



UNVEILING HIJAB

An Explanation of the
Head Veil of the Muslim Woman

Afroz Ali

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AL-GHAZZALI CENTRE
for Islamic Sciences & Human Development
P.O. Box 7014
Mt. Lewis NSW 2190
Australia
www.alghazzali.org
info@alghazzali.org

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Introduction

*He has created cattle from which
there is warmth and many benefits for you;
and from them you have food...¹*

Devotional observations are the fundamental tradition of any religion. Such observations can include matters concerning time, festivals and celebrations as well as attire, to mention just a few. Indeed, many of these kinds of practices are not exclusive to religion, but are also common to culture, including the culture of secularism.

Islam is no exception in providing detailed guidance to its adherents on many such matters. Within Islam, guidance on dressing is one of such devotional practices.

Even Bedouin communities, e.g., Aboriginal communities in Australia, Africa and the Americas, have for a long time used grass straw, animal wool and skin and even clay to cover their bodies. And it had not always been merely as a response to weather (or for good skin), but also for the purposes of simply covering themselves as a sign of respect, honour and dignity.

Clothing is a human right², and this includes the right to dress as a devotional observance. However, no attire has come under such scrutiny and opposition as the head-veil of the Muslim woman. Many countries asserting to uphold democratic rights of its citizens actually prohibit the Muslim woman to maintain such a right.

The often fierce attack on the head-veil of the Muslim woman is not only one from governmental policy, but also from academic intellectualism. The most common “intellectual” justification against the head-veil is that it oppresses women, or at the very least it is a symbol of such oppression. The other argument commonly presented asserts that there is a total lack of evidence that the head-veil is a religious requirement at all.

This book hopes to alleviate the confusion for those who are seeking facts on the matter, as well as to offer proof against sophistic arguments on the subject. To achieve this, this book is divided into three parts.

Outline of the Book

Part 1 will explain the theoretical framework of the evidences from the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition (to be referred to as the Sunnah from here on) pertaining to clothing in general and the head-veil in particular. The focus will be on women's attire, given that this is the focus of this book.

It will focus on the implications of the theoretical framework. In particular, it will discuss the application of the laws and guidance and how they have been interpreted in practice. This will include the time of the Prophet ﷺ³ himself, the time after the Prophet with the Companions,⁴ as well as those who learnt directly from the Companions⁵ and those who learnt from those students of the Companions.⁶ These three generations are a divinely protected source of knowledge and interpretation of matters as approved of, exemplified or ordered by the Prophet ﷺ.

Part 2 of the book will discuss the culture of the head-veil, in light of modernity and secular states and academia, as well as the many obstacles and positive experiences of Muslim women the world over.

Part 3 will look at the spiritual wisdom of physical concealment and what the Qur'an aims to realise.

This book will thoroughly discuss the topic of the head-veil of the Muslim woman, commonly referred to as the *Hijāb*. Although this book also refers briefly to the full-body cloak which covers the face of the woman, the *Niqāb*, it does not intend to discuss its proofs in much detail, as it is subject to a separate book that will supplement this one. Further, this book will not discuss the requirements of dressing for Muslim men, not because it is unimportant, or that somehow Islam ignores it (as erroneously claimed by many academic "intellectuals"), but because there is little, if any, maligning of the Muslim men's devotional observance of dressing. There has not been a call upon me to offer clarity on that matter. That is not to say that Islam says little or nothing about the devotional requirements of men's attire; to the contrary since the nature of such requirements are as detailed and differing from the woman's not so much in degree but in type.

I hope this book will serve as a resource that English-speaking individuals

can refer to, to understand the concept, extent and nature of the head-veil and attire of the Muslim woman. And success is only from God, and May God grant us clarity on matters obscure and guidance on matters clear.

AFROZ ALI

Sydney, Australia

1st Rajab, 1429

Part 1 Clothing & the Primary Sources

*O children of Adam!
We have bestowed upon you clothing-
to conceal your erogenous parts and as fine apparel.
And, the clothing of righteousness - that is best for you.
That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.⁷*

The Australian legal system is based on the English Common Law system.⁸ It would be greatly helpful for the reader to reflect on the nature and complexity of our modern legal systems, particularly those which are based on the English legal system (including United States). This complexity and thoroughness is not lost in the Islamic legal system which our modern adoptions were influenced heavily by. And, because the subject matter is heavily legal in nature, it is important that the legal form of Islamic Law is briefly explained. What follows is quite brief, and is moulded to suit the subject matter of the head-veil and clothing, and so is not exhaustive in terms of the scope and method of the Islamic legal system.

The Primary Sources

The corpus of Islamic Law is derived from four sources, often referred to as the Primary Sources. They are the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the consensual agreement (*Ijmā`*) of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and expert analogical reasoning (*Qiyās*).

These four sources rely on numerous tools such as Textual Critique (*Dalālātul Alfāz*), Juristic Preference (*Istihsān*), Public Interest (*Maṣlaḥa al-Mursala*), and many others. Further, each of the Primary Sources is founded on numerous branches of Islamic Sciences such as: The Objectives of the Shari'ah⁹ (*Maqāṣid as-Shari'ah*), Primary Maxims of Jurisprudence (*Qawā'id al-Uṣūlīyah*), Arabic language in particular Grammar (*Nahw*), Context of Revelation (*Asbāb an-Nuzūl*), pre-Islamic Arabic poetry (*Shi'r*), Prophetic Narratives (*Ulūm al-Hadīth*) many others.

It will be impossible to explain in any detail each of these sources, tools and principles. But, as they specifically apply to the subject matter in the analysis that follows, they will be highlighted.

Clothing- The Divine Intent

The Qur'an refers to clothing in numerous verses, many focussing on clothing for humans literally, and in other places it is used metaphorically, e.g.:

*... And made the night as clothing...*¹⁰

This book will focus on the literal reference to clothing for humans, although where applicable the metaphorical use will be explained for additional perspectives on the concept of clothing.

*O children of Adam- We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your erogenous parts and as fine apparel. And, the clothing of righteousness - that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.*¹¹

In this verse, God The All-Wise provides two explanations of why clothing has been given as a gift to humanity. The first is for concealment of our pudenda. Whilst the Arabic term used here, *sū-ātikum*, can be referred to our private parts, it is far more encompassing than just the genital organs. It carries the connotation of “that which causes mischief” and “that which corrupts”.¹² The second reference is to clothing being a gift as fine apparel. Islam recognises and approves of good fashion-sense by wearing adorning attire. The Arabic term for such adornment in this verse is *rīshan*, which generically means “adorned with feathers”.

The continuing verse is potentially far more telling, because God compares such clothing- one of dignified concealment and the other of adornment- with the clothing of righteousness. The context of it is that whilst the outward nature of clothing as such is acceptable, what is far more important is that our “garment” is one of God-consciousness. Outward covering of the pudenda and the erogenous zones does not stop one from mental mischief, to which

the Prophet ﷺ said:

*“The eyes fornicate. Their fornication is the look. The hands fornicate. Their fornication is the touch. The feet fornicate. Their fornication is the walking (towards it). The heart desires, and the private parts either confirm it or deny it.”*¹³

Further, in regards to adornment, that whilst it is permissible, a balanced approach is exhorted. Such a balance is one of avoiding consumerism, extravagance and that which is abnormal in comparison to the norm of social consensus, for God does not like those who are loud-mouthed show-offs.¹⁴ What the Qur’an mandates is that both men and women conduct themselves modestly and not make public spectacles of themselves through a “wanton display” of their bodies. In addition, the implicit meaning here is that it is from wearing clothing that adornment is attained, not from undressing from it.

