have had the meal, just disperse, and do not sit for long being keen for a chat. This conduct of yours shall hurt the Prophet, but he feels shy of telling you about it, but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask anything from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind hijab (a curtain). That is better for the

¹ Surat Al-A'raf from verse 22

² Surat Al-A'raf from verse 26

purity of your hearts and theirs. It is not allowed for you that you hurt Allah's Messenger, nor that you ever marry his wives after him. Indeed, it would be an enormity in the sight of Allah

Most interpreters³ posit that this verse was revealed in regard to the festival arranged on the marriage of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to Zainab Bint Jahash. This verse indeed raises several ethical issues, including the etiquette of visiting the Prophet in his house. These interpreters however refer to this verse as the verse of hijab because some Muslims, as they claim, enter the Prophet's house without permission, and wait for lunch until it gets ready, and after they eat, they are involved in talks and conversations for a long time. Accordingly, God has commanded them to adhere to visiting manners, and if a person is invited to a meal, he shall leave as soon as he finishes his food. Besides, when God Almighty says, "if you ask them for supplies" He means that if you ask the Prophet's wives for supplies, do not enter upon them, and you should talk to them from behind a curtain or hijab.⁴

It is narrated that before this event, Omar Bin Al-Khattab used to request the Prophet (PBUH) to hide his wives from the eyes of foreigners. However, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) kept silent and never replied. Another reason for the revelation of this verse, as depicted, that the Prophet's wife Sawda Bint Zam'ah went out to carry out some of her needs, and she was covering her entire body, nonetheless, Omar managed to recognize her due to her unique height, and he said to her, "O Sawda, I swear by God that cannot hide from us, so you should pay more care and attention when you go out. She went back to see the Prophet (PBUH), and he was at the house of Aisha and she told him about what Omar had said. This incident led to the revelation of the verse, which says, "You have been permitted to go out to meet your needs"⁵ It has been stated in Fath Al-Bari that "Omar and after the verse of hijab, wanted the Prophet's wives not to show up even if they are entirely covered, and he had been exaggerating. On the contrary of Omar's intentions, they were permitted to go out to meet their needs."⁶

However, speech here is not directed to women, not even the Prophet's wives, but to men in an attempt to manipulate and conduct their manners in accordance with Islamic morals, especially that the Arabs before Islam used to live in an uncontrolled environment, i.e. with no specific regulations. Hijab, in this case, therefore has been applied as some kind of barrier between Muslims and the Prophet's wives. It is indeed a protection and appreciation for them, and it cannot be considered in any way as an effort to detract or limit their freedom. God Almighty says, "There is no blame upon women if their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or their women or those their right hands possess enter their houses And fear Allah Indeed Allah is ever over all things Witness".⁷ Indeed, the Prophet's wives, being veiled, i.e. wearing hijab, are highly glorified when God Almighty says, "It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him except through revelation, or from behind a veil, or that a messenger (an angel) be sent to him who reveals to him by Allah's leave whatever He wishes. He is All-High, Most Wise".⁸ In His saying "from behind a veil", it is similar to the case of a hidden angel whom he can hear his voice, but he cannot see him.⁹ Moreover, God Almighty, being the greatest and the most powerful, cannot be seen by any human being even the prophets themselves. Besides, it should be noted that the Prophet's

³ Interpretation of the Great Quran, Ibn Kathir, 6/451; The Collector of Quran's Rulings, Al-Qurtubi, 14/224; Al-Muharrar & Al-Wajeez, Ibn Attiya, 4/395; Tafsir Al-San'ani, 3/121; Tafsir Al-Baghawi, 6/369.

⁴ Tafsir Al-Jalalein, 1/559; Tafsir Al-Samarqandi, 3/66.

⁵ Al-Bahi Al-Khouli (1994). Islam & Women's Contemporary Issues. Dar Al-Qalam for Publishing & Distribution, 5th Edition.

⁶ Ahmad bin Ali bin Hajar Al-Asqalani (1960). Fath al-Bari, Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari. Dar Al-Ma'rifa, Beirut.

⁷ Surat Al-Ahzab, Verse No. 55.

⁸ Surat Al-Shure, Verse No. 51.

⁹ Al-Zamakhshari, Abu Al-Qasim Mahmoud (1986). Tafsir Al-Zamakhshari. Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut.

wives are prohibited for all men except the Prophet (PBUH). Hence, if they are exposed to other men, they could be subject to covetousness.

This situation, addressing Muslims from behind a veil, is specific for the Prophet's wives only despite the fact that they are all prohibited for them, and this is not demanded of other Muslim women as it is quite obvious in the following Verse of the Quran, which states that "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women".¹⁰ A Muslim woman, therefore, is not required to imitate the Prophet's wives in her social communications, and if she wants to do so, then she has to address all men even the prohibited ones from behind a veil except those who are stated in the Verse of Al-Zina. In this case, she enforces herself for something unnecessary and unrequired, simply because the attitude of the Prophet's wives is very specific and it has nothing to do with their hidden or apparent adornment. As for the mutual issues between Muslim women and the Prophet's wives, they incorporate hidden ornamentation and dressing as per habitual rules. In other words, addressing men from behind a veil is not included.¹¹

This, however, can be generalized to all women when they are at home alone and being visited by other people. In this case, everybody shall adhere to the morals or etiquette of visiting according to which a stranger cannot visit a woman while being alone, and if he wants something, he shall talk to her from behind a veil, which could be, for example, the wall or the door of the house. Such behaviour indicates respect to the absent husband and the common social habits. Meanwhile, it demonstrates other issues, such as self-conservancy, protection for the wife, and a positive response to any kind of suspicions.

Such misinterpretation to the previous verse has been the reason behind all the accusations that raised against Islam, claiming that it hides women, excluding them from social life. Accordingly, "Women in Islam" is a problematic issue that has been raised by many researchers.

1. Hijab or Veil in Old Nations

Women's Hijab or Veil has been akin to Eastern Societies for a long time and still until nowadays, regardless of religion or belief, simply because it is a moral behavior, and morals, as a matter of fact, are shared by all nations, whether polytheistic or monotheistic, primitive or civilized. However, it might differ from one nation to another. It is, therefore, a big mistake to consider "Hijab or Veil" as a system invented by Islam. It should be taken into consideration that the veil was familiar among the Greek Nations, and from there it was transferred to other societies, spreading, for example, among the Hebrews at the time of Abraham (PUH), until the advent of Christianity. There has been in fact a reference to some type of veil in the Old & New Testaments.¹² Besides, it has been narrated that if a woman violates the "Jews Laws", such as going out among people with uncovered head, or spinning in a public street, or chatting with men, or even raising her voice, while being at home, to a degree that it can be heard by neighbours, her husband has the right to divorce her without paying a dowry.¹³

The Jews rely upon the 11th Chapter of Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he says "If a woman prays or prophesies with uncovered head, her hair shall be cut or shaved, and if she becomes ugly with such cut or shave, then she should be exhorted not to do

¹⁰ Surat Al-Ahzab, Verse No. 32.

