

## **Decided to start wearing hijab?**

One of the most difficult decisions many Muslim sisters face is the decision to start wearing hijab. This is certainly true for reverts, but may also be true for sisters whose families or even whose cultures are not particularly observant. As a revert myself, I have been through the whole thing. I would like to offer some advice that I hope inshallah will be helpful to sisters who are considering wearing hijab but find that something is holding them back.

The first step is to learn about hijab. There is so much information out there. Many Muslim sisters who will assist you in this regard.

## **Deciding to wear Hijab**

This is where the difficulties usually come in. For many sisters, it truly is a jihad. I remember very vividly how scared I was the first day I put on the headscarf and went out into public. As long as you are just wearing the modest clothes, nobody has to know that you are a Muslim. Once you complete your hijab with the headscarf, you are suddenly announcing to everyone who sees you that “I am a Muslim”. Here is some advice based on my own experiences.

### **Wear it for the sake of Allah SWT**

Various statements are made about why you should wear hijab, such as for modesty or for protection, but the real reason that we wear hijab is that Allah SWT has commanded it. Whenever anyone asks you, why do you dress like that, that’s the only answer you need to give them.

Allah SWT is the source of everything we have, our existence, our life, our capability, even our goodness. If He ever stopped sustaining us, we would vanish in that instant. If He ever took away what he gives us, we would never have even a speck of it. If we worked for millions of years, we could never repay Him for all that He has given us. And yet He does give it to us, and all He asks in return is that we do our best to obey what He has commanded us. Surely wearing hijab is a very small thing that you can do for Him compared to what He does for you!

### **Wear it for the hope of Jannah**

Allah SWT makes tests for us in this world. He makes things difficult for us. He wants to see if we will remember Him, if we will have faith in Him, and if we will trust in Him. These qualities are what is meant by “sabr”.

Allah SWT does not lose the work of anyone, ever (see Surah Ali Imran ayah 195). Even if it seems like nobody is paying attention to you or notices or appreciates good things that you do, Allah SWT has seen them, and He will not forget them. Even when it seems like the whole world is against you, Allah SWT is always there for you when you turn to Him. Remember this.

Allah SWT always wants the best for us and in His wisdom He knows why each thing that happens to us is in fact best for us. When it seems like everything is going wrong and

life is just one disaster after another, it is easy to forget this and to become bitter and skeptical. Yet we must remember always to have faith that Allah SWT knows best why He has willed this for us, and we must always ask Him only “Make me pleased with what You have willed for me”.

This world we live in, although it seems at times to be the only real thing, is actually fleeting compared to the Hereafter, which is better and more abiding. The trials of this world will seem as fleeting as a nightmare when seen from the Hereafter, and the pleasures of this world will also seem as fleeting as a dream when seen from the Hereafter. It’s our happiness in the Hereafter that we should be most worried about attaining, because it is what will last forever; and it’s our suffering in the Hereafter that we should be most worried about avoiding, because it also will last forever.

Allah SWT has promised Jannah to those who remain steadfast in their faith in Him and who trust in Him. The more difficult it is for you to have sabr, the greater the reward for it. So what will it be? Ease in this world, and perhaps the eternal sufferings in Hell? Or difficulty in this world, and inshallah the eternal bliss of Jannah? Let’s face it, the old cliches are true: there’s no such thing as a free lunch and you can almost never have your cake and eat it too. We’ve all got to face difficulties some time. Better by far that they be in the world than in the Hereafter.

So that’s what you should set your mind to. Yes, it’s difficult to wear hijab. You may be rejected by your family or your friends, you may face harassment and persecution or be fired from your job. These are very scary thoughts. But if you have sabr and keep trusting in Allah SWT, I swear to you sister, this is the path to Jannah, and when you look back on the Day of Qiyamah you will know that it was worth it and have no regrets.

### **Wear it today and trust in Allah SWT for tomorrow**

What do I mean by that? What I mean is that you should take it one day at a time, or even one outing at a time. Sometimes the future seems to stretch on forever and ever and you don’t think you can make it that long. You want to give up before you even begin.

So sometimes the best thing to do is to keep your mind focused on what is immediately at hand. Allah SWT will take care of the future. If you have to go out to the market, then concentrate on being able to wear hijab just for this activity and on getting through it. If you do get through it and nothing bad happened, then give thanks to Allah SWT for making it easy for you, and turn your mind to your next outing.