The term for clothing in the preceding verse is *libās*. It means clothing in the context, and is derived from the meaning “to cover”, “to wrap around”. Its nuance is that of benefit (like warmth and covering), and no wonder God also uses the same word to describe a husband and wife:

*They are your garments and you are theirs...*¹⁵

Further, God alludes to garments or clothing as a means to deal with the weather by providing warmth:

*He has created cattle from which there is warmth and many benefits for you..*¹⁶

In another verse, the Qur’an highlights the decorum within family; something human beings do naturally at their homes:

O you who believe! Let those whom your right hands possess, and the children among you who have not come of age, to ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: before morning

*prayer; the while you take off your outer garments for the midday heat; and after the late-night prayer: these are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other (without having to ask): Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.*¹⁷

This verse is testimony to the intrinsic human nature to avoid exposing their private parts inside their homes in front of one's children, family and non-relations. It highlights three occasions when adults do happen to undress to a minimum amount of clothing at night when sleeping and during afternoon siestas where it is common to rest after midday during hot weather. This verse is explicit in regards to keeping one's bodily exposure private, and that during private times others should seek permission before presenting themselves.

In summary, the Qur'an outlines three reasons for clothing in general—concealment of our erogenous zones, for adornment (through clothing, not from removing it) and for warmth and protection from the weather. These are the universal and fundamental reasons that the Qur'an provides to Muslims about the necessity of clothing. It is not different at all from Social Sciences perspectives, which considers clothing as something people wear for those similar functional and social reasons.

Women's Clothing & the Qur'an

We have seen what the Qur'an reveals to us regarding clothing in general. This section narrows down the matter specifically to the Qur'anic explanation for women's attire as a devotional observance. There are two primary verses that deal with women's attire. The first is:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and preserve their modesty;

That they must not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof;

That they must draw their head-coverings upon their bosoms and not display

their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of sexual needs, or small children who have no discernment of women's sexuality;

And that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.

*And O you Believers! Turn you all together towards Allah, that you may attain success.*¹⁸

The part of the verse that is of interest to this discussion is “...*that they must not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they must draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty*”. The critical terms or phrases that need clarity of definition are the reference to “*except what must ordinarily appear thereof*” and “*draw their head-coverings upon their bosoms and not display their beauty*”.

The phrase “*except what must ordinarily appear thereof*” requires prepositioning, i.e., to what it is referring to; what is it the exception of. The common misplacement of this phrase is to the parts of the verse that follow it (about the bosom and to a lesser extent the veil itself), when this is simply not the case. It in fact qualifies the preceding part of the verse, that one should not display their beauty and attractiveness except that which ordinarily or naturally is exposed. So, the message is that one should clothe themselves appropriately so as not to expose those parts of the body which is not apparent¹⁹ in the ordinary process of one going about their daily lives. The “*beauty and adornment*” referred to here is primarily natural rather than adornment of the clothing itself²⁰ (referred to as *rīshan* in the earlier quoted verse). We had briefly looked at the numerous tools and principles that lead to the clarity about a Ruling in Islamic Law. One of them was *Dalālātul Alfāz*, or Textual Critique. In this particular case, two kinds of Textual Critique for evidence was relied upon here by the Companions and the Scholars- *‘Ibārah an-Naṣ* (explicit meaning of the text), as well as *Dalālah an-Naṣ* (necessary linguistic meaning of the text).

The Qur’an does not provide any further details of what these natural

elements or parts of the body are that are excluded from being covered. It is in the Sunnah, as recorded in the Hadeeth, that the practical injunction is provided and explained, and to which we will return to, but suffice to say that it is now clear that it is a Divine injunction that certain parts of the body are exempt from covering.

The next important phrase from the above-mentioned verse is “*draw their head-coverings upon the bosoms and not display their beauty...*”

This phrase requires a detailed explanation, through Textual Critique tools as well as Context for Revelation, both used by the Companions and the Scholars that followed on this particular matter.

The critical Arabic terms in this phrase are *wal-yaḍribna*, *bi-khumurihinna* and *juyūbi-hinna*. To eliminate the unnecessary parts of the word (removing them do not affect the meaning) is *hinna*- that merely is a pronoun referring to “their”- the women’s. Firstly the term *yaḍribna*, is derived from its root word *ḍaraba*.²¹ The word carries a few meanings, one of them being “to strike, as in hit”. But this is most certainly not meant here at all. Its root meaning is to “to cast”, “to set forth”, “to train over”. It carries a meaning of being deliberate in such an action. Some examples of this word when used in a sentence in such a context, are “I cast upon them a sleep upon closing his ear” (*ḍarabtu an-nauma āla udhnihi*) and “He trained his dog for the purpose of the chase” (*ḍaraba kalbahu āla as-ṣaidi*). The necessary linguistic meaning (*Dalālah an-Naṣ*) here is that one must train(purposefully) or draw, their head-coverings over their bosoms.

The next term, *khumur* (the *bi* in front of the term generally means “with” in this context, and very important) is possibly the most important word in the entire analysis of the subject matter.

Before we proceed to explain the term, it is important to highlight the intellectual vacuum in the likes of Ali Ahmad Said, an Arab poet popularly known as Adonis, who was a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in literature. Although writing his “popular” poetry in Arabic, he deliberately or ignorantly misrepresented the Qur’an at least in linguistic terms. He claimed:

“... nowhere in the *Quran* or *Hadith* is there a single, unequivocal passage that imposes the veil on Muslim women.”²²

How wrong is he, and we shall see how wrong he is, and others who sing a similar tune out of ignorance or malice.

The term *khumur* is not at all obscure in what it means...²³

Based on authoritative description and definition,²⁴ the word *khumur* has explicit linguistic meaning (*'Ibārah wa Dalālah an-Naṣ*) as used: and that is, a head-covering. As used in the Qur'an with the prepositional *bi*, (hence *bi-kumuri-hinna*), it means "to cover [their bosoms] with their *khumur*",²⁵ i.e., to cover their bosoms with their head-covering. It is undoubtedly explicit.

What most "academic intellectuals" have found strange is that it sounds odd, according to them, that such an explanation would be plausible. How could one cover one's bosoms (their chest area), with a veil on the head used as a covering, despite the fact that the the meaning specifically includes "head covering"? The explanation, and the conclusive proof of what *khimār* (singular of *khumur*) is, is in what the Companions and their Successors actually did. Their description and explanation is unequivocal. Given the fact that the word itself is explicit in meaning, additional descriptions through what the Successors experienced are only secondary, but visiting them will help to cement the matter.

The manner in which the female Companions wore the *khumur* is actually the basis for a difference of opinion amongst the Scholars regarding the face-veil (*Niqāb*)! There is simply no doubt that the Companions and their Successors, as well as the Classical Scholars were in unanimous consensus about the head-veil to be a long veil able to be drawn over one's chest area upon the Revelation; the difference only existing in relation to whether covering the face was also an obligation. Some women of the time drew the veil from the top down to achieve the Divine Command, whilst others from the sides and over, whilst maintaining to cover their heads with the veil (the head-covering-*khimār*). The result for the first method of covering was to cover the face, while the second method had the face uncovered. The women prior to the Revelation wore the veil by tying it behind the necks (like an overhanging bandana scarf) and in so doing left their bosoms bare and exposed.

Following are two Ahadeeth²⁶ that illustrate the use of the *khimār* applied by female Companions. Abu Hurairah gave the following account of his mother's conversion:

I came to the Prophet ﷺ weeping one day and said: “O Messenger of Allah, I have been inviting my mother to Islam and she has been refusing. Today I asked her again, and she said something about you which I hated to hear. Ask Allah to guide Abu Hurairah’s mother!” Whereupon the Prophet ﷺ said: “O Allah! Guide Abu Hurairah’s mother.” Then I returned home cheered up by the Prophet’s supplication. When I arrived at the door of the house I found it closed. Hearing my footsteps, my mother said: “Abu Hurairah, do not come in yet.” I could hear the sound of water. She washed herself and wore her Dir’ (robe) and khimaar (headcover) then she opened the door and said: “Abu Hurairah! I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s servant and messenger!” I returned at once to the Prophet ﷺ weeping for joy, and said to him: “O Messenger of Allah, good news! Allah has answered your request and guided my mother!” He glorified and praised Allah, thanking Him and saying good things. I said: “O Messenger of Allah! Ask Allah that He make me and my mother beloved to his believing servants and that He make them beloved to us.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “O Allah! Make your little servant (here meaning Abu Hurairah) and his mother beloved to Your believing servants, and make the believers beloved to the two of them.” Not one believer is brought into existence who hears about me without seeing me except he loves me.”