¹¹ Shahroor, Muhammad (2011). *The Book & the Quran*. Dar Al-Saqi, PP. 609 – 610.

¹² Ismail, Muhammad Ahmed (2005). *Return of Hijab*. Dar Ibn-Al-Jawzi, Cairo, First Edition, Part 03, P. 76.

¹³ Durant, Will (1988). *The Story of Civilization*. Dar Al-Jabal, Beirut, Volume 12, P. 30.

so”.¹⁴ We would like to note as well the Church of the Middle Ages had allocated a special place where they could pray without being mixed with men. Historically, the Orthodox Church has deprived women of their social rights, forbidding them from attending banquets and parties. The woman then had to obey her husband, doing nothing but to spin, weave and cook food, and if she went out, she had to cover her body from top to bottom. It is remarkable to note as well that the effect of Hijab do still exist until today and the nuns’ costume is a good example for that. Moreover, Christian women have to cover their heads before entering a church for prayers.¹⁵

As for the Persians, Will Durant confirmed that women used to occupy a high social rank at the time of Zaradasht. They could go out freely with uncovered face. However, after Daryosh, women’s rank deteriorated, especially among people who belonged to rich classes. Meanwhile, poor women remained free due to their need for work, which required them to mix with people. It has been noted as well that the Iranian woman and according to the law shall keep away from people. and then extending to include all her social life. Will Durant considers this issue as the beginning for the spread of wearing hijab among Muslim women. indeed, women of upper classes never to dared to go out without being covered with veils. According to Durant, the Iranian woman was completely deprived of meeting or receiving other men except her husband even if it was her father or brother. Another phenomenon related to the same issue is the fact that old Iranian paintings are devoid of images for women.¹⁶

It seems that Will Durant has misunderstood the relationship between menstruation and hijab, regarding the former, i.e. menstruation, as a main reason that leads to the inferiority of women in Islam forcing them to wear hijab. On the contrary, we believe that when girls wear hijab after they start to menstruate is just and evidence that they have become adults and therefore qualified for marriage and motherhood, I think the difference between the two viewpoints is quite obvious.

As for the Arabs environment, it has been characterized with divergent costumes, specifically, women’s dressing. It has been common among Arab women to wear what is called at-home or walls veil, being praised and recommended by all, indicating chastity and luxury of women who do not go out of their houses and do not come in contact with strangers. An Arab woman has also put on Al-Niqab or the face veil. it has been narrated that Arab women do not remove Al-Niqab and show their faces unless there is a serious issue that they might face. It is argued that these habits have been inherited from previous religions, such as Hanafi, Judaism or Christianity. Besides, they used to be circumcised as well.

As a matter of fact, Arab women used to wear the veil as a habit. Some of them may remove it as a sign of their beauty. Others keep wearing it as long as they are outside their houses. She may cover her face due to decency and shyness, or because of having some problem with her face, and therefore striving not to remove her veil. Interestingly, it is narrated that an ugly man has proposed to an ugly woman. She has been told that he is ugly and that’s why he is wearing a turban. In her reply, she said, “If he has put on a turban for us, we have veiled for him”.¹⁷

Pre-Islam Arabs used to believe that a girl covers her face due to an evil or a defect she’d prefer to conceal. A veil in their opinion is merely utilized for hiding the grey hair.¹⁸

¹⁴ Saeb, Waddah (2004). *Female Infanticide*. Dar Al-Intishar Al-Arabi, Beirut, First Edition, PP. 47-48.

¹⁵ Ismail, IBID. PP. 77-78.

¹⁶ Durant, IBID. Volume 01, P. 551.

¹⁷ Afifi, Abdallah (1935). *The Arab Woman Before & After Islam*. Al-Maarif Printshop, Egypt, Part 01, PP. 104-105 & Bakri, Abdul Rahman (2004). *Al-Hijab and Women’s Rights Undervalued by Some Muslims*. PP. 32-33.

¹⁸ Afifi, IBID. PP. 104-105 & Bakri, IBID. PP. 32-33.

However, most commonly for them are the women who do not cover their faces appearing in different forms of beautification, which God Al-Mighty has described as “the Makeup of Pre-Islamic Era”,¹⁹ as the woman had the habit of wearing a shield of pearls walking in the streets displaying herself to men.²⁰ In addition, some Arab tribes were familiar with the ritual known as the “scandalous nakedness” in which they walk around Al-Kaaba wearing nothing, and they justify their behaviour by saying, “We cannot walk around the “Holy House” wearing the clothes with which we have disobeyed God”.²¹

We may conclude that women’s dress before Islam is largely similar to nowadays clothing due to interaction of nations and civilization leading to what we already know as globalization. At the same time, we find women hidden at home where nobody can see them. Some women are with veiled faces. Others are unveiled. We also find women with uncovered hair, and they are all Muslims. This indeed means that Al-Hijab is related to habits and traditions of a specific area more than being a commitment to the Quran provisions. We may find for example a woman who takes off her hijab when travelling to another country. Another conclusion is that Al-Hijab has not been invented by Islam, but codified by this religion with certain limits that all women shall comply with. The question to be raised here are

- What is the dressing code as stipulated in the Quran, and whether legislators have gone farther?
- Is Islamic dress confined by its time and place, or is it suitable for every time and place?
- Is it religious or social traditional issue?

We shall attempt to clarify these issues and aspect by referring the Quran Verses that have dealt with the Islami Dress, making use of linguistic tools that could help us analyze the text and understand it.

Some claim that Al-Hijab has economic origins, and that Al-Harem & Al-Hijab are some of the remains of Man’s Authority time, when man used to manipulate woman similarly as exploiting slaves, keeping them at home and convincing them that it is not a good idea to go out. Accordingly, he created the veil and the isolated places for Al-Harem.²²

2. Researchers’ Viewpoints Regarding the Appearance of Al-Hijab

There are many theories, which demonstrate the reasons that lie behind the appearance of Al-Hijab. Most of these theories attempt to clarify that Al-Hijab phenomenon is the result of injustice and ignorance. Mottahari (1142 Hijri)²³ stated and discussed these theories, claiming that some of them are philosophical. Others are moral, and some more are psychological. The philosophical viewpoint is based on taming and controlling the soul through intimidation, regarding marriage as a malignant event, whereas celibacy is deemed as a divine state through which the body and its desires are severely oppressed.