Or if you have to go out to school or work, then concentrate on being able to wear hijab just for this one day and on getting through it. And give thanks to Allah SWT when you have made it, and turn your mind to the next day.

Eventually the outings will turn into days and the days into weeks, and the weeks into months. One day you will realize that you have been wearing hijab for quite a long time and it isn’t really as bad as you feared, and Allah SWT helped you get through it. Don’t be ashamed. Sometimes it is like this. The most important thing is to have sabr and keep your trust in Allah SWT always.

**Wear it and spite the shaytan**

My dear sister, the worries and fears in your mind are the whisperings of the shaytan. He wants to talk you out of obeying Allah SWT.

It is very easy to keep going around in circles in your mind and to dwell on all the things that could go wrong. I know that I myself have a tendency to do this, I put it off and I dither and I wait for “the perfect time”. If I let myself, I would never do anything at all!

So the thing you have to remember is that you do not need to be perfect in iman to wear hijab. If perfection were a qualification, where is the sister who could wear it??

You must also not fall into the trap of thinking that you should wait until all your worries and fears have disappeared. They never will! Trust me on this, sister.

True courage is going ahead to do what’s right even though you are still nervous and scared. So don’t listen to the shaytan. Ignore the worries and fears he whispers into your mind. Tell him that you will not let him keep you from obeying Allah SWT and you will not let him rule your life.

**Make the decision to wear it**

Once you have come to know in your heart that you must wear hijab, then you have to set a day and JUST DO IT !!

This is the only way. Set a day and when that day comes, you have to do it. Don’t back down. Don’t give up. Do it.

Offer salat al-istikhara. Make du’a. Make lots of du’a. Do not stop making du’a. Ask Allah SWT to give you strength. Ask Him to make it easy for you. Ask Him to help you. He will, I swear it to you. He is always there for you when you turn to Him. Remember how much He has given you, how everything that you have, even your very existence, is due to Him. Remember that He deserves this from you. Remember the promise of Jannah. Remember that remaining patient and faithful through difficulty now may lead to Jannah, inshallah. Even if bad things happen, keep these thoughts in your mind. Don’t worry about tomorrow. Just concentrate on getting through today, and leave tomorrow to Allah SWT until it gets here.

That’s how you do it.

**Final Words of Encouragement**

I have been wearing hijab since September 1999. I do not regret it. I have never for one instant regretted it. I do not regret it even one iota. Inshallah, you will discover that you feel the same. Even within a few months I came to feel that I would not be properly dressed if I went out not wearing hijab. This is when you know that you have made it! Never feel that you are alone, or that you are the only one who is scared and worried and nervous. Just about every other sister who has travelled down this road has gone through the same things. I know I have. Your sisters are here for you. We have been where you are. We are encouraging you and cheering you on. We know what it takes because we had to find that in ourselves too. We are praying for your success just as we prayed for

our own.  
Come and join us.

Allah does not burden a soul except what it can bear. For it is what it has earned, and upon it is what it has made due. “Our Lord and Sustainer, do not condemn us if we forget or do wrong. Our Lord and Sustainer, do not put a burden on us like the burden You put on those who were before us. Our Lord and Sustainer, do not put a burden on us that we cannot endure. And blot out (our sins) and forgive us, and be gentle to us. You are our Protector. So help us against the rejectors.” (Surah al-Baqarat ayah 286)

The Qur'anic verse, "Say to believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward; and let them drape their headcoverings over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment . . ." (Qur'an 24:31) is a specific requirement for Muslim women to cover their hair.

The word "headcoverings" (Ar. singular khimar, plural khumur), more familiar in our times as the hijab, is a word of well-known signification among scholars of Arabic, at their forefront the authors of the classical lexical reference dictionaries like Zabidi's encyclopedic *Taj al-'arus* or Mutarrizi's *al-Mughrib*, both of which define khimar as "a woman's headcovering"; or Fayumi's *al-Misbah* or Fayruzabadi's *al-Qamus*, which both define it as "a cloth with which a woman covers her head." The *Taj al-'arus* also notes that a man's turban is sometimes referred to as a khimar "because a man covers his head with it in like manner as a woman covers her head with her khimar when he disposes it in the Arab manner, turning part of it under the jaws nearly in the same manner in which a woman disposes her khimar." These authorities are cited in the eight-volume *Arabic-English Lexicon* of Edward William Lane, who describes the khimar as "a woman's muffler or veil with which she covers her head and the lower part of her face."