The *khimār* described by Abu Hurairah, one of the closest Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, was no different to other *khumur*, where the veil was used to cover the head.

Another Tradition records this:

A’isha said: “By Allah, I never saw any women better than the women of the Ansaar (i.e. the women of Madina) or stronger in their confirmation of Allah’s Book! When Sura al-Nur was revealed: “and to draw their ‘khumur’ over their bosoms” [Qur’an 24:31] -- their men went back to them, reciting to them what Allah had revealed to them, each man reciting it to his wife, daughter, sister, and relative. Not one woman among them remained except she got up on the spot, tore up her waist-wrap and covered herself from head-to-toe with it.

They prayed the very next dawn prayer covered from head to toe.”

Whether the women covered their faces or not is unclear from this Tradition, but one thing is certain- they veiled their heads which was long enough to be drawn over their chests. The visual description of such a veil is unambiguous- the head covering is a veil that at the very least covers the head, neck and the chest area.

The second primary verse regarding the attire of the woman is:

O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women to let down upon them their over-garments;

*This is more suitable, so that they may be known and not be molested, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*²⁷

In this verse, there is one word that requires definition- *jalābībi-hinna* (*jalābīb* by eliminating I which is a pronoun to mean “their”, i.e., the women’s), as well as an explanation about the context of revelation in order to understand the meaning of “... *This is more suitable, so that they may be known and not be molested...*”

Jalābīb is the plural of *jilbāb*, and is traditionally a loose wrap or robe used by women which was worn over their garment. It was a long and wide piece of cloth (or cloak with a hood) that would cover a woman from head to under the ankle, and as such also functioned as a *khimār*. It is also described by *Lisaan al-Arab*²⁸ as “*thawb tawīl*” which means “a long robe or gown”.

A point of clarification is required here. Islamic Jurisprudential analyses of words are not concerned with modern or post modern definitions of words, but the classical definitions as understood by the Prophetic generation. The language is extremely powerful and preserved, even at the level of each individual letter in a word. In addition, from the perspective of Islam, the words possess *necessary legal meaning* (*Iqtida an-Naṣ*) when used for the purposes of a devotional act.

The Textual and Juristic Scholars did disagree whether the *jilbāb*, mentioned in this Qura’nic verse, refers to a veil or an outer garment. For example, Ibn Qutayba associated it with an outer garment (*rida’*).²⁹ In contrast, Muqatil Ibn Sulayman considered it a long veil (*qina’*).³⁰ Other exegetes, such as Ibn Sirin, explained it as a calling upon Muslim women to cover their faces

by lifting the edge of their cloaks (*rida'*) and wrapping it around their faces and over their eyebrows, leaving only the eyes exposed.³¹ A similar account was described by the Companion of the Prophet, Ibn 'Abbas, who was also bestowed the title of "The Translator of the Qur'an" (*Tarjumān al-Qur'an*), as well as by the expert Qatada.³² This description is quite apt, and can still be observed among the Bedouin, where they hold the ends of their loose overgarment (often a large veil) between their teeth. It is quite often also used to protect oneself from sandstorms, incidentally.

Evidently, both the *khimār* and the *jilbāb* were long and big enough to be used to cover one's head and chest area, and in the case of the *jilbāb*, it was used to cover the entire body in a loose fitting manner. In both of these circumstances (at least in terms of definitions, for now in context with the current book) what is not clear is whether these included the face.³³

Having covered the linguistic aspects of this verse, we now consider the phrase "... *This is more suitable, so that they may be known and not be molested...*" This phrase is critical in understanding the Divine Intent of such covering. Ignorant academics³⁴ have asserted that it is to oppress or control women; but is this plausible?

To understand this verse, and indeed this phrase, the Science of *Asbāb an-Nuzūl* (Context of Revelation) is fundamentally important. *Asbāb an-Nuzūl* is a factual record of when a verse was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In numerous cases, it also tells us under what circumstances, or in which context, the verse (or verses) was revealed. The Context of Revelation does not limit its application only to that time, but analyses whether the verse can then be applied generally or is exclusive to that point of time. When the verse did apply generally to include others at the time of the Prophet, for example, the Ruling is then concluded to apply to all Believers.

Commenting on the circumstances that led to the revelation of this verse, Muqatil Ibn Sulayman narrates the following:³⁵

When the Muhājirūn [the refugee migrants from Makkah] came to Madina with their wives they were hosted by the native Madinans, the Ansār, who joined the Prophet. Since the living situation was congested inside the house, women needed to go out every night to relieve themselves near the palm trees. The ill-reputed men of Madina

would follow them and touch them. If any woman wished to have sexual intercourse, the ill-reputed men would pay her due and satisfy himself. If she was chaste, she would cry out, and the man would leave her alone. These people were, in fact, targeting slave girls who did not dress appropriately and attracted the men, but the men could not distinguish at night between the Believers and slave women. The believing women told their husbands about their nocturnal encounters with the male adulterers, and they in turn mentioned it to the Prophet ﷺ. As a result, God decreed that the Believing women should place a veil (*qina'*) above their neck scarf [modern-day equivalent of a muffler]... so that they would be distinguished from "loose" females, be set aside as honourable, and not be approached by anyone or harmed at night.

It is clear from this, that it does not depict modesty of the woman as a remedy for women's allegedly irresistible sexuality. No claim is made here that God revealed the verse in order to shield men from carnal desire, or to control women's sexual power, or to salvage morality.

What it does connect physical veiling to is women's approachability. The Qur'anic regulation was revealed to distinguish free and respectable women from disreputable women or women who did not wear appropriate clothing that could be the basis for sexual provocation on the women, or those who could be misunderstood as such through attire, and thus was to protect them from being improperly approached by men. Other early Scholars likewise stressed that the purpose of the *jilbāb* was contextually to render free women distinguishable from slave girls in the public sphere, not because of their status as "slaves" or "free", but because of impropriety or personal honour.³⁶ The distinction was not due to the social status of the times but due to the behavioural manner of each group of the women at the time. The universal law that therefore followed upholds the protection of women's honour in the public sphere.

The Islamic Jurisprudential masters unanimously held that the *jilbāb* was ordained to protect free women (and not only the Prophet's wives) rather than to somehow shield men from sexual temptation. As such and most importantly, their juridical concern was about the potential harm to women

that the Qur'an aimed to eradicate. It is aimed to prevent a person of ill-intent from approaching a Believing woman³⁷ in a harmful way either by making a negative utterance³⁸ or by raising suspicion against her.³⁹

As al-Tabari explained that "the men harmed the women with their offensive talk (*qawl al-makruh*)."⁴⁰

Another important example is that of Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Qays who was a Kufan, and a Companion of 'Ali ibn abi Talib. He explained:

*... men used to sit on the road for the purpose of luring women (lil-
azal).*

'Azal is "the talk, and actions, and circumstances, occurring between the lover and the object of love."⁴¹ The remarks to women who are seductively dressed or not covered in such a manner that conceals their erogenous zones, according to Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Qays, induce the remarks made by men which were sexual in nature. Obviously, the fact that a woman was dressed appropriately never meant that it would somehow stop the men from behaving rudely, but that inappropriate attire would certainly induce it.

The dress restrictions obligated by the Qur'an rendered women in attire which concealed them appropriately, distinguishable from their counterparts who would either flaunt to expose themselves in the public sphere or were dressed inappropriately for public space. The Qur'an thus warned men against addressing Believing women dressed appropriately in a manner that was demeaning or otherwise harmful to women.