The social point of view attribute Al-Hijab to the absence of justice and lack of security. Economically, man considers woman as a property since he is the one who has paid the alimony and dowry, and therefore he has the right to treat her the way he likes. He may force her to veil

¹⁹ Surat Al-Ahzab, from Verse No. 33.

²⁰ Ismail, IBID. Part 03, P. 78.

²¹ Ismail, IBID. Part 03, PP. 78 – 86.

²² Mottahari, Murtadha (1142 Hijri). The Issue of Al-Hijab. Translated by Jaafar Sadiq Al-Khalili. P. 44.

²³ Mottahari, IBID. PP. 29-62.

herself and stay at home to do the housework.

As for the moral viewpoint, Al-Hijab might be traced to man's selfishness, being quite apprehensive and suspicious of other men if they look at his wife or his family. Thus, we may assume that morals have surrendered to selfishness in the name of man's jealousy and chastity of women. Accordingly, Al-Hijab is quite praised and preferred from a moral point of view.

According to a psychological viewpoint, the menstrual period gives the woman a feeling that she is biologically deficient when physically compared the male body, in addition to being considered as impure during that time. Jews and Zoroastrians used to treat a menstruating woman as a contaminated creature, and therefore, she had to be abandoned in an isolated place.

However, these reasons, even if they led to the emergence of the veil in Non-Islamic Nations, they cannot be taken as part of the philosophy that have led to the appearance of Islamic dress.²⁴

Khalifa (2014) argues that girls are burdened from the beginning with their bodies, and what men consider is not related to the truth, but mere illusion with which he enriches his whims similar to that one who tells a lie and then he believes it. In fact, he has believed previous lies that are convincing to men. It is described, however, as a reflection of illusive thoughts and ideas created by men themselves.²⁵ He cites two verses from the Holy Quran: "Say who has forbidden the adornment which Allah has brought forth for His creatures"²⁶ and "do not forget your share of the world".²⁷ He believes that these two verses include both man and woman, and therefore, woman has the right, the same as man, to enjoy life and its delights, the sunlight, fresh air, exercising her body outdoors and watching Nature in the different seasons of the year without being burdened with robes and veils.²⁸ In his opinion, what is required of women is just modesty.

One female researcher rejects Islamic dress, claiming that nudity has been linked to sex only when the religious authority intervened in the issue attempting to construct a complicated social system, and man is taught since childhood that nudity is socially and morally unacceptable. Accordingly, through time and history, feelings of shame and modesty, regarding the issue of nudism, have been growing and deepening among people. Any intimate relationship between man and woman is often accompanied with a feeling of guiled unless this relationship is blessed and approved by the family representing the smallest unit of the community. Thus, a number of ambiguous rituals dating back to the ancient worship of sex have been imposed on male-female relation, and hence manipulated by traditions and religion.

Some tribal or rural peoples can be taken as an example for the rituals they perform on the day of marriage. They may submit an offer to a pagan deity, or they might plant a land as a symbol of fertilizing. It can be noted as well that since the establishment of the idea of sin, the believers of such idea have a tendency to covering their bodies from each other.

This researcher goes farther when she considers nudity as something normal with the claim that some tribes whether in Africa or South America do live in a state of permanent nakedness without relating to sin. In her opinion, it is a kind of coexisting with Nature since

²⁴ Mottahari, IBID. P. 30

²⁵ Khalifa, Muhammad (2014). Muslim Woman & Men's Illusions. Eastern Africa Publication, Casablanca, Morocco. P. 86.

²⁶ Surat Al-A'araf, from Verse No. 32.

²⁷ Surat Al-Qasas, from Verse No. 77.

²⁸ Khalifa, IBID. P. 84.

they were originally created naked and therefore they should adhere to their origin and remain nude similar to Neanderthals and the Erectus. They behave like animals, relying on the signals of the female during the days of fertility.²⁹

It is a bit bewildering whether such speech is a call for liberation, or it is just a relapse towards the beginning of creation. We believe however that dress and fashion are a sign of civilized nations, and referring to those primitive tribes might represent a regression for the civilization and development that have been achieved by humanity. Besides, it should be confirmed that such issue is not specific for a certain religion. It concerns indeed human progress in general, and a good evidence to be stated here is the modest clothes that the wives of kings and presidents wear despite being of different religions and nations.

On the other hand, the researcher Taslima Nisreen (cited in Jadaan, 2012) declares that “woman’s body is beautiful, so is man, and woman wears clothes as well as man, then why is woman forced to veil? Women in fact are quite sensitive and attracted towards men’s beauty and clothing not less than that of men towards them. We may wonder then why men do not wear the veil as well.”³⁰ Al-Hijab has created some kind of obsession for the body, raising the degree of attraction. Instead, we assume that priority shall be given to work and activity, since these issues are more important than the body.

In addition, the veil has never managed to defer or hamper those with bad intentions. We therefore are required to find an alternative to the veil that could prevent or at least slow down the male obsession towards the female body. However, men draw the image in a different way, accusing women of being responsible for their bad behaviour and the corrupted actions committed by them. Thus, disparity has been expanding between men and women as religion is anti-egalitarian supported by the society and the State.³¹

As for Dr. Ali Al-Wardi, he says that some scholars believe that woman shall be confined in the house with tightened veil over her because of her immature mind with which she would not be able to protect herself, as they claim, from the whims of lust, ignoring that the veil, which they have imposed on her is responsible for intellectual status...Indeed, when we have imprisoned her and forbidding her from wandering and mixing, we by applying such compelling rules on the woman, have greatly affected the normal maturing process of her brain.”³²

Researchers have different opinions about the effect of woman’s body on men as it arouses the latter’s physical desire. Man’s attraction to woman therefore is based on the body inclination. As for woman’s attraction to man, it is related to other considerations, such as soul and emotion. However, the necessity of life imposes on man to uncover parts of his body while performing certain jobs. Hence, covering all his body the same as women shall hinder him from doing his work properly. Besides, woman, as created by God, is a beautiful and attractive creature, and then she is an adornment and not lust.

Some researchers, on the other hand, believe that the veil, if satisfactorily chosen, might indicate a tendency to escape from the world. A veiled woman, and as described by one female researcher (cited in Al-Damoni, 2007) is an animated ghost, and man, likewise, can wear Al-Hijab and do whatever he wants in a female disguise. Similarly, a veiled woman can do

²⁹ Ismaili, Hamouda (2015). *Mystery of Femininity & Sex Affair*. East Africa Publishing. Casablanca, Morocco, P. 70.

³⁰ Jadaan, Fahmi (2012). *Outside the Flock*. Arabic Network for Research & Publication. P. 99.

³¹ Jadaan, IBID. P. 99.