There is no other lexical sense in which the word khimar may be construed. The wording of the command, however, "and let them drape their headcoverings over their bosoms," sometimes confuses nonspecialists in the sciences of the Qur'an, and in truth, interpreting the Qur'an does sometimes require in-depth knowledge of the historical circumstances in which the various verses were revealed. In this instance, the elliptical form of the divine command is because women at the time of the revelation wore their headcovers tied back behind their necks, as some village women still do in Muslim countries, leaving the front of the neck bare, as well as the opening (Ar. singular jayb, plural juyub, translated as "bosoms" in the above verse) at the top of the dress. The Islamic revelation confirmed the practice of covering the head, understood from the use of the word khimar in the verse, but also explained that the custom of the time was not sufficient and that women were henceforth to tie the headcover in front and let it drape down to conceal the throat and the dress's opening at the top.

This is why Muslim women cover their heads: because the Qur'an unambiguously orders them to, and there is no qualifying text or hadith or even other lexical possibility to show that the Qur'anic order might mean anything besides obligation. Rather, the hadiths all bear this meaning out, Muslim scholars are in unanimous agreement about it and have been from the time of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) down to our own day, and it is even known by all non-Muslim peoples about them.

There was thus nothing new or surprising in the Islamic legal opinion promulgated in December 2003 by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh 'Ali Jumu'a of the Egyptian Fatwa Authority (*Dar al-Ifta' al-Misriyya*) that "the hijab is an obligation on all Muslim female adults, as firmly established in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's hadiths, as well as unanimously agreed upon by Muslim scholars." He pointed out that unlike the

cross sometimes worn by Christians, or the skullcap worn by Jews, the hijab is not a “symbol” of Islam but rather that “Islam orders female adults to wear hijab as obligatory religious clothing.” It is part of every Muslim woman’s religious practice.

Some ink and words have been spent by some contemporary ethnic Muslim women writers (and an occasional convert) trying to do away with the covering of hair mandated by the Qur’an and the unanimous consensus of Muslims. They say—accurately enough, for a Muslim does not leave Islam merely by committing a sin—that one can take off the hijab and still remain a Muslim. But such a person remains a bad Muslim, who deems aping non-Muslims better than practicing Islam. For what? The Supreme Being knows our benefit better than we do; and if one believes in Allah, Master of every atom in the universe, it is only plain sense to follow Him. When all else fails, read the directions. Those who refuse to wear the hijab are acting out of ignorance or bad faith, and when one meets them, one seldom finds they manage to practice the other aspects of their religion. In the end, it is a matter of hearts. The heart that is alive has a sense of eternity, and knows that the infinite is greater than the finite. The heart that is dead follows the trends of the trend makers because it has turned its back on the Divine and forgotten endless time.

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In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful and Compassionate

In the West, and for those in difficult social or family situations in Muslim lands, what is emphasized and unquestionable is the obligation for women to wear hijab.

As for wearing niqab (the face veil), this was considered necessary (*wajib*) by the classical scholars of the Hanafi school, as well as other Sunni schools such as the Shafi’i school. However, this is often not reasonably possible to follow for many people, given their personal, family, or social situation.

The Transmitted Ruling

The transmitted position of the Hanafi school is that a woman’s face, though not considered of a woman’s ‘nakedness’ (*awrah*), is necessary (*wajib*) to cover because of the fitna involved in not doing so. This mentioned in virtually all its major texts, including the *Hashiya* of Ibn Abidin, the *Hashiya* of al-Tahtawi, *al-Bahr al-Ra’iq*, *al-Hidaya*, its commentaries, and other texts.

The Ruling For Our Times and Situation

As for what the ruling is in our times, the scholars differ.

Some scholars say that this ruling would remain the “basic ruling” on the matter. As Shaykh Wahbi Sulayman Ghawji, a Syrian Hanafi scholar of Albanian origin, shows, the evidence for covering the face is far stronger, from the Qur’an, Sunna, and is the position of the vast majority of classical Qur’anic exegetes, hadith commentators, and jurists.

However, as Shaykh Mahmoud Ashraf Usmani and other major god-fearing scholars explain, in our times, what we necessarily emphasize is the need to wear hijab. For many people, and in many situations, this is all that is reasonably possible to wear.

I heard similar rulings from scholars in Damascus. This is also what major traditional scholars who understand the reality of Muslims in the West state.

And Allah knows best.