Importantly, the early Classical Sources (up to the 3rd century of Hijra⁴²), authored by the masters of Islamic Jurisprudence, do not cite any authority that associates (outward) modesty with sexual morality or with the notion that veiling was necessary to prevent lust and sexual philandering. Further, these sources do not imply whatsoever, that women are responsible in any way for men's despicable behaviour. On the contrary, women are presented as the undeserving *victim* of men's such unacceptable behaviour.

The Qur'an's message is that women must take responsibility to protect themselves from the ill intention of men, and that if the women do not do so, then men will inadvertently take advantage of the circumstances. What God obligates upon women (hence it being a devotional practice) is a

personal responsibility for self-protection as well as the societal honouring of women. This is done through attire, which is the most appropriate and convenient manner by which to conceal the erogenous parts and at the very least minimise, if not eliminate, unacceptable approaches to oneself. In fact the phrase, “...*This is more suitable, so that they may be known and not be molested...*” already informs the reader that such covering is suitable, i.e., most appropriate and convenient.

It must be noted that it was late (pre and post colonial modern times) commentators who increasingly tied modesty laws to sexual morality, either by attributing such a concern to early scholars or by articulating this concern themselves. An indication of later scholars and commentators’ tendency to link modesty to morality is the fact that they increasingly incorporated the term *fitnah*⁴³ into the laws of women’s attire, using it exclusively to refer to sexual allure and more specifically to women’s power to seduce men because “female slaves cause *fitnah* because of their voluptuous nature”.⁴⁴ Ibn Kathir, whose Tafsir⁴⁵ is amongst the most popular in contemporary reading, attributes to Sufyan al-Thawri (one of the earliest Scholars who learnt directly from the Companions of the Prophet) an opinion (with no chain of transmitters) that alludes to the issue of *fitnah* in this similar context. However, neither al-Tabari nor Muqatil ascribed such an opinion to Sufyan al-Thawri. If the attribution made by ibn-Kathir to Sufyan is authentic, it is certainly a strange (*gharīb*) opinion that was not used or quoted by any Scholars prior to the 9th century (3rd century AH). The works of the likes of al-Tabari were foundational for later scholars for their own commentary, and it is clear that this kind of *fitnah* of the woman is neither from the Qur’anic Text nor from any Juridical procedure that is standard to Islamic Jurisprudence. It could be, at the best, an opinion of the later Scholars and commentators.

Before the 9th century CE (3rd century AH) authoritative Qur’anic Scholars assigned the veiling law of the [33:59] verse as maintaining, honouring and safeguarding Believing women, at the very least, their reputations and safety. The idea that this verse aimed to shield men from women’s “immoral nature” gained unfortunate momentum, only in the middle or the end of the 10th century CE (4th century AH).

Head Veil- An Obligation?

In Islamic Jurisprudence there are five levels for all acts, and particularly those which are devotional observances. Legally, they are referred to as The Five Rulings. The first, *Wājib*,⁴⁶ refers to those matters which are obligatory or mandatory. *Wājib* matters are an imperative Command of God either explicitly through the Qur'an, or through the injunction from the Prophet ﷺ. Fulfilling these Divine Commands⁴⁷ results in success and being rewarded in this life and in the Hereafter. Similarly, the non-fulfilment of them results in failure and punishment from God. The second, *Mandūb*, refers to those matters which are recommended under the Law. It is often, but not entirely correctly, interchanged with Sunnah- the Prophet's practice of non-obligatory matters. Matters which are *Mandūb* bring success and reward when fulfilled, but are not punishable if not fulfilled, although may be questioned by God. The third, *Mubah*, refers to those matters which are merely permissible, and form most part of all acts that a human involves themselves in. The fulfilment of them or otherwise neither brings reward nor punishment, although performing them as an act of obedience to God is a rewardable act. The fourth, *Makrūh*,⁴⁸ refers to matters which are disliked. Avoiding them brings one rewards, but engaging in them does not bring punishment but can be questioned by God. The fifth, *Harām*, refers to matters which are prohibited. Avoiding them brings success and reward from God in this life and the Hereafter, and engaging in them results in failure and being punished by God.

The stipulated dress code is a devotional practice, and hence is a matter which falls within the afore-mentioned Five Rulings. Evidence of its Ruling is found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, which is that *Khimār* (commonly referred to as *Hijāb*, and will be the term used from here on)⁴⁹ is mandatory upon women, i.e., *Wājib*. The evidences from the Sunnah that the *Hijāb* is mandatory will be explained in the next section.

As far as the Qur'anic evidence is concerned, firstly the imperative form of verb is used in both the primary verses pertaining to the minimum requirements of women's attire in public which mandates the *Hijāb*, [24:31] and [33:59], which is an explicit Command from God. That imperative verb is the two-lettered *Qul*,⁵⁰ which means "say" or "tell", in a commanding tone.

In [24:31] God directs this imperative Command to Believing women (*Wa qul lil-mu'mināti...*). In [33:59] God directs it to the wives and daughters of the Prophet and the Believing women (*Ya aiyuhan-Nabi qul li-azwājika wa banātika wa nisā-il-mu'minīna...*).⁵¹

An analogy from the English language may assist in understanding imperative commands, and why time does not change the command of *Hijāb* as an obligation, as contrary to the claims of “academic intellectuals”. If one is instructed, “Tell the workers to only use work- based websites”, then this would be an imperative requirement of that company, for example. Combined with a punitive action by the company for breaking the rule, then gives us the Islamic equivalent of an obligation (*wājib*). The same imperative command can be direct, such as “Only use work-based websites”, without losing the commanding nature of the instruction.

It must be pointed out that the reason this analogy is easy to understand is because it is in the English language that we (hopefully) comprehend. It is rather unfortunate that most who have referred to the *Hijāb* as a symbol of oppression, or that it is not an obligation at all, are those who have little or no expertise in the Arabic language; certainly their works prove nothing of it.

The second textual evidence that the *Hijāb* is mandatory is in verse [24:31], in the form a negating command followed by an exception. Such a textual evidence comes under *'Ibaarah an-Naş* (explicit meaning of the text) described earlier, and another termed *an-Nahy al-Khāş* (a particularised prohibition). In this verse, God commands, “... they must not display their beauty and ornaments except what ordinarily appear thereof...” The command requires that certain areas of the body must be concealed (i.e., not displayed) to the exception of the others. What must be concealed is explicitly articulated- their bosoms with their *khimār* (*'Ibārah an-Naş*: explicit meaning of the text), which is a veil that drops down from one’s head. Furthermore, by virtue of what a *khimār* is and through *'Ishārah an-Naş* (inferred meaning of the text) and *Dalālah an-Naş* (Necessary Linguistic Meaning of the Text), the negating command requires that the head (and by necessary extension, the hair) must also then be concealed (i.e., not displayed).

The third explicit evidence that the *Hijāb* is mandatory is in the same verse [24:31]. Again, a very small textual proof, one letter, but that which is a most

important evidence. The word *yadribna* (the meaning of which we discussed previously) is preceded by the Arabic letter *Lām*, as in *(wa)l-yadribna*. The *Lām* is a definitive imperative, called *Lām al-Amr* (the *Lām* of Command) in Arabic language. This verse is specifically commanding to “draw their head veils” (*khimār*), which naturally covered their heads (it is, after all, a head covering....) and draw them along their chests.

It is evident from the Qur’an, as discussed so far, that the head covering (*khimaar*) is an explicit Divine Command. We have also shown that whilst the use of the veil is mandatory as practised by the generation of the Prophet ﷺ and inherent in the essential meaning of the critical words used in the Qur’an, what is not clear is whether the covering of the face is also included. The majority of the Classical Scholars, the masters of Islamic Jurisprudence, concluded through expert analysis that covering of the face is not mandatory.⁵² Moreover, we have seen that a loose over-garment or attire is also prescribed. The form, type, fabric, etc. are not described in the Qur’an and it is not the role of the Qur’an to control such matters which are more often cultural and personal.