³² Al-Wardi, Dr. Ali (2020). *The Parody of Human Mind*. Dar Al-Waraq for Publication, Amman, Jordan. P. 47.

anything, and thus the veil has become a means through which all actions of pornography and social evil can be committed. In fact it is a veil from outside, but so deep from inside, dealing in a contradictive way with female body³³

As for Rajaa Bin Salama (2008), she says, “The black cloak with the veil are invading nowadays all regions of the world, and thus wearing the chosen or imposed geography of slavery that regards women and the female body”.³⁴ Then she raises the following inquiries: “If the veil is an obligation and one of the pillars of Islam, it is compulsory therefore to condemn the non-veiled women as well as those who do not consider Al-Hijab as an obligation, and they are many. Some of them indeed are knowledgeable in religion and religious reformers. So could the veil advocates condemn all non-veiled women and those who reject the veil as an obligation? Besides, what is the judgment on those who annul obligations in Islamic countries? How could the obligation take the form of a dress or an insignia so as to be recognized as Muslims in a country ruled by Democracy? Do they have the right to attack their opponents, and escaping the principle of multiplicity, being the essence of Democracy? Isn't it a matter of integrity that they repudiate the fake democracy they claim and show the real face of their societal project? isn't the political defense of the veil is just a cover to issues they cannot reveal? Don't they trade with women bodies in order to build their political glories amid very peculiar conflicts where the minimum freedom of expressing one's thoughts does not exist?³⁵ After all, they use the veil as an insignia with which they cover the female body so as to enslave woman and force her to surrender to the social regulations of pleasure, gender segregation and exchange of women.

Some advocates of women's freedom argue that since the Iranian Revolution, a paradoxical model of a veiled but working woman has spread everywhere. Despite the fact that women do surrender to the veiling rules, they are no longer imprisoned at home. However, their bodies remain a taboo and prohibited. The veil, therefore, and as per their viewpoint is an ideological brand of the Islamic dress. It is indeed an attempt to reorganize the differences between men women through the process of reviving the prohibition, which erases the female body by being veiled. The shadows of Harem World are spreading everywhere in the city of nowadays.³⁶

Ahmed Al-Qubbanchi (2009) has a viewpoint as well about this issue. He says, “Fundamentalists attempt to besiege and imprison woman at home, using two ways in applying this: 1. Constant appraisal of Al-Hijab that reaches an ultimate degree of value, considering it as a central part of faith and religious obligation, in addition to adopting a process of intimidating women from the West, the unveiling and gender mixing with much exaggeration to the degree that no morals and religious values shall remain for woman without being veiled and secluded at home, committed to her sole duty, the great Jihad, and that is her devotion to her husband; 2. Adopting and forcing instructions and fatwas issued by the so-called Religious Men, which prohibits women from practicing politics or occupying specific judicial jobs.”³⁷

Al-Qubbanchi (2009), indeed, has refused both religious and civil discourses, claiming that though being contradictive, they come up with the same conclusions, and that is the annihilation of woman's personality. While the religious discourse calls for veiling woman and confining her at home so as to do the role of maternity, nursery and serving her husband, the secular discourse on

³³ Al-Damoni, Hassan (2007). *The Veil of a Muslim Woman. Establishment of Arab Distribution. First Edition.*

³⁴ Bin Salama, Rajaa (2008). *On the Criticism of Human Crowds. Dar Al-Tali'a for Printing & Publication. Beirut, Lebanon. P. 47.*

³⁵ Bin Salama, IBID. PP. 56-57.

³⁶ Bin Salama, Rajaa et al (2005). *Global Concepts: Masculine & Feminine for Cultural Dialogue. Arab Cultural Center. PP. 39-40.*

³⁷ Al-Qubbanchi, Ahmed (2009). *The Woman: Concepts & Rights. A New Reading to Woman's Issues in the Religious Discourse. Establishment of Arab Distribution. P. 133.*

the other hand, emphasizes woman's liberation of traditions and complete equality with man and thus leading to the destruction of the family entity transforming it to a shaky existence.³⁸

As for the Turkish researcher Najlaa Kilik, she believes that Al-Hijab issue is the consequence of a certain historical context to protect women of sexual violence, and men of losing their honor. So instead of punishing the guilty, victims are veiled. Contrary to what the Conservative confirm, Al-Hijab does not represent a symbol faith. Moreover, and due to considering woman a Permanent Satanic Seditious for men who cannot control themselves, the function of the veil is to hide woman and keep her away from public society. Accordingly, some type of a separating line has been established between man and woman. While the former has full right in the open society, the latter is confined at home representing man's honor. It is posited that according to Islamic Education, woman is an irrational creature who lacks the biological conditions that are necessary for growth of mind.³⁹ Thus, Al-Hijab has become a symbol of simplified Islam. It is indeed the small flag that Islamists wave to say, "Here we are, and we are many," creating of the veil a political issue.⁴⁰

The researcher Rahhal Bobreek (2012), also considers the female body as a source of sedition due to being a beauty, symbolizing seduction, temptation, immorality and haunted by Devil who constantly attempts to entrap man in sin, and seduce him to disobey his Lord. Man therefore is in a negative status while facing woman's body. Subsequently, it has been quite necessary to oblige woman to religious rules and keep her under control and surveillance, hiding her as far as possible either by forcing her to stay at home or by completely veiling her if she temporarily wants to go out to open society, and her clothes shall be wide to hide not just the body, but its details as well. In other words, they should not be narrow or transparent so as to free herself from the charge of temptation, making her body lose any feature of femininity. According to this analysis, the female body has become a sin and a source of sinful excitement as it provokes man's instincts and urges him to commit evil actions.⁴¹

Saeb (2004) goes farther than that in his inquiries, when he raises the following questions: "Do the common concepts, which dominate millions of Muslims minds, agree with what is stipulated in the Quran?" "Has a major distortion been committed to our beliefs that now we are unable to distinguish between the correct and the false?" "Has Al-Hijab, as an Islamic Dress, been forced by the Quran?" "Has Muhammad Bin Abdillah come with a Heavenly Message or just clothes?" "Is it the effect of Pagans' or the Israelites that have been intruded on Islam?" or "they are the consequences of masculine knot imposed by man on the community."⁴²

However, some social affairs are imposed on men and women, and such procedures are taken so as to keep so as to keep everything under control without affecting the moral balance of society. These restrictions cannot be considered as a type of imprisonment or detention, nor to be taken as contradicting human dignity and his right to freedom. In many civilized countries in the world, for example, man is not allowed to go out naked to the street or even in his nightgown.⁴³

Some researchers believe that the veil has been established and imposed so as to distinguish pure women from those who constantly wander in the streets. As a matter of fact, it was used during the Mamluk Family Era in Egypt in the thirteenth century as a title which refers to the noble woman who belongs to a large family.⁴⁴ In other words, Al-Hijab is a

³⁸ Al-Qubbanchi, IBID. P. 131.