Wassalam,  
Faraz Rabbani

With the recent death of [Aqsa Parvez](#), may Allah have mercy on her, a number of issues have been raised with regards to the various details surrounding her death that have been reported in the media. In my earlier post regarding it (linked to above), I mentioned that not enough is known yet regarding what happened and the circumstances leading up to the killing to justly comment on it. For that reason, I’ve tried to refrain from commenting on the “right” and “wrong” of those involved and throughout the various comments I’ve posted to other blogs about it, I have maintained that we shouldn’t jump to any conclusions with regards to what happened. By this I do not mean that we shouldn’t say her death was wrong, because *it was*; her life was taken unjustly, whether it was done intentionally (i.e., [murder](#)) or unintentionally (i.e., [manslaughter](#)). In an authentic ḥadīth, Prophet Muḥammad said that «the blood of a Muslim person [who] testifies that there is no god [worthy of worship] except Allah and that I am Allah’s messenger is not lawful except for one of three: the deflowered adulterer (i.e., one who is or has been married), the soul [of the murderer] for the soul [of the murdered], and the abandoner of what he has—the opposer of the Congregation (i.e., the apostate).»[1] There are other justifications for when a life may be taken (defending yourself from an attacker, for example), but none of them include the possible motives behind Aqsa Parvez’s death that have been mentioned in the media thus far—and even if there were a justifiable reason behind her death (i.e., some sin or some infraction of Islamic law she committed), the punishments legislated in Islam are only to be carried out by the [authorities](#) (e.g., government, Islamic courts, etc.) after trying the accused and getting a conviction for the offence. The law is *not* to be taken into our own hands; vigilanteism is *not* condoned in Islam.

With that said, I wanted to touch on an issue that was mentioned in the media as a possible cause behind Aqsa Parvez’s death: the ḥijāb, or rather, her decision to stop wearing it. I wanted to address this and some of the things related to it since there have

been various statements made by several misguided Muslims claiming the hijâb is a cultural symbol (i.e., not from Islam) and merely a personal choice rather than an Islamic obligation, despite the *clear* Qur’anic and prophetic injunctions regarding it.

The word hijâb in English means veil, curtain, partition, or barrier. In Islamic terminology, it refers to the veil with which a woman covers herself in front everyone other than those mentioned in v. 24:31 of the Qur’an. Thus, contrary to the popular misconception, the hijâb refers to the Muslim woman’s *entire* dress rather than just her headcover; this is more apparent when you take what is mentioned in the verses of hijâb quoted below.

As mentioned above, there are those who have made the assertion that the hijâb is not obligatory, but merely a personal choice (as [this lady](#) has), while others have gone as far as claiming that “none of this is actually mandated by the Koran. The Koran, while speaking generally of modesty in dress and demeanour, falls short of specifying the details of that modesty” (as [these two](#) have).

#### **It’s All About Choice**

Off the bat, it should be mentioned that just about *everything* in our lives is about choice. Even in some of the situations where we are compelled and coerced into doing things against our will, situations where we would not be held accountable for any wrong doing, we still have the *choice* to comply with what is demanded of us or to refuse and possibly suffer the consequences that go along with such refusal and defiance. So to say that wearing the hijâb is a personal choice does not really negate the fact that it is obligatory to wear it, because with all religious duties in Islam, we have the choice to obey and comply, fulfilling our obligations, or the choice to disobey and defy, failing to meet them. And as with all choices in life, there are rewards and consequences that go along with them, be they good or evil. As Allah says, «Say: “The truth is from your Lord,” so whoever willed, then let him believe and whoever willed, then let him disbelieve. Surely We have prepared a fire for the oppressors, whose canopy will encompass them» (18:29). He also says, «Say: “Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, for if you turn away, then certainly what is upon him is what he is burdened with, and upon you is what you are burdened with. If you obey him, then you would be guided, and upon the Messenger is only the clear conveyance» (24:54), and «O those who believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and do not render your deeds invalid» (47:33).

#### **A Sign of Piety?**

Mississauga News reports that

Farzana Hassan-Shahid, president of the Muslim Canadian Congress (MCC), who was at the vigil, said she was aghast that some imams (Muslim spiritual leaders) are propagating the use of hijab, saying women who wear them are more pious than those who don’t don it.



“That is absolutely not true. The statement is creating false hierarchies in the community,” she said. “However, the hijab has become a very contentious issue and we need to face it upfront rather than prevaricate that perhaps this tragedy is a result of culture clash.”

“We need to insist that this type of preaching that goes on in the mosque now has to stop,” she continued. ([Source](#)).