Finally, we have also shown that the women’s attire is not intended to control or oppress women, particularly not their sexuality, but is an injunction to give a clear message to anyone who through ill-intention seeks to lure Believing women or treat them as a sexual object, to simply stay away.

As one of the foremost Islamic Scholars- al-Ghazzali articulated, physical veiling “is a mandatory preservation of honour of the women”.⁵³

Women’s Clothing & the Sunnah

Contrary to the most common fallacious claim that the Qur’an is devoid of or ambiguous about any proof⁵⁴ mandating Hijaab, we have shown that the Qur’an is quite explicit and unequivocal about it. Furthermore, “academic intellectuals” claim that the later Scholars had to resort to the Hadeeth literature in order to “fill the gap.”⁵⁵

It is true that Islam relies on Hadīth literature, which records the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, but far from the reason of “filling the gap”! As explained previously, it has been from the time of the Prophet himself that the Sunnah

was a fundamental exemplifier of the Divine Intent, recorded namely in the Qur'an. It is the second of the four Primary Sources for Islamic Jurisprudence. The following Hadīth will clarify and alley the kinds of claims made against it as mentioned.

Before sending Mu'adh ibn Jabal to Yemen to act as a Judge, the Prophet asked him, "What will you base your judgments on?"

Mu'adh replied, "By the Book of God."

The Prophet ﷺ then asked, "And should it not be in the Book of God?"

Mu'adh replied, "Then the Sunnah of the Prophet."

"And should you not find it in the Sunnah?" asked the Prophet,

"Then I will exert my efforts completely and not falter," replied Mu'adh.

To this the Prophet ﷺ replied, "Praise is due to God, who has given the messenger of the Messenger of God, success."⁵⁶

This Hadeeth elucidates what any Scholar of Islam must do in order to understand any Ruling, something which was established at the time of the Prophet ﷺ himself. Thus, the claim that somehow later Scholars referred to the Hadeeth to "fill the gaps" is not only erroneous but ignorant of the methodology of the Islamic Juridical process, and such claims from "academic intellectuals" is a definite proof against their academic quality, and perhaps intellect.

Once the Companions (*Sahāba*), the Successors (*Tābi'īn*) and their Successors (*Tabi' Tabi'īn*) understood and articulated the proofs of the mandatory nature of the Hijaab, they referred to the Sunnah to articulate the nature of the Hijaab. The nature of the most appropriate form of *Hijāb* arises from what the female Companions did right in front of the Prophe^ﷺ, because the Sunnah is proof of three things. Firstly, it records what the Prophet actually said about a matter. Secondly, it records what the Prophet did himself. Thirdly, it records what the Prophet approved of by virtue of the fact that it occurred in his presence, but he did not prohibit or object to it. These three forms of records is what entails Sunnah itself.

There are numerous Ahadīth that record what the Prophet ﷺ said or approved of regarding women's attire- from *khimār* to *jilbāb*. The Ahadīth to follow are not exhaustive, but provide an excellent resource to understand the

form and nature of the *hijāb*.

*Narrated Umm Atiyya: “We were ordered to bring out our menstruating women and screened women to the religious gatherings and invocation of the Muslims on the two Eid festivals. These menstruating women were to keep away from the prayer hall. A woman asked, “O Messenger of Allah! What about one who does not have a jilbāb?”. He said, “Let her borrow the jilbāb of her companion”.*⁵⁷

And, this Hadīth:

*A’isha reported that Asma’ the daughter of Abu Bakr [her sister] came to the Messenger of Allah while wearing thin clothing. He approached her and said: ‘O 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.’*⁵⁸

The above Hadīth reinforces the “exception rule” from the verse [24:31] that “... they must not display their beauty except what ordinarily appear thereof...” and explains the nature of the *jilbāb* and the *khimār*, which provided concealment.

Here is another Hadth:

*A’isha narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who experiences menstruation (i.e., who has reached puberty) except with a khimār (head covering).”*⁵⁹

Whilst not entirely relevant to the discussion of the mandatory requirement upon women to wear the *hijāb* in public space, the Hadīth quoted above is clear proof of what a *khimār* is. It is clear because there are numerous Ahadīth that provide clarity about what needs to be covered during prayer, and the head, hair and neckline are required to be covered of which there is no doubt from the Primary sources. Such covering was traditionally done by using a *khimār*, which is also the essential meaning of the word in context with it being a veil.

The Hijab, Khimar & the Veil

Often the claim is made that nowhere in the Qur'an does God require a woman to wear the *hijāb*. That is somewhat true, but not entirely accurate.

It has become standard practice to refer to the head veil of the woman as *hijāb*, and this is not quite correct, because the physical veil as a head covering is factually called *khimār*. The essence of the two words leads them to be interchangeable.

Thus, the definition of *hijāb* requires some explanation.

Hijāb is a derived word from its root *hajaba*. Its root meaning is “to conceal”, “to cover” or “to separate”. *Hijāb* is “that which conceals, covers or separates.” It is a barrier between two things.

A window or door curtain is called *hijaab*. The Qur'an uses it in this manner:

*... And when you ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything-
Ask it of them from behind a curtain. . .*⁶⁰

Maryam, mother of Jesus (peace be upon them both) separated herself, or secluded herself from her family when an Angel appeared and informed her of miraculously conceiving a child:

*So she secluded herself from them....*⁶¹

It is a means of separation:

*And between them is a veil.*⁶²

Hijāb is essentially a barrier between two things:

When you do recite the Qur'an,

*We put between you and those who do not believe, a barrier.*⁶³

In all of these verses, the *hijāb* is a barrier of some kind which aims to protect one from harm. Given it is like a curtain, or something that conceals, it is synonymous to what a *khimār* actually does. It is because of such close resemblance between the two words, that they are used interchangeably.

The word *khimār* also needs a brief semantic explanation. It is derived from the root word *khamara*, which means “to obscure” or “to conceal”. Just

like a veil obscures or conceals, another word from the same root family- *khamr*- also obscures. Khamr is an intoxicant, e.g., alcohol, and it obscures one's intellect.

Hence, we see that the words *khimār* and *hijāb* are in fact interchangeable. What is most important to realise is that whilst the *khimār* is a physical veil, *hijāb* is far more encompassing. *Hijāb* includes the physical veil, the lowering of the gaze, as well as the best of adornments, God-consciousness as mentioned in a previous Qur'anic verse.

Part 2 The Anti-Hijab Culture

*The Prophet said, "If anyone interprets the Book of Allah in the light of his opinion even if he is right, he has erred."*⁶⁴

Governmental Influence

Ill informed Governmental policy and academic intellectualism are two of the greatest forces of the 21st century that are leading a campaign against the *hijāb*.

The previously quoted example of Adonis is case in point, but there are many more such outrageously inaccurate and fallacious assertions about the Hijab. A Federal member of the Australian Parliament, Bronwyn Bishop, did not even know the the word properly,⁶⁵ whilst attacking it as backward and oppressive.

Furthermore, Amir Taheri wrote:

*"This is not Islam... (various legal rules) ... are based on the claim that the controversial headgear is an essential part of the Muslim faith and that attempts at banning it constitute an attack on Islam. That claim is totally false... the headgear in question has nothing to do with Islam as a religion. It is not sanctioned anywhere in the Koran, the fundamental text of Islam, or the hadith (traditions) attributed to the Prophet."*⁶⁶

And:

*This headgear was invented in the early 1970s by Mussa Sadr, an Iranian mullah who had won the leadership of the Lebanese Shi'ite community....*⁶⁷

Putting aside all the evidences outlined in this book already, the following practical evidence simply proves Taheri's claims completely false and fabricated, although it is something that received both international academic circulation and praise.