³⁹ Jadaan, IBID. PP. 200-201.

⁴⁰ Jadaan, IBID. P. 201.

⁴¹ Bobreek, Rahhal (2012). Women's Pool. Noor Bookshop. PP. 47 - 48

⁴² Saeb, IBID. PP. 13-14.

⁴³ Mottahari, IBID, PP. 86-87.

⁴⁴ Shibil, Malik (2010). Sex, Harem & the Spirit of Concubines: Marginalized Sexual Behaviours in the Big Maghreb.

uniform imposed by customs and traditions, but not religion at all. It is believed that the only place where a Muslim woman can be treated as a form is the Great Mosque of Mecca. There, she mixes with men, moving and praying among them, and dress in this case is a means of modesty sought by all sensible people. When the Quran states that it is obligatory to cover the pockets, such as the chest openings, for example, it undoubtedly call for modesty. Besides, when a makeup is denied, it is a call for decency as well. Decency nowadays is reflected by covering the hair, and a dress which reflects clearly the cuts of the woman's body being more exciting than the hair of the head, which has no value as a symbol for lust and desire.⁴⁵

3. Limits of Dress in Islam

Dress of man and woman has been stated in two verses of Surat Al-Noor, which deals with general behaviours and not just women's dress. It starts by His saying, "This is a surah which we have sent down and made [that within it] obligatory and revealed therein verses of clear evidence that you might remember"⁴⁶ As for man, God Almighty says, "O Prophet, enjoin the believing men to restrain their gaze and guard their private parts. This is a more righteous way for them: Allah has knowledge of what they do."⁴⁷ But for woman, He says, "And O Prophet, enjoin the Believing women to restrain their gaze and guard their private parts. and not to display their adornment except that which is displayed of itself, and to draw their veils over their bosoms and not to display their adornment except before their husbands, their fathers, the fathers of their husbands, their sons and the sons of their husbands (from other wives), their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their female associates and those in their possession and male attendants incapable of sex desire and those boys who have not yet attained knowledge of sex matters concerning women; also forbid them to stamp their feet on the ground lest their hidden ornaments should be displayed. O Believers, turn all together towards Allah: it is expected that you will attain true success"⁴⁸

These two verses have been preceded by another verse dealing with the etiquette of visiting and general behavior. In this verse, God Almighty says, "Then, if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter until you have been given permission, and if you are told to go back, you should go back. This is a purer way for you; and Allah has full knowledge of what you do. There is, however, no harm if you enter houses which are not dwelling places, but contain something useful for you; Allah knows what you disclose and what you conceal."⁴⁹

We may conclude therefore that the Islamic dress has passed through two distinctive stages:

Stage No. 01:

Surat Al-Muminoon has been the first to deal with the issue, in which God Almighty says, "And they who guard their private parts, except with regard to their wives and those women who are legally in their possession, for in that case they shall not be blame-worthy."⁵⁰ The sexual organs here incorporate the vagina as well as the anus. As for preservation, It includes covering and veiling that lead to chastity and immunization against adultery as well as immorality. It should be noted that these issues have been stated before in Surat Al-Israa when God Almighty says, "And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse Indeed it is ever

Translated by Abdallah Zad. East Africa Publisher. P. 119.

⁴⁵ Jameel, Muhammad Khalifa (2014). Muslim women & men's authoritarian and sexual fantasies. East Africa Publisher. P. 85.

⁴⁶ Surat Al-Noor, Verse No. 01.

⁴⁷ Surat Al-Noor, Verse No. 30

⁴⁸ Surat Al-Noor, Verse No. 03

⁴⁹ Surat Al-Noor, Verses No. 28 – 29.

⁵⁰ Surat Al-Muminoon, Verses No. 5-6.

an immorality and is evil as a way.”⁵¹ We do not notice new legislation as covering and veiling the private parts and confining their use only to the husband, whether man or woman, (including those who are legally in their possession) is a human instinct and a divine law since the Beginning of Creation, brought by all religions and known among pagan societies as well. However, free women before Islam were not familiar with such behaviour, but God intended to place Muslim women in a position similar to that of free women treating them all equally.⁵² The Divine Text has put an end to any argument regarding private parts, confirming the fact that they are not adornments, and the shall be preserved except for husbands and for those who are legally in their possession.⁵³

Stage No. 02:

God Almighty says in Surat Al-Ahzab, “ O Prophet tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.”⁵⁴ This verse was revealed during the 5th Year of Hijra, following the Trench Battle, more than 17 years after the beginning of the mission.⁵⁵

We should note that God in this verse is addressing the Prophet and not the Messenger, and there is a difference between the two. It is quite necessary to distinguish between legal rulings that are applicable under all circumstances and those that are considered as mere commandments and instructions, or even the rulings related to achieving purposes and not a goal in itself.

One researcher argues that this verse is constituted of three main elements. The first element refers to the utterance of the verse. In other words, it focuses on what God wants the Prophet to say, and that is “to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments”. The second element is the purpose, that...”they will known and not be abused...”. Ibn Saad in Al-Tabaqat narrates in reference to Abi Malik, he says, “The Prophet’s wives used to go out at night to relieve their needs, and some hypocrites attempt to bother them. They are hurt, so they complain. The hypocrites are informed of this, and they claim that they do this with slave-women. In an attempt to explain the situation, Al-Sadi says that the houses in the city are too small, and therefore when the night falls, women go out to relieve their needs. The immoral of the city go out as well. If they find a woman wearing a mask, they say, “She is free.”, and they let her go. But if they find a woman without a mask, they would say, “She is a slave-woman”, and they start annoying her. Due to this, the related verse has been revealed.⁵⁶

All interpreters agree that this verse has been revealed due to accidents of harassing free women. Those bad boys used to chase slave-women, and because of the difficulty to distinguish between the two types, free women have been bothered as well and they have to complain to their families. Accordingly, a verse has been revealed ordering them to wear an extra veil so as to be recognized from slave-women.⁵⁷ The verse stated above, as per most interpreters aimed to veil the face, in addition to distinguishing between free and slave women.⁵⁸ However, such interpretations needs to be reconsidered, since it is unbelievable that

⁵¹ Surat Al-Israa, Verse 32.

⁵² Saeb, IBID. p. 16.

⁵³ Saeb, IBID. P. 44.

⁵⁴ Surat Al-Ahzab, Verse No. 59.

⁵⁵ Saeb, IBID. P.16.

⁵⁶ Al-Nisapouri, Ali Bin Ahmed (2007). Reasons of Revelation. Dar Al-Islah, Al_Dammam, Saudi Arabia. 01 / 245.