It should be mentioned that [Farzana Hassan-Shahid](#) (on the left, Tarek Fatah is on the right) is a so called “progressive” Muslim woman who does not wear hijâb, so it’s not surprising that she would take offence to the suggestion that Muslim women who wear the hijâb are more pious than those who don’t.

Piety is defined as “reverence for God or devout fulfillment of religious obligations” ([Source](#)). Faith originates in the person’s heart and although its true condition and state is only known by Allah, mighty and sublime is He, there are indications with which we can judge the *apparent* strength or weakness of a person’s faith. This is because there is a direct and very real [correlation](#) between what is in one’s heart and one’s outward aspects, whether they be his statements, his deeds, or his outward appearance; what is in one’s heart *should* manifest itself on one’s outward deeds. Being that the hijâb is a religious duty upon (mature) Muslim women (as we will see below), not wearing it is a clear indication of a woman’s relative weakness in faith and godliness, just as a man’s shaving or excessive trimming of his beard is a clear indication of his relative weakness in faith and godliness. However, even if it were not obligated and merely a desired and recommended act, a woman who wears the hijâb would still *apparently* be more pious than one who doesn’t—at least in that regard; an old friend, Ibn Abee Omar, posted about the relationship between acts of worship, godliness and piety, thankfulness, and blessings some time ago on [MuslimMatters](#).

### **Hijâb & Its Obligation**

Those who claim that the hijâb’s obligation is something that is not mandated by the Qur’an are either ignorant or liars—or worse, both. In v. 24:31 of the Qur’an, Allah commands Prophet Muhammad to

«tell the believing women to lower their sights; to preserve their genitals; to not display their adornment—except what is visible from it; ***to draw their headcovers over their bosoms***; to not display their adornment except to their spouses or their fathers, or their spouses’ fathers or their sons or their spouses’ sons, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or what their right hands possess (i.e., slaves or captives), or their servants from the men [who are] not possessors of desire, or the children who have not become cognizant of women’s private parts; and to not strike their feet in order that what they hide of their adornment be known. And repent to Allah collectively, O believers, in hopes that you may be successful.» (emphasis added).

The word translated here as “headcovers” is the word *khumur* (خُمُر), which is the plural of the word *khimâr* (خِمَار). In his lexicon titled *al-Qâmūs al-Muhîṭ*, Imam Majd ad-Dîn al-

Fairūzâbâdî (d. 817H) defines the khimâr as “the veil ... all of what conceals something, then it is its khimâr.”[2]

In v. 33:59, Allah commands Prophet Muhammad,

«O Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to display their outer garments (Ar. jilbâb, pl. jalâbîb) over them; that is more appropriate, that they be recognized and not harmed. And Allah is Forgiving and Compassionate.»

The word here translated as “outer garments” is the word jalâbîb (جلابيب), which is the plural of jilbâb (جلباب). al-Fairūzâbâdî states that it is “the shirt and the wide gown for the woman, beneath the wrap; or it is what she covers her gown with from above, like the wrap; or it is the headcover.”[3]

In his *Sunan*, Imam Abū Dâwud as-Sajistânî reports that ‘Ā’ishah bint Abî Bakr narrated that her sister

Asmâ’ entered upon Allah’s messenger and on her were thin clothes. Allah’s messenger (may Allah send salutations and peace upon him) turned away from her and said, «O Asmâ’, surely when the woman reaches the [age of] menstruation, it is not appropriate that [anything] be seen from her except this and this» and he pointed to his face and his two palms.[4]

These texts are just a few of the legislative texts concerning the hijâb, and they are more than sufficient in proving those who claim that the hijâb is not a religious duty upon women wrong.

Some may argue that the word hijâb is not mentioned in any of these texts. This argument doesn’t hold any water, especially when you consider that the very garment that they refer to as “hijâb” (i.e., the khimâr) is mentioned in the first verse I’ve quoted. As for the assertion that the Qur’an falls short of specifying the details of a woman’s modesty, I’ve posted previously about [the conditions for proper women’s Islamic dress](#). The conditions outlined in that post all have their textual evidences to support them taken from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. As I mentioned in that post, Shaikh Muḥammad Nâsir ad-Dîn al-Albânî discusses these conditions and their evidences in his book, *Hijâb al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah*; I read recently on one of the mailing lists I’m subscribed to that an English translation of a summary of this book has been completed and should be published sometime in the near future, if Allah wills.