Huda Shaarawi⁶⁸ (1879 – 1924) was a pioneering Muslim feminist in Egypt and the founder of the Egyptian Feminists movement. In Egypt during her time in the 1920s, women were required to wear the head as well as the face veil (*niqāb*) under compulsion, which is something that Islam rejects. In 1923 after her visit to a conference in Rome, she and many of her friends publicly took off their *niqāb*, which took Egypt by a storm that was far reaching worldwide. Her 1923 photos clearly show Huda Shaarawi wearing the *hijāb*. Other photos included in her autobiography clearly show a whole number of other women wearing the *hijāb*, and some the *niqāb*.

In addition, Dawn Chatty, a social anthropologist at Oxford University and an expert on Arabian societies, writes about the Bedouin society:⁶⁹

*“The women, without exception, always wear traditional Bedouin dress. This consists of a long dress that sweeps the ground, generally in solid brown, dark blue, or black, and one or two black scarfs.”*⁶⁹

In a personal communication, Dr. Omar Farooq Abdullah asked Dawn, “Was that practice of wearing scarf - adding to a long or any other dress - been in vogue for long time?” She wrote back:

“Bedouin women and men both cover their hair and have been doing so for a very long time. Certainly documents from the 19th century talk about this and the early photographs of men and women from Bedouin tribes at the end of the 19th and early 20th century show men and women wearing head scarfs.”

The preposterous claims of Amir Taheri are blatantly dishonest. It was not a 1970 Shi’ite cleric who invented the *hijāb*; that is rather obvious. Yet, such are the “evidences” of the “academic intellectuals” that governments choose to rely upon.

Two quite stark realisations become apparent from such un-academic preoccupation.

Firstly, the likes of Adonis and Taheri wrote in support of the French ban of the *hijāb*, claiming that *Hijāb* had “nothing to do with Islamic religious injunctions”. But, the French Government banned the *hijāb* on religious grounds!

Secondly, because the academia holds much prestige and credibility,

concocted ideas of the academics can very quickly obscure the truth of a matter, as has become the case regarding the *hijāb*.

Media Conditioning

The media has been the tool of choice to propagate the wrong message about the *hijāb*. Several studies⁷⁰ have shown that mainstream North American media have consistently portrayed an image of “the Muslim woman” who wears the *hijāb* as an oppressed and passive. The majority of articles about the *hijāb* in the print media suggest that this practice is a sign of Muslim women’s subjugation, and therefore should be condemned. The following headlines illustrate this point:

- “Wearing a Uniform of Oppression” (Toronto *Globe and Mail*, 1993). The article depicts the *hijāb* as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women;
- “Women’s Legacy of Pain” (Toronto *Star*, 1995). The article depicts women as helplessly struggling to free themselves from the “pain of the *hijāb*”;
- “The new law: Wear the Veil and Stay Alive” (Toronto *Globe and Mail*, 1993). This article portrays an image of force being used by families to pressure children to wear the *hijāb*, or be killed by lunatic fathers.

The examples are innumerable. It is hardly surprising that people who are not familiar with Islam, hold such grim views of it when they are being surrounded not only by negative images but also false information about the *hijāb*.

Academic Misrepresentation

This final example is important, because it addresses some of the most popular academic writers on the subject, who are commonly labelled as “Muslim feminists.”

An example from an academic source presented as a Paper in a conference is as follows:

*In conclusion, it seems that the hijab is a construction created shortly after the Prophet's time and maintained till today by patriarchal society in order to keep women in a subordinate position. Because of the vagueness of its prescriptions on the dress code for women, the Quran has been manipulated at various historical times, including in our own times, in order to uphold various political agendas.*⁷¹

Nothing could be further from the truth of the matter.

Others such as Fatima Mernissi and Nawal El Sadaawi criticise it in the context of social, political or religious activism.

Nawal El Sadaawi and Fatima Mernissi both reject the veil. El Sadaawi, in her many lectures in Scandinavia, particularly at the end of the 1980s, asserted the idea of “veiling the brain”. Her main argument was based on an account of a young relative of hers who had been intelligent and brave until she started wearing the veil. After that, according to El Sadaawi, it was impossible to conduct a normal discussion with her. This story, her alleged one experience was presented as evidence of field work of how veiling not only means covering the hair, but also “veiling the brain.”⁷²

Fatima Mernissi, attacks the use of the veil, claiming that there is no Qur’anic evidence that the wearing of a veil is an Islamic obligation.⁷³ Mernissi, in “analysing” verse [24:31] concludes that the verse has no reference to the *hijāb*, when in fact it does, as seen in the analysis of this book. She completely misses the term *khimār*; intentionally or otherwise (and both are highly problematic), and what its definition entails. When it comes to the other primary verse [33:59], Mernissi tries hard to portray the *hijāb* as applicable exclusively to the Prophet’s wives. She veils the entirety of the verse in such a way that readers of her book without sufficient knowledge of the Qur’anic Text, would be misled. According to her, that particular verse is “in which He [God] advised the wives of the Prophet to make themselves recognised by pulling their *jilbaab* over themselves.” She fails to inform the reader that the injunction is clearly aimed beyond the wives of the Prophet, and includes all Muslim women.

Another academic writer shaping the misunderstanding of unsuspecting young students, Leila Ahmad, also falsely claims that veiling for women was a requirement only for the wives of the Prophet.⁷⁴

According to Dr. Anne Roald,⁷⁵ the Muslim feminist debate is marked by selectivity, and it seems that they tend to select those texts that are suitable to their (academic and career) purposes, precisely the same thing they have accused male scholars of doing historically and in contemporary times.

Misrepresentation of the truth, selective quoting, gross ignorance and sheer dishonesty in many cases, are rife in these governmental, media and academic onslaughts on the *hijāb*. Their claim that it is for the woman's own good to remove the *hijāb*, ultimately only victimises the woman as someone who needs to be told what to do. Islam is clear in its paradigm- there is no compulsion in adherence to Religion, and one who claims to be a Believer shall choose to take Divine Guidance. Islam obligates the *hijāb*, but does not force it upon women, contrary to governmental policy to ban it,⁷⁶ academic intellectualising and media rhetoric which force the woman to remove it.

In the West, where there is freedom and pressure to remove the *hijāb*, more women have in fact chosen to embrace it and wear it. Far from being oppressed, veiled women are part of the mainstream society in almost all democratic nations. No doubt, countries with Muslim leaders today operate an oppressive regime, and the primary victims in such countries are women. Hijaab was not mandated to remove oppression, or to instil it. It was mandated to protect women and dignify their status.

Part 3 The Divine Wisdom

Abu Masu'd 'Uqbah ibn 'Amr al-Ansari al-Badri narrated:

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘A part of that which people understood from the message of the first of prophethood is: If you have no shame, then do whatever you want.’”⁷⁷

The Divine Intent in regulating public space interaction between genders is a vast ocean in itself. Since the cause and effect of this matter are quite complex and the effects felt cross-generationally, there are much good advice in the Divine Intent, that we as mere mortals are unable to fully understand. It may be that time will expose more of the underlying reasons behind this Intent, but only time will tell. A clear wisdom from this vast ocean is that the Divine Intent does not aim to subjugate or control either one of the genders.

The other piece of wisdom is one of modesty and character. The tension between the two genders is relaxed through modesty and good character.

The opening quote for this part of the book declares:

“If you have no shame, then do whatever you want.”

This Prophetic Tradition is very relevant to the subject matter of concealment through attire. Anyone who lacks a sense of modesty⁷⁸ will abandon oneself to indecency and offensive behaviour. The Madinan males luring the women are an example for all times that such indecent behaviour will exist, and we are certainly not free from it. Existence of it is founded on lack of modesty or internal shame.

The term for shame/modesty in Arabic, as used by the Prophet is *hayā*. It shares the same root word which means “life”. The derivation of the word also means “heavy rain which brings forth growth”. When one does not have *hayā*, it is equivalent to having no life. Modesty is life and it is what brings growth and prosperity like rain does to earth.

