

Thickness is the third requirement. The clothing must be thick enough so as not to show the color of the skin it covers or the shape of the body.

The Prophet Muhammad(SAW) stated that in the later generations of his followers, there would be women who would be dressed but yet naked and the hair on top of their heads would look like camel humps. Curse them for they are truly cursed. (Muslim)

Another requirement is an over-all dignified appearance. The clothing should not attract men's attention to the woman. It should not be shiny and flashy so that everyone notices the dress and the woman.

In addition there are other requirements:

1- Women must not dress so as to appear as men. Ibn Abbas narrated "The Prophet(SAW) cursed the men who appear like women and the women who appear like men." (Bukhari)

2- Women should not dress in a way similar to the unbelievers.

3- The clothing should be modest, not excessively fancy and also not excessively ragged to gain admiration or sympathy.

Often forgotten is the fact that modern Western dress is a new invention. Looking at the clothing of women as recently as seventy years ago, we see clothing similar to Hijab. These active and hard-working women of the West were not inhibited by their clothing which consisted of long, full dresses and various types of head coverings. Muslim women who wear Hijab do not find it impractical or interfering

with their activities in all levels and walks of life.

Hijab is not merely a covering dress but, more importantly, it is behavior, manners, speech, and appearance in public. Dress is only one facet of the total being.

The basic requirements of the Muslim women's dress apply to the Muslim men's clothing with the difference being mainly in degree. Modesty requires that the area between the navel and the knee be covered in front of all people except the wife. The clothing of men should not be like the dress of women, nor should it be tight or provocative. A Muslim should dress to show his identity as a Muslim. Men are not allowed to wear gold or silk, however both are allowed for women.

For both men and women, clothing requirements are not meant to be a restriction, but rather a way in which society will function in proper, Islamic manner.

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

THE QUESTION OF HIJAB

By Mary C Ali

"Why do Muslim women have to cover their head?" This question is one that is asked by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For many women, it is the truest test of being a Muslim.

The answer to the question is very simple – Muslim women observe *Hijab* (covering the head and body) because Allah has told them to do so.

"O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men). That is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslim) and not annoyed..." (Quran Translation 33:59)

Other secondary reasons include the requirement for modesty in both men and women. Both will then be evaluated for intelligence and skills instead of looks and sexuality. An Iranian schoolgirl is quoted as saying, "We want to stop men from treating us like sex objects, as they have always done. We want them to ignore our appearance and to be attentive to our personalities and mind. We want them to take us seriously and treat us as equals and not just chase us around for our bodies and physical looks."

A Muslim woman who covers her head is making a statement about her identity. Anyone who sees her will know that she is a Muslim and has a good moral character. Many Muslim women who cover are filled

with dignity and self esteem; they are pleased to be identified as a Muslim woman. As a chaste, modest, pure woman, she does not want her sexuality to enter into interactions with men in the smallest degree. A woman who covers herself is concealing her sexuality while allowing her femininity to show.

The question of Hijab for Muslim women has been a controversy for centuries and will probably continue for many more. Some learned people do not consider the subject open to discussion and consider covering the face a requirement, while a majority is of the opinion that it is not required. A middle line position is taken by some who claim that the instructions are vague and open to individual discretion, depending on the situation.

The wives of the Prophet(SAW) were required to cover their faces so that men would not think of them in sexual terms since they were the "Mothers of the Believers". But, this requirement was not extended to other women.

The word Hijab comes from the Arabic word *hajaba* meaning "to hide from view or conceal". In the present time, the context of Hijab is the modest covering of a Muslim woman. The question now is what is the extent of the covering?

The Quran says: *"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty and 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 do not display their beauty except to their husbands..." Quran translation 24:30-31"

These verses from the Quran contain two main injunctions:

1. A woman should not show her beauty or adornments except what appears by uncontrolled factors, such as the wind blowing her clothes.
2. The head covers should be drawn so as to cover the hair, the neck and the bosom.

Islam has no fixed standard as to the style of dress or type of clothing that Muslims wear. However, some requirements must be met. The first of these requirements is the parts of the body that must be covered.

Islam has two sources for guidance and rulings: first, the Quran, the revealed word of Allah, and secondly, the Hadith or the traditions of the Prophet (SAW) who was chosen by Allah to be the role model for mankind. The following is a Tradition of the Prophet(SAW): Ayesha(RAH) reported that Asma, the daughter of Abu Bakr(RAH) came to the Messenger of Allah(SWT) while wearing thin clothing. He approached her and said, Oh Asma! When a girl reaches the menstrual age, it is not proper that anything should remain exposed except this and this. He pointed to the face and hands. (Abu Dawood).

The second requirement is looseness. The clothing must be loose enough so as not to describe the shape of the woman's body.

One desirable way to hide the shape of the body is to wear a cloak over other clothes.

However, if the clothing is loose enough, an outer garment is not necessary.