## **HIJAB: Fabric, Fad or Faith?**

“Yeah, I just got on the bus and I’m on my way home. Okay, Mum, *Wa’alaikum Assalam*.”

I slip my cell into my bag. A girl in a yellow tank top and dark blue cut-offs plops into the seat beside me.

“*Ugh*, I hate taking the bus, especially in this heat,” she says.

I nod and smile.

She raises her eyebrows at my full-length dress and the cloth wrapped around my head. “Aren’t you hot in that?” she asks.

I contemplate my answer. The girl shoots another question. “Why do you wear that thing on your head anyway?”

I fiddle with the clasp on my bag. I wonder what I should say. Why do I wear Hijab?

### **Why the Hood?**

It’s tough to explain, isn’t it? Hijab relates to the basic faith that there is only one God worthy of worship. As Muslim women we want to submit to God and obey all His commands. Since Hijab is a clear commandment of God (see Quran 24:31), we choose to do it to please Him. If we wear Hijab for any other reason, we may fulfill an obligation without gaining the reward for it.

Aisha (The wife of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him) said, “**May Allah have mercy on the immigrant women (from Makkah). When Allah revealed ‘that they should draw their veils over their *juyubihinna*\*,’ they tore their wrappers and covered their heads and faces with them.**” [*Bukhari*]

The female companions of the Prophet gave up the traditions and norms of their society and covered up immediately to respond to Allah, before they knew the proper method.

### **Only a Head Covering?**

**“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their *Juyubihinna*\* and not display their beauty except to...”** [Quran 24:31]

The word \**Juyubihinna*, according to most scholars, refers to the head, ears, neck and chest. To fulfil the minimum requirements of Hijab, a Muslim woman covers her entire body, except her face and hands. Once Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr, entered upon the Prophet wearing thin clothes. The Prophet turned his attention from her. He said, “*O Asma, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this,*” and he pointed to his face and hands. [Abu Dawud].

Proper Hijab means loose and opaque clothes. Clothes should not be alluring or similar to the clothing of men. What about guys? Islam outlines a modest dress code for men and women. The requirements are different based on the obvious physiological and psychological differences between the two genders.

Hijab does not apply only to clothes. It is a state of mind, behaviour, and lifestyle. Hijab celebrates a desirable quality called *Haya* (modesty), a deep concern for preserving one's dignity. *Haya* is a natural feeling that brings us pain at the very idea of committing a wrong. The Prophet said: "**Every religion has a distinct call. For Islam it is *Haya* (modesty).**" [*Ibn Majah*].

### What's in it for Me? Five Advantages of Hijab

- **I can't be messed with! Hijab protects me** – Hijab identifies a Muslim woman as a person of high moral standards to reduce her chances of being harassed.

**“O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons: that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested.”** [Quran 33:59]

As Dr. Katherine Bullock (a Canadian convert and community activist) observes, “The point to covering is not that sexual attraction is bad, only that it should be expressed between a husband and wife inside the privacy of the home. A public space free of sexual tensions is seen as a more peaceful place for human beings, men and women, to interact, do business, and build a healthy civilization.”

- **I am liberated from slavery to ‘physical perfection’** – Society makes women desire to become ‘perfect objects’. The multitudes of alluring fashion magazines and cosmetic surgeries show women's enslavement to beauty. The entertainment industry pressures teens to believe that for clothes, less is better. When we wear Hijab, we vow to liberate ourselves from such desires and serve only God.
- **I don't let others judge me by my hair and curves!** – In schools and professional environments, women are often judged by their looks or bodies—characteristics they neither chose nor created. Hijab forces society to judge women for their value as human beings, with intellect, principles, and feelings. A woman in Hijab sends a message, “Deal with my brain, not my body!”
- **I feel empowered and confident** – In contrast to today's teenage culture, where anorexia and suicide are on the rise, as women attempt to reach an unattainable ideal of beauty, Hijab frees a woman from the pressure to ‘fit in’. She does not have to worry about wearing the right kind of jeans or the right shade of eyeshadow. She can feel secure about her appearance because she cares to please only Allah.
- **I feel the bond of unity** – Hijab identifies us as Muslims and encourages other Muslim sisters to greet us with the salutation of peace, “Assalamu Alaikum”. Hijab draws others to us and immerses us in good company.

