

## FURTHER READING

<http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Muhammad-the-liberator-of-women.html>

### Women in Islam

<http://www.alislam.org/library/WOMANINISLAM.pdf>

### The Islamic veil

<http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000133.html>

[www.loveforallhatredfornone.org](http://www.loveforallhatredfornone.org)



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## THE ISLAMIC VEIL

Oppression or Choice  
for Muslim Women

# THE FACTS UNVEILED

Note: The veil is a word used generically throughout this leaflet, which could refer to Hijab, Burqa, Niqab, headscarf or outer garment used to cover the body.

## Introduction

The veil has long been regarded as a symbol of the subservient position of women within the Islamic world. Muslim women are often portrayed by the West as being alienated, isolated and voiceless. They are seen as oppressed by Muslim men and leaders who use the name of religion to commit injustice against them.

Tactics are repeatedly utilised by elements of the Western media to try and impress upon society the notion that Muslim women are considered unequal to men in Islam, and that they are oppressed, even by the moderate Islamic regimes. Words such as 'shackled', 'repressed', 'shrouded' and 'enslaved' are used to convey the image that Muslim women are the possession of their male relatives and that they have absolutely no individual rights.

The veil in Western society has become increasingly controversial over time and many misconceptions regarding its true purpose have evolved. Consequently, many societies consider Muslim women require liberating from the veil.

In Islam, modesty and chastity are very important tenets of faith, and are achieved through establishing certain codes of behaviour and dress. It is said in the Holy Qur'an:

*And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they display not their beauty and embellishments except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-covers over their bosoms, and that they display not their beauty and embellishments thereof save to their husbands..'*

(Ch.24:V.32)

Islam is a worldwide religion and therefore no specific or compulsory dress exists for Muslim women. As a result, each country or community adapts its cultural dress code to observe the veil in accordance with Qur'anic instructions. In essence, the degree to which a woman covers herself up is a personal choice providing modesty in accordance to the teachings of Islam is observed, as mentioned in the above verse.

Therefore, observance of the veil is part of a Muslim woman's faith. It establishes dignity and respect for women, so that they are recognised in society as individuals who are respected for their intelligence, personality and academic achievement, rather than for their physical beauty.

## Is the veil unique to Islam?

A modern day misconception is that the veil is worn exclusively by Muslim women. It is well established that women of other faiths have worn the veil throughout history. In Christianity for example, one of the most widely known examples of a woman of faith observing the veil, is Mary Mother of Jesus, her wearing of a veil has always been used to depict her modesty and humility. A well-known modern day example of the observance of the veil is by Christian nuns, who cover their hair and wear modest outer garments. Additionally, in Judaism, women often cover their hair in observance of modesty.

## How does the veil fit into modern day society?

The veil is no obstacle to success. In modern day society, the wearing of a veil poses no hindrance to Muslim women functioning in a professional environment. They do not require or expect special allowances to be put into place in relation to the veil, and work in a professional manner with their other colleagues across a diversity of fields including medicine, law, science and teaching. The veil does not create any unnecessary barriers in any of these or other professions.

## Is the veil a means of suppression and keeping women under control by their male relatives?

For many, the veil may be seen as a means of restraint upon a woman exercised by her male relatives. However, the veil is not a sign of a man's authority over a woman, and by wearing a veil it does not mean that she is under the control of anyone. By wearing the veil, a woman is willingly adhering to God's commandment and the teachings of Islam, which she abides by of her own free will. For Muslim women who choose to wear the veil, it represents a symbol of protection, respect and dignity.

## If Muslim women wear the veil, does this not show society that Muslim women are unequal or inferior to men?

Islam declares the undeniable fact that women and men are equal partners and protectors of one another. Islam therefore grants equal rights and opportunities to all people, irrespective of gender. In the sight of God, women are equal to men, even though they differ physically from one another. These differences make them more suitable than men for certain responsibilities, but they also make them more susceptible to certain dangers in

society. Since women are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, Islam advises women to take their protection into their own hands by covering themselves, thus creating a physical barrier against such harm. Therefore, the veil is not meant to differentiate between men and women, rather it liberates women and enables them to excel within all dimensions of society.

## Why do men not have to observe the veil?

In actual fact, men are equally expected to take full responsibility of observing modesty as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

*'Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.'*

(Ch.24:V.31)

If both Muslim men and women practice what is prescribed for them in the Holy Qur'an, their individual actions would compliment each other and thus promote a harmonious society.

## Will putting a ban on the veil truly liberate Muslim women?

To try and put a ban on the veil is not the right of any government or professional body, as it violates an individual's freedom of choice and restricts one's religious beliefs. Any attempt to restrict the wearing of the veil will hinder the human rights of individual citizens. The majority of Muslim women are not coerced into wearing the veil, and do not feel restricted by it, therefore the banning of the veil will not be liberation; rather, it will be a humiliation for Muslim women.