⁵⁷ Al-Damoni, IBID. P. 31.

⁵⁸ Ibn Kathir, Ismail Bin Omar (2000). Interpretation of the Great Quran. Dar Ibn Hazm. 6 / 482.

the Quran shall take care of free women and ignore hurting the slave.⁵⁹

One researcher confirms that there is no evidence in this verse, indicating that woman's face is a prohibit, and therefore, it shall be veiled. Rather, it is absolute. It is related indeed to the adornments, where they are placed, and they shall not be displayed, as stated in verse No. 31 of Surat Al-Noor. Thus, the aforementioned indication is rejected. Besides, the verse focuses on a specific case represented in protecting the Prophet's wives and daughters, in addition to distinguishing between free and slave women.

However, the situation nowadays is completely different since the Prophet's wives and daughters are no longer alive with the absence of slave-women, and this is what we may call the "Intentions of Shari'ah". As a result, we cannot force women to wear Al-Jilbab or prohibit it as Omar (PUH) did. We are required indeed to carefully examine God's words when He says, "That is more suitable that they will be known". They indicate one non-deniable meaning, so as to be known, and then "...not be abused". It is quite obvious that an individual cannot be recognized without looking into his face, and accordingly, the allegation of those who claim that Al-Jilbab is for covering the face cannot be accepted in any way.⁶⁰

This viewpoint seems somehow to be sound. Nevertheless, we do not approve the issue related to differentiating between free and slave women. Islam has come to unify humans, eliminating discriminations except what concerns faith and religiousness. If the purpose behind the veil is to avoid seduction and to protect woman from any type of harm, in this case both free and slave women shall be included as they together could represent the element of seduction.

After all, what has been narrated about Omar's behavior⁶¹ with slave women, cannot be taken as an indication of adherence to the laws of Islam. It could be a conventional view prevailing from the Pre-Islamic Era, which intends to degenerate slave-women, considering them as means of joy and comfort. Nevertheless, even if we accept such justification, a slave-woman is supposed to be exposed to her owner only and not to everybody.

Such viewpoint indeed is attributed to conventions and traditions that dominated the community, and it cannot be related to Islam. Some Pre-Islamic women, as narrated by several historians (Bakri, 2004), used to go out with their faces and heads uncovered as they were afraid to be taken as slave-females.⁶²

It can be also concluded from the ruling of verse No 59 of Surat Al-Ahzab that the veil has not been imposed so as to free men of women's seduction. It is confirmed that such seduction is mainly caused by female slaves because in general they are more beautiful and exciting than free women. Based on this perspective, the Andalusian interpreter Abu Hayyan has disagreed with his fellow-interpreters, confirming that the veil shall be applied on both free as well slave women with the emphasis on the fact that slave females are more seductive. However, the interpretation of Abu Hayyan is some kind of "an Ijtihad", being restricted to distinguishing between free women and slave females. Such interpretation is quite contradictory with the applications of the verse during the early days of Islam. Undoubtedly, if the purpose was to prohibit seduction, Al-Hijab, then, would be general, with the legislator

⁵⁹ Mottahari, IBID. P. 148.

⁶⁰ Bakri, IBID. P. 40.

⁶¹ Bakri, IBID. P. 41.

⁶² Bakri, IBID. P. 41.

being very strict in veiling slave females, and somehow lenient with free women.⁶³

It is remarkable to note that verse No. 31 of Surat Al-Noor has forbidden display of adornment, commanding women to cover hair and chest. It shall be considered therefore as the “Veil Verse”, due to being unrestricted by any specific situation or time, and barely resulting from sensitivity against temptation.⁶⁴

In his reply to those who believe that the veil is imposed only on free women, Ibn Arabi adopts the principle of equity among all humans without any kind of discrimination, whether between man or woman, or between free and slave females, rejecting slavery as a relationship amid humans, and that what he has meant when talking about women’s dress during prayers. He says, “It has been agreed on the shield and the veil. If she prays uncovered, some say that she has to re-pray at once, or she could do that later. As for a slave woman, it is argued that she might pray with uncovered head and bare feet. Others emphasize that she must cover her head. A third group say it is preferable if she covers her head, taking the soul into consideration, confirming the fact that there is no difference between a free or a slave as they are all owned by God. Indeed a slave female becomes totally free of any kind of bondage when she stands at the presence of God.”⁶⁵

In this regard, Ibn Arabi investigates the mystical interpretation of the legal ruling that regards a woman covering her head during a prayer. He clarifies that that action has indeed profound implications that cannot be reached outwardly since it is related to the soul, considering the head as the leader and controller, this soul would prefer to show up in the world with its control to its veiling instead of being overwhelmed by its Master. Accordingly, by veiling the head, we tend to cover the human soul’s inclination towards owning and leading.

However, Al-Hijab is often related to women, and the soul refers to the femininity of every human. Hence, we may conclude that woman’s veiling concerns the souls of men and women who love to dominate and lead. The divine words of God Almighty urge them to cover the love of leadership.⁶⁶

It is somehow a weird viewpoint, according to which Ibn Arabi believes the Verse of Veiling is addressed to men who fight for power, authority and domination, being ordered by God Almighty to cover these inclinations, seeking the veil of slavery.⁶⁷

If such interpretation is correct, the verse in this case has not imposed a deterrent ruling on wrongdoers, but instead addressing the victim to be somehow precautious, leaving culprits to perform their bad deeds against female slaves as if they are not God’s creatures, though some of them are more truthful and upright than free women. However, it is argued that the verse in fact refers to the believers’ women, and therefore it incorporates both free as well as slave females. Besides, one of Islam’s priorities is to protect vulnerable people, in addition to cultivating the souls of its followers and not justifying their misconducts. Such interpretation distorts the divine wisdom that lies behind the revelation of this verse.⁶⁸

One researcher claims that Salaf jurists deliberately mixed up things in order to further mislead people, and thus achieving their goals in trampling and humiliating women. Whereas the verse talks about putting down the cloak without referring to Al-Hijab, Ibn Taymiyyah comes up with a claim that the veil is specific to free women only, excluding slave females,

⁶³ Al-Damoni, IBID. P.33.

⁶⁴ Al-Damoni, IBID. P.33.

⁶⁵ Bradha, Nuzha (2008). *Femininity in the Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*. Beirut, Lebanon, Dar Al-Saqi, First Edition. PP. 172 – 173.

⁶⁶ Bradha, IBID. P. 173.

⁶⁷ Bradha, IBID. p. 174.