### Heard These Before? Three Misconceptions About Hijab

- **Hijab is a symbol of ‘male dominance’**  
If you think Hijab is an act of *submission*, you are right! It is a way to submit to God. Like any other act of worship, the rewards of Hijab come only when it is done for Allah alone.
- **Hijab is a ‘cultural thing’**  
From remote villages to cosmopolitan mega cities, women all across the world, from every ethnic background, wear Hijab. Do all of these women cling to old cultural practices? Hijab, the internal and

external aspects, take understanding, training and determination. Since the purpose of Hijab is to please Allah, doing it for tradition is wrong.

- **Hijab is a ‘challenge to the political system’**

While Hijab may have political implications, as evident in the banning of Hijab in certain countries, Muslim women who choose to practice Hijab are not doing it to challenge the political system. Islam encourages men and women to observe modesty in private and public life. Hijab is an individual’s act of faith and religious expression.

## Are you Ready? Six Obstacles to Overcome

Thinking about wearing Hijab? Here are some tips to help you overcome obstacles that may get in your way:

- **Yourself** –Not sure if you’re ready? Remember that *Iman* (faith in Allah) includes submitting to Allah’s will. Research, understand the reasons and talk to girls who have gone through it. Ask Allah to help you put your beliefs into action. Prophet Muhammad related that Allah said, “*if [My servant] draws near to Me a hand’s span, I draw near to him an arm’s length; if he draws near to Me an arm’s length, I draw near to him a fathom’s length; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.*” (Bukhari and Muslim)
- **Your Friends** – Worried about how your buddies will take it? Your friends should accept your decision and be proud of your courage. Give them time and be patient. Be conscious of Allah, not the girls or guys.
- **Your Parents** – It’s difficult to do things when the people closest to you oppose it. As Muslims, it’s our duty to please our parents, unless their wishes go against the command of Allah. As much as your parents do for you, their love and mercy could never compare to that of your Creator. Ease your parents into your decision and pray that it becomes easy for them to understand.
- **At School** –It takes courage to be different. You are likely to hear, “what is that thing on your head?” or “who made you do it?” Questions aren’t bad. Know your reasons and explain why you chose to wear Hijab.
- **At Work** – The United Nations states that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18). Most countries in the world abide by this declaration and have their own laws that protect an individual’s freedom of religious practice at work.
- **At the Gym** – What about swimming or basketball for sporty sisters? Obeying Allah and wearing Hijab does not limit your physical activity. Organize sisters-only sports events. This encourages true sports-womanship. When you play, it’s about the love of the game, not the glory (or the guys watching!).

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#4

Nov 13, 2007

Some people, especially in the West, would tend to ridicule the whole argument of modesty for protection.

Their argument is that the best protection is the spread of education, civilised behaviour, and self restraint. We would say: Fine but not enough.

1. If ‘civilization’ is enough protection, then why is it that women in North America, dare not walk alone in a dark street - or even across an empty parking lot?

2. If Education is the solution, then why is it that a respected university like ours has a ‘walk home service’ for female students on campus?

3. If self restraint is the answer, then why are cases of sexual harassment in the workplace on the news media every day? A sample of those accused of sexual harassment, in the last few years, includes: Navy officers, Managers, University professors, Senators, Supreme Court Justices, and the President of the United States!

You don’t believe your eyes when you read the following statistics, written in a pamphlet issued by the Dean of Women’s office at Queen’s University:

In Canada, a woman is sexually assaulted every 6 minutes",  
1 in 3 women in Canada will be sexually assaulted at some time in their lives",  
1 in 4 women are at the risk of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime",  
1 in 8 women will be sexually assaulted while attending college or university,  
and

A study found 60% of Canadian university-aged males said they would commit sexual assault if they were certain they wouldn't get caught.

Something is fundamentally wrong in the society we live in. A radical change in the society's life style and culture is absolutely necessary. A culture of modesty is badly needed, modesty in dress, in speech, and in manners of both men and women. Otherwise, the grim statistics will grow even worse day after day and, unfortunately, women alone will be paying the price.

Therefore, a society like France which expels young women from schools because of their modest dress is, in the end, simply harming itself.