The Prophet ﷺ passed by a man who was objecting to his brother’s modesty, saying “You are too bashful; that will cause you harm.” The Prophet interjected and said, “Leave him alone, for modesty is part of Faith.”⁷⁹

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Modesty, all of it is good.”⁸⁰

According to Islamic Tradition, modesty or shame is directly connected with the human conscience and has two parts, according to Islamic Tradition. The first part of modesty is innate and not acquired. It is the inner conscience that “speaks” to us when we engage in something offensive, improper or wrong. It urges us to use our noble and exalted qualities of character.

The second part of modesty is acquired through experience and knowledge, which develops one’s character. Research, for example, can inform us a lot about the positive or negative impacts of the nature of clothing on the larger society beyond the self. Moreover, there are those elements that humans are either incapable of knowing or do not yet know. Revelation and Divine Guidance provides direction in all such cases. The Prophet said of such development of character:

“I was only sent to perfect good character.”⁸¹

In the context of sexual morality and modesty, some research to date shows interesting trends and provides a knowledge-base of the human psyche. For example, adolescents and later as adults establish attitudes about what is and what is not appropriate sexual behaviour.⁸² Such attitudes are certainly arbitrary, and no wonder the Qur’anic injunction aims to guide humans from a broad perspective rather than just personal experiences. Another research concluded that males have a higher permissive attitude to casual sex than females.⁸³ According to yet another study, which is in alignment with what the Qur’an attempts to achieve (in order to protect the honour of women) although the “double standard” has declined, it is still quite prevalent. The “double standard” attitude allowed and expected a young man, to “sow some wild oats” and obtain some sexual experience, but the young woman was to remain a virgin until she got married. The young man sowing his wild oats gained respect and status for his sexual exploits, whilst the woman was viewed negatively for engaging in sexual behaviour.⁸⁴ Clearly, the solution to the “double standard” problem is not to promote and encourage women to match the activities of the males!

Young men asserted that young women who engaged in sexual activity were more immoral thereby viewing them as “cheap”.⁸⁵

In one survey as many as 61% of females insisted on a meaningful, loving

relationship with a sense of permanence rather than casual relationships with strangers, but only 29% of males agreed, and accepted casual sex more readily.⁸⁶

This sounds very much like the intention of those Madinan men, of whom the Qur'an warns the women against. Women are not immune from such attitudes befalling them today, as they were not when the Qur'an was revealed.

It emerges from other research that adolescents and young adults are quite confused about sexuality and modesty.⁸⁷ According to Ponton, young adults are actually encouraged to be popular and attractive to the opposite gender. Print and visual media glamorises sexual behaviour, sending mixed signals to the growing young people, often told to hold on to virginity and to fear and avoid pregnancy, bad reputation, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Islam had declared that “there is no shame in learning the Devotional Practice”, and sexual morality and behaviour is no exception. The Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition outline *how* humans should behave based on the nature of humans. Through the Five Rulings, they provide guidance on how to protect oneself from harm and how to strive towards personal excellence and mutual social benefit.

Concluding Remarks

An interesting observation of human behaviour is how humans behave when alone. On the one hand, they would never do or say things they think themselves, or do when “nobody”⁸⁸ is watching. In one Prophetic Tradition, the Prophet explains the concept of chivalrous honour (*murū'ah*). The Companions mentioned that honour is that you do not do anything in private which you would be ashamed to do if you were to in public. The Prophet himself explained that wrongdoing (*ithm*), the antithesis to honourable action, is that which becomes agitated in yourself and which you would hate for people to discover.

Thus, modesty with people is an honourable relationship with the Divine, and all most honourable things happen to be behind a *hijāb*, a veil. The *Kadosh*

Hakdashim, (Holy of Holies),⁸⁹ the most sacred site in traditional Judaism, is the inner sanctuary within the Tabernacle and Temple in Jerusalem. Its entrance is veiled protecting the Sacred, and only those who honour the Sacred are allowed to enter the veiled space.

And The Most Holy, God Almighty is also veiled.⁹⁰

Only the most honourable are honoured with the *hijāb*, and the Believing woman is no exception. Honour is an *emphasised right* of a woman, and God protects it by mandating the *Hijāb* as Law.

Endnotes

1. Qur'an [16:5]
2. For example, as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.1.
3. This "symbol" is Arabic (written in a calligraphic form) for "peace and blessings of God upon him", referring to the Final Messenger and Prophet, Muhammad.
4. The Companions of the Prophet are referred to as *Sahabah* (lit. Companions).
5. Those who met and learnt from the *Sahabah* are referred to as *Tābi'īn* (the successors, or the following generation).
6. Those who met and learnt from the *Tābi'īn* are referred to as *Tābi'-Tābi'īn* (those following the successors).
7. Qur'an [7:26]
8. John Makdisi- *The Islamic Origins of the Common Law* (North Carolina Law Review, June 1999). Similarly, Monica Gaudiosi- *The Influence of the Islamic Law of Waqf on the Development of The Trust in England* (University of Pennsylvania Law Review, April 1988), and others.
9. *Shari'ah* refers to the entirety of the system of Islam, including its Laws.
10. Qur'an [78:10]
11. Qur'an [7:26]
12. E.W.Lane- *The Arabic-English Lexicon*. Lane's lexicon is amongst the most authoritative lexicons for Arabic, and is the lexicon of choice for this book unless specified otherwise.
13. Sahih Bukhari, also recorded in Sahih Muslim.
14. For example, Qur'an [25:67] and [26:151]
15. Qur'an [2:187]
16. Qur'an [16:5]
17. Qur'an [24:58]
18. Qur'an [24:31]. The preceding verse refers to the men in similar context.
19. The word "apparent" is more appropriate to describe the Qur'anic term *zahara* in this verse.
20. There is a difference of opinion amongst the Companions on this although there is consensus that at the very least natural beauty is primarily referred to. Ibn Mas'ood held that the *zīna* as adornment referred to the decorative outer garments. Others, like ibn 'Abbas held that it included apparent ornamentation like kohl to accentuate the eyes, the face and the like.

21. Arabic words most often are derived from a 3-letter perfect verb. In this case, *daraba* is commonly written in grammar books as da-ra-ba.
22. Adonis- *Pulling a Veil Over Reason Itself*. The article conveniently disappeared from its original source, but can be read at: <http://www.churchofvirus.org/bbs/index.php?board=54;action=display;theadid=29833> although I do not recommend reading it due to it being devoid of logic and reason.
23. The attention of the reader is to be drawn to the fact that this sentence is a deliberate pun. The word *khimār*, means literally “that which obscures”.
24. The word is a well known Arabic word. The root word means “to cover” in its general sense, and head-covering when applied specifically as a piece of cloth. Lane- *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Hans Wehr- *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* from post-classical times, to the most authoritative Arabic lexicon, *al-‘Ayn* by Khalil as well as *Lisān al-Arab* all define it as such.
25. Khumur is the plural form of *khimār*.
26. Plural of Hadith- Collection of Prophetic Tradition
27. Qur’an [33:59]
28. *Lisān al-Arab* is an authoritative dictionary by ibn Manzoor
29. See Ibn al-Jawzi- *Zad al-masir fil-‘ilm al-tafsir* (Beirut, 1994).
30. See Muqatil- *Tafsir* (Cairo, 1979)
31. See al-Zamakhshari- *al-Kashshaf* (Beirut)
32. Ibn ‘Atiyya- *al-Muharrar al-wajiz fi tafsir al-kitab al-‘aziz* (Beirut, 1993).
33. The majority of Scholars concluded that the *khimār* and the *jilbāb* do not include the covering of the face.
34. For example Fatna Sabbah- *Women in the Muslim Unconscious* (New York, 1984). Also, Fatima Merissi- *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1987).
35. Muqatil- *Tafsir* (Cairo, 1979). Other Exegetes also record this: see Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandi- *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-karim* (Beirut, 1993); Abu Hayyan cited two versions of this narration, one of which attributes the men’s scandalous behaviour to the time of the Jahiliyya (pre-Islamic pagan practices)-see his *al-Bahr al-muhit fi tafsir al-Qur’an* (Beirut, 1993); Ibn Kathir- *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘azim* (Beirut, 1997); and al-Qurtubi- *al-Jami’ li-ahkam al-Qur’an* (Beirut, 1997).
36. Al-Tabari in his *Jami’ al-bayan fi ta’wil al-Qur’an* (Beirut, 1997), verifies this position to be of Ibn ‘Abbas.
37. That is, a Muslim.
38. Like, for example dog-whistling or calling sexually oriented names due to bodily exposure that is found to be seductive whether intended to seduce or not.