⁶⁸ Saeb, IBID. P. 20

based on a narration traced to Omar Bin Al-Khattab, and adjusting without a legal basis between cloaks and veils as if the saying is to bring down their cloaks on their faces. This is indeed the wrong concept that has prevailed since then.⁶⁹

Al-Marnisi (1993) believes that male authority, starting with Omar Bin Al-Khattab who could not clearly comprehend the concept of man as submitted by the new religion and remained attached to the tribe morals, believing that the veil (Al-Hijab) was the sole solution that could contain sexual violence. This male authority, according to Al-Marnisi, has reinforced the superiority of men, meanwhile discarding the Prophet's approach who kept calling for gender equality. Thus The veil achieved victory, and women were blocked in a private sphere.⁷⁰

Verse No. 31 of Surat Al-Noor was revealed during the last quarter of the Prophetic Mission. It can be argued that all this time before the revelation of these verses, the Arab woman undoubtedly was not naked without wearing any type of clothes. Certainly, men and women in the Arabian Peninsula used to wear their national dress prevailing in their society at that time. Being under the influence of customs as well as the climate, Arab woman wears a long dress with a veil on the head to protect her from the heat.

There is no doubt that when this verse was revealed, the Arab woman did not change her dress, but she might have noticed that her breasts could be seen through the chest opening of her dress, and she had to cover it with her head veil since the other openings are originally covered in her national dress. Accordingly, what we call it nowadays as the legal dress is the one that the Arab Muslim woman used to wear in the Seventh Century A.D. It is unfair to claim that the Muslim Woman's clothing is the one stipulated in Surat Al-Noor, and therefore, this wrong concept shall be corrected. Such measurement is unacceptable unless we assume that Arab Woman before Islam has been naked. We are assumed not to mix up between the obligatory dress code in Islam and the national dress.⁷¹

Although the verse "...except what has appeared of them" does not specify the parts that can be revealed, the jurists have confined them to woman's face, hands and feet. Such provision somehow is general and could be related to what is customary, or what is necessary to reveal. Exception anyhow regards what is allowed to be shown of adornments, which includes jewelry and make-up, whereas the veil is not related to adornments, but to their places. For example, necklaces are worn on the dress that covers the chest, while bracelets, anklets and rings are displayed on revealed parts of the body.⁷²

This garment with its divergent forms has already been familiar in the different communities, and not something new that God imposes on Muslim women. He only requires the Muslim woman to bring down some of the dress without attaching deliberately too close to the body, and with no big openings that may reveal parts of her body if she bends down for example. She has to drop some of it on her legs regardless of its length or how much it covers of the legs.⁷³

According to Al-Bukhari, Abu Dawood, Al-Nisa'i and Ibn Majah, both men and women during the days of the Prophet (PBUH) used to perform ablution together from the same basin, and this status lasted at the reign of Abu Bakr and part of Omar's dominion who finally separated them. However, and in order to finalize the ablution process, the head remained uncovered so that it would be possible to wipe over the head, in addition to the ears,

⁶⁹ Saeb, IBID. P. 21

⁷⁰ Al-Marnisi, Fatima (1993). Political Harem: The Prophet & Women. Dar Al-Hasad for Publication & Distribution

⁷¹ Shahroor, IBID. P. 617

⁷² Al-Damoni, IBID. P. 31

⁷³ Saeb, IBID. P. 26-27

and the arms revealed above the elbows as well as the feet up to the ankles without identifying the length of the exposed part. A researcher (Saeb, 2004) indeed claims that the head in all its parts, the arms above the elbows, and the legs to the knees are the parts of the woman's body that can be shown even to foreigners.⁷⁴

For his part, Shahroor (2011) argues that "in order to correctly understand the two verses of Al-Noor and Al-Ahzab, we should assume the existence of a naked woman, i.e. with no clothes on her, and she intends to become a Muslim. The question to be raised here is "What clothes does she have to wear?" In reply to such question, we should understand that a female believer anywhere in the world is assumed to wear clothes as per the norms of her country, and meanwhile adhering to the verses 31 and 59 of Surat Al-Noor and Surat Al-Ahzab respectively as an instruction and not a legislation."⁷⁵

As for those who consider woman's voice as a "prohibit", we say that the woman used to attend the Friday Prayer in Al-Medina, and she might stop the Prophet (PBUH) in the street to ask him certain questions, and he would answer her. It is indeed a modesty and not a prohibit, and the verse that deals with the argument that occurred between the Prophet (PBUH) and a female Muslim is a good proof for that.⁷⁶

Bradha (2008) posits that "the men who have interpreted the Divine Speech from a male viewpoint have viewed the female's body as a prohibit, and therefore, it shall be covered so as not to be seduced while being preoccupied with their public interest outside. Seducing, however, could be to an extent that might suit their desire. Accordingly, the veil or Al-Hijab has been imposed on women for fear that men could be subject to uncontrolled seducing. Al-Sharia indeed has been exploited to justify Al-Hijab, though at the same time, it confirms the weak moral motive among men while defending the animal side of humans. As we can see that by the name of religion, women have been obligated to wear the veil or Al-Hijab.

It should be understood however that wearing the veil is neither one of the fundamentals of Islam, nor does it respond to a female feature. There is no doubt that Al-Hijab has been dictated as per changeable human conditions. In his explanation, Ibn Arabi says, "if the veil has any origin, then why women are told in Ihram not cover their faces. Besides, the verse of veiling was not revealed at the beginning of the Prophetic Mission, but rather too late to treat certain issues. indeed, interpreters do differentiate between primary divine rulings and those that were revealed at a late stage."⁷⁷

Bradha (2008) argues that Ibn Arabi, like any other Islamic thinker or philosopher, differentiates between two types of verses. There are the ones that tell about the existence of God as well as the issue of monotheism, and there are the verses that narrate the news and events of past peoples and prophets, in addition to those related to worshipping and other human affairs. Since multiplication of meanings cannot be accepted as a sole approach for understanding and interpretation, the divine text has been classified into indisputable verses and those that are open for interpretation. While the first type regards all the verses focusing on the doctrinal aspect and they are genuine with their meanings transcending time and place, the second type as stated above concerns human daily affairs, which require a certain flexibility provided by explanation. Some of the second type verses, for example, have already died out as they concern no longer existing phenomena, such as blood money and slavery.

If we consider the verse, in which God Almighty says, "" O Prophet tell your wives and

⁷⁴ Saeb, IBID, pp. 44-46

⁷⁵ Shahroor, IBID. P. 617.