It is one of the great ironies of our world today that the very same headscarf revered as a sign of 'holiness' when worn for the purpose of showing the authority of man by Catholic Nuns, is reviled as a sign of 'oppression' when worn for the purpose of protection by Muslim women

## Islam's Ideal Woman

### By Imam Qaradawi

The correct Islamic behaviour required of Muslim women which keeps them from wantonly displaying their attractions is characterised by the following: (A) Lowering the Gaze Indeed, the most precious ornament of a woman is modesty, and the best expression of modesty is in the lowering of the Gaze, as Allah says: ".....And tell the believing women that they should lower their gazes.....(24:31) (B) No Intermingling Not intermingling with men in such way that their bodies come in contact or that men touch women, as happens so often today in movie theatres, university classrooms, auditoriums, buses, street cars, and the like. Ma'qal Ibn Yasar narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) said, "It is better for one of you to be pricked in the head with an iron pick than to touch a woman whom it is unlawful to touch." (C) Her clothing must conform to the standards laid down by the Islamic Shari'ah, which are as follows: 1. Her dress must cover her entire body with the exception of "that which is apparent," which, according to the most preferable interpretation, refers to the face and hands. 2. It must not be transparent, revealing what is underneath. The Prophet (Pbuh) has informed us that, among the dwellers of hell are such women as are clothed yet naked, seduced and being seduced. These shall not enter the Garden, nor shall (even) its fragrance reach them. Here the meaning of "clothed yet naked" is that their light, thin, transparent garments do not conceal what is underneath. Once some women of Bani Tamim, who were clad in transparent clothes, came to see Hazrat Aisha (ra) and she remarked, "If you are Believers, these are not the clothes which befit believing women." On another occasion, when a bride wearing a sheer and transparent head-covering was brought into her

presence, she commented, "A woman who dresses like this does not believe in Surah al-Nur." (Surah 24, which together with Surah 33 (al-Ahzab) contains many injunctions concerning purity and propriety, man-woman relations, and dress. (Trans.) 3. Her dress must not be too tight so as to define the contours of her body even though it may not be transparent. This describes many of the styles of clothing current in the sensuous, materialistic civilisation of the Western world, whose fashion designers compete with one another in devising clothing for women which tantalisingly emphasises the bustline, waist, and hips, etc., in order to elicit the lustful admiration of men. Women who wear such clothes likewise fall under the definition of "clothed yet naked," since such a dress is often more provocative than one which is transparent. 4. She must not wear clothes which are specially for men, such as trousers in our time. The Prophet (Pbuh) cursed women who try to resemble men and men who resemble women, and prohibited women from wearing men's clothing and vice-versa. 5. In her choice of clothing a Muslim woman should not imitate non-Muslims, whether they are Jews, Christians, or pagans, for Islam disapproves of conformity to non-Islamic modes and desires its followers to develop their own distinctive characteristics in appearance, as well as in beliefs and attitudes. This is why Muslims have been asked to be different from non-Muslims in many ways, and why the Prophet (Pbuh) has said, "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." (D) The Muslim woman walks and talks in a dignified and business-like manner, avoiding flirtatiousness in her facial expressions and movements. Flirting and seductive behaviour are characteristics of women with immoral motives, not of Muslims. Allah says; " Then do not be too pleasant of speech, lest one in whose heart there is a disease should feel desire (for you).....(33:32) (Pbuh) She does not draw men's attention to her concealed adornment by the use of perfume or by jingling or toying with her ornaments or other such things. Allah says: "They should not strike their feet in order to make known what they hide of their adornment....." (24:31) The women of the time of Jahiliyyah used to stamp their feet when they passed by men so that the jingling of their ankle-bracelets might be heard. The Qur'an forbade this, both because it might tempt a lecherous man to pursue her and also because it demonstrates the evil intention of the woman in attempting to draw the attention of men to herself. Similar is the Islamic ruling concerning the use of fragrant perfumes, since here again the intention is to attract men by exciting their desire. A Hadith states, "The woman who perfumes herself and passes through a gathering is an adulteress." Islam does not require, as some people claim, a woman to remain confined to her house until death takes her out to her grave. On the contrary, she may go out for namaz, for her studies, and for her other lawful needs, both religious and secular, as was customary among the women of the families of the Prophet's Companions and the women of later generations. Moreover, this early period of Islam is considered by all Muslims to be the best and most exemplary period in the history of Islam. Among the women of this time were those who took part in battles in the company of the Prophet (Pbuh) himself, and after that under the caliphs and their commanders. The Messenger of Allah (Pbuh) told his wife Saudah, "Allah has permitted you to go out for your needs." He also said, "If someone's wife asks his permission to go to the mosque, he should not deny it to her." (Reported by al-Bukhari, on the authority of Aisha and Umar respectively). On another occasion he said, "Do not prevent the bond-maids of Allah from (going to) Allah's mosques." (Reported by Muslim).