39. al-Samarqandi- *Tafsir*. Just like Mujahid, Ibn al-‘Arabi also held that the purpose of the Divine instruction is to protect the honour of the Believing and free women- *Ahkam al-Qur’an* (Cairo, 1967).
40. Al-Tabari- *Jami’ al-bayan fi ta’wil al-Qur’an* (Beirut, 1997).
41. E.W.Lane- *The Arabic-English Lexicon*.
42. Hijri dates are the Islamic dates based on a lunar calendar connected with the migration (Hijra) of the Prophet and his Companions.
43. *Fitmah* has a few root meanings, referring to “temptation”, “tribulation”, “test”, and the like.
44. Abu Hayyan- *al-Bahr al-muhit*, for example.
45. Ibn Kathir- *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘azim* (Beirut, 1997)
46. The Hanafi Methodology differentiates between that which is *Fardh* (Mandatory) and that which is *Wajib* (Necessary), but the difference does not affect our discourse on the subject matter.
47. The Islamic principles of Commands or Prohibitions from God are to bring benefit to the human. Some of such benefits can be known, whilst others are only known by God alone.
48. Again, the Hanafi Methodology differentiate between merely disliked and utterly reprehensible, but these differences do not affect our discussion.
49. The term *hijāb* will be further explained in the later part of this book.
50. Is it not interesting how small things can carry so much weight!
51. The starting phrase of [33:59] *Ya aiyuhan...* itself is a commanding imperative.
52. The proofs of the non-obligatory nature of the *niqāb* will be the subject of a separate book.
53. Al-Ghazzali- *Al-Waseet fil Madh-hab*
54. For example Dima Dabbous-Sensenig- *To Veil or not to Veil: Gender and Religion on Al-Jazeera’s Islamic Law and Life* (Lebanese American University)
55. Ibid.
56. Recorded in the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim.
57. Recorded in the Sahih of Bukhari.
58. Recorded in the Sunan of Abu Dawood
59. Recorded in the Sunan of Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi and ibn Majah.
60. Qur’an [33:53]
61. Qur’an [19:17]

62. Qur'an [7:46], referring to a distinction made between righteousness and evil.
63. Qur'an [17:45]
64. Recorded in the Sunan of Abu Dawood
65. Ms. Bishop was on a nationally televised forum, where she referred to the *Hijāb* as "hagib".
66. Amir Taheri- New York Post, 15th August 2003, and <http://www.benadorassociates.com/article/509>
67. Ibid.
68. Huda Shaarawi- *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist* (New York, The Feminist Press, 1987).
69. Dawn Chatty- *Women in the Muslim World* (Harvard University Press, 1978).
70. For example Sajidah Kutty- *Speaking For Her: The Representation of the Muslim woman in Popular Culture*; Katherine Bullock & Jous Jaffri- *Media (Mis)Representations: Muslim women in the Canadian Nation* (Canadian Women Studies, 2000)
71. Sahar Amer- *Uncovering the Meaning of Veil in Islam* (University of North Carolina). The document is available at http://www.unc.edu/depts/europe/conferences/Veil2000/Veil-sa/veil_islam-amer.PDF
72. Dr. Anne Roald, Associate Professor of Malmö University, Sweden recounts this narrative- *The Message International* (February 2004)
73. Fatima Mernissi- *Women and Islam: A Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Blackwell, 1987).
74. Leila Ahmed- *Women and Gender in Islam* (Yale University Press, 1992)
75. Dr. Anne Roald, Associate Professor of Malmö University, Sweden recounts this narrative- *The Message International* (February 2004)
76. Is it not ironic that the Governments that have banned the *hijāb* are mostly "democratic"?
77. Recorded in the Sahih of Bukhari
78. The term modesty and shame are used interchangeably here, and will be explained in due course.
79. Recorded in the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim. The word *Imān* roughly translates to faith, but more appropriately shares meaning with "trust" and "safety" as well.
80. Ibid.
81. Recorded in the Sahih of Bukhari.
82. Carol Sigelman & Elizabeth Rider- *Life-span Human Development* (Wadsworth, 2006)
83. National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2003.

84. M. Crawford & D. Popp- *Sexual Double Standards: A Review and Methodological Critique of Two Decades of Research* (The Journal of Sex Research, 2003); Also M. Marks & R. Fraley- *Confirmation Bias and the Sexual Double Standards* (Sex Roles, 2006).

85. M. Crawford & D. Popp- *Sexual Double Standards: A Review and Methodological Critique of Two Decades of Research* (The Journal of Sex Research, 2003)

86. C. Darling, J. Davidson & L. Passarello *The Mystique of First Intercourse Among College Youth: The Role of Partners, Contraceptive Practices & Psychological Reactions* (Journal of Youth & Adolescents, 1992), and others.

87. L. Ponton- *The Sex Lives of Teenagers: Revealing The Secret World of Adolescent Boys and Girls* (Plume, 2001)

88. ... and know that God is All-Seeing!

89. The King James version of the bible refers to it as "Most Holy Place".

90. Qur'an 42:51



Afroz Ali is the Founder and President of Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences & Human Development, based in Sydney, Australia. He is a qualified Imam in the Islamic Tradition, having studied under Traditional Islam and received licence to teach in various Islamic Sciences. His studies have taken him from university-based Islamic University- Madina, Saudi Arabia then moving towards Traditional Scholarship in Yemen, United States and Mauritania, where he has spent considerable time to learn from the most esteemed Rightly Guided Islamic Scholars of our time. He has also travelled to Cairo, Egypt for further studies in Islamic Jurisprudence with Scholars at al-Azhar University and is on the Board of Advisors at Markaz Aleem in Cairo, Egypt.

He has presented lectures, workshops and training programs worldwide on Islamic Jurisprudence, Spirituality, Ecological Well-being, Ethical Rights and Responsibilities, and Personal and Corporate Citizenship.

As a trainer in personal leadership he provides corporate training on Team building, Personal Leadership, Change Management, Business Strategy Development and Corporate Ethics. Further, Imam Afroz utilises his corporate training skills to mentor and train community organisations in Community Sustainability Programs, Personal Leadership and Interpersonal Skills, Spiritual Development, Motivation and Goals Setting. He has initiated philanthropic as well as sustainable environment projects in Australia and abroad, and continues to advocate for peace, acceptance, justice and interpersonal rights.

Imam Afroz is a founding member of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. He is also the recipient of the International Ambassador for Peace award and is an Australian Ambassador for the Charter for Compassion.

This book aims to address the incorrect and maligned understanding of the head-veil of the Muslim woman. The often fierce attack on the head-veil of the Muslim woman is not only one from governmental policy, but also from academic intellectualism, both of which have had a marriage of convenience with the media in maligning the truth about the devotional practice of the Muslim woman. The most common “intellectual” justification against the head-veil is that it oppresses women, or at the very least it is a symbol of such oppression. The other argument commonly presented asserts that there is a total lack of evidence that the head-veil is a religious requirement at all. A careful and objective analysis of the evidences show that nothing could be further from the truth.

This book hopes identify those evidences in order to alleviate the confusion for those who are seeking facts on the matter, as well as to offer proof against sophistic arguments on the subject, and leaving the Muslim woman well informed and free to make her own mind up about the head-veil instead of forcing it on or off her.