⁷⁶ Shahroor, IBID. P. 618

⁷⁷ Bradha, IBID. PP. 165-166.

your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful,”⁷⁸ has been revealed due to historical conditions of which war and slavery are main features, therefore, differentiation between Muslim and Non-Muslim women, free and slave females is highly required. The purpose behind that is to protect Muslim women from any harm. Because of that, jurists have come up with different rulings and provisions. Some of them have ruled that the free woman shall wear the veil whereas the slave female does not have to, based on the idea that the former’s body is a prohibit while the latter’s is not. However, Ibn Arabi does not adopt this viewpoint as, in his opinion, he does not differentiate between one person and another, and moreover, he does not take into account gender discrepancies, which express natural submission and thus degrading the humanity of man.⁷⁹

Ibn Arabi indeed believes that woman’s veiling incorporates deep meanings, demonstrating that if it has been originally for woman, the saying “Don’t cover your face” would not have been necessary at all. As a matter of fact, he considers this as an evidence that wearing the veil is not an absolute and genuine ruling for woman, arguing that the face is the most honorable part of the human, which reflects all deep and apparent forces of man, and with it he faces his God.⁸⁰ He claims that there is not prohibit in woman except the two private parts, relying in that on God’s saying, “..and when they tasted of the tree their private parts became apparent to them and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of paradise.”⁸¹ It is quite obvious that God Almighty has equated between Adam and his wife in covering their private parts. In other words, we may conclude that woman’s body is exactly the same as that of man.⁸²

A dress after all is not confined to direct and sensual connotations, but includes as well deeper meanings that Ibn Arabi has inferred from the Holy Text, “O children of Adam We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment But the clothing of righteousness.” In addition to covering private parts, it is a dress for justice, piety and adornment.

Conclusions

Hence, we may conclude that Al-Hijab is one of several issues that have been prevalent among different societies and cultures, being considered as a habit though some regard it as part of worship practices. Al-Hijab or the Islamic dress that a Muslim woman wears does not offend her modesty or reduce her respect. Meanwhile, it protects her from any kind of harm. The veil in fact is not just a piece of cloth. It is a matter of virtue and decency that every female perceives instinctively.

As for covering the woman’s face, it has been proved through evidence that women during the Prophecy Era do not cover their faces. Such claim is supported by the Quranic Command, in which God Almighty has ordered the believers, both men and woman, to lower gaze, i.e. not to look directly into face. It is also narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) commanded a man who married a woman from Al-Ansar to look at her face as this is essential in engagement issue. We may wonder here, therefore, “How could a person look at a face and

⁷⁸ Surat Al-Ahzab, Verse No. 59.

⁷⁹ Bradha, IBID. PP. 166-168

⁸⁰ Bradha, IBID. PP. 168-169.

⁸¹ Surat Al-A’araf, From Verse No. 22.

⁸² Bradha, IBID, PP. 171-172.

it is covered?”⁸³

Above all, God Almighty addresses the Prophet (PBUH) saying, “Thereafter women will not be lawful for you, and it will not be lawful for you to take other wives in place of them, even though their beauty might please you.”⁸⁴ The last phrase of this verse “even though their beauty might please you” confirms that women’s faces have not been covered, otherwise how He might be pleased with their beauty if the faced are veiled. The literature of our religious heritage incorporates lots of events and stories, which ascertain that women at that time used to participate in meetings, prayers and even wars.⁸⁵

If we interpret the verse No. 59 of Surat Al-Ahzab as per those who called for covering the woman’s face, in this case, men should also cover their faces, simply because God Almighty has addressed both men and women to lower gaze.⁸⁶

God has created the human community as well as other animal communities of males and females. Do we have to believe that God commands have the society, i.e. the males, not to look at the other half? If we take into consideration the nowadays circumstances of life with the increase of females number and upsurge of corrupt, we are supposed to encourage the youth to get married, and we cannot do this by commanding males not to look at females or forcing females to wear the veil. Besides, Al-Hijab that some women often wear in public places could be somehow a deceiving one.⁸⁷

It is believed that the veil is a cultural heritage and not imposed by Islam. There is an assumption, which claims that the veil has come from Judaism based on chapters 24 & 38 of the Genesis.⁸⁸ The Egyptian Ministry of Al-Awqaf has issued a pamphlet of which thousands of copies have been printed under the title “Al-Niqab is a Habit and not a Worship”. The opinions of three scholars, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, the late Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ali Jumaa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, and Muhammad Al-Ghazali have been presented in the pamphlet. The three of them have confirmed the illegality of Al-Niqab as there is no holy text, which approves its enforcement. Centuries of extremism and intolerance have resulted in very bad social impact on woman’s status, destroying her personality as a human being and meanwhile offending Islam.⁸⁹

There is no doubt that women in the Arabian Peninsula used to cover their heads with a veil to protect themselves from the heat of the sun and dust. Thus, and due to the effect of climate, wearing the veil has become a common dress in these societies. Al-Zamakhshari says that women’s dress openings are so wide showing their necks, chests that they used to drop their veils behind similar to that of Upper Egypt dress. Accordingly, they remain uncovered. As a result, they have been commanded to drop the veils on their front. The Muslim woman at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) is accustomed to remove the veil from head among men while performing ablution.⁹⁰

⁸³ Muhammad, Jamal Al-Din (2019). Muslim Women at the Age of Globalization. Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masri, First Edition, P. 206.

⁸⁴ Surat Al-Ahzab, from Verse No. 59.

⁸⁵ Al-Damoni, IBID. PP.13-15.

⁸⁶ Shahroor, IBID. P. 605.

⁸⁷ Saeb, IBID. P. 31

⁸⁸ The Kuwaiti Rai Newspaper, 30 January 2009.

⁸⁹ Saeb, IBID, PP. 40-41.

⁹⁰ Saeb, IBID, PP. 46-47.

Progress and advancement that have already been achieved in the different aspects of our life, shall lead to expanding the spatial as well as the objective ornamentation and adornment. If it is spatial, then the entire body of woman is adornment, and not merely the make-up or the jewelry. According to God Almighty, woman's body is divided into two parts: one is apparent. God says, "...not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears", and another hidden part. While the first refers to what can be seen of the woman, such as her head, back, front, arms and legs, the other part, i.e. the hidden adornment represents her openings, which include the woman's breasts, nipples, armpits, vagina and anus. All these openings shall be covered as God Almighty says, "and to draw their veils over their bosoms..". As for the other openings, such as her mouth, nose, eyes and ears, they are considered unveiled because they are in the face, which determines man's identity, and therefore, they shall be shown to others.⁹¹

In conclusion, the veil or Al-Hijab is not confined to Islam. It is indeed a social necessity admitted by all religions. Islamic Sharia has not imposed a specific dress on woman that cannot be avoided, but rather obligating it, leaving the details of its implementation to women themselves. It is quite obvious that there is tolerance and flexibility since the choice has been left to the woman to cover her body the way she prefers, and with the color that is psychologically appropriate to her within the legal identification of Al-Hijab.

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⁹¹ Shahroor, IBID, P. 607

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