

## Women and Purdah

- The veil has recently been branded as being a political symbol. This is not true to any extent. Purdah is a **requirement of Faith** for all Muslim women; it is a purely religious issue and has nothing to do with politics. In fact, Purdah is an essential part of the original teachings of Christianity and Judaism. Unfortunately, some countries have extracted Purdah out of religion and have turned it into a political issue. Consequently Muslim women have been forced to give up wearing the veil.
- Governments should never interfere with religions. This interference creates dissatisfaction and unrest in society. It is against human rights to stop people from observing their religious duties unless they are harmful to others.
- The first directive of Purdah is addressed towards the men as Huzoor explained in his recent Khutba-e-Juma.
- Islam is the religion of ultimate feminism. It gave women rights that were previously unheard of in any other religion or culture. Even today, the western society does not compare with the rights and liberties provided to women in Islam. The so called modern women of this age who consider the veil as backward and oppressive are themselves constantly struggling for equal rights and opportunities both at home and at the workplace. It is commonly said in the west, that a woman has to work twice as hard to be considered equal to men. The pressures from society some times drive them to dress in a manner that is immodest and makes them attractive to men. The focus is thus taken away from their intellect and ability to perform a certain job to their bodies and clothing.
- Purdah, on the other hand, liberates a woman in a way that other women can never imagine. It gives us the ability to express our minds and display our intellect without drawing unnecessary attention to our bodies. We can thus perform our jobs with dignity and self-respect and even excel at them without the need for pleasing others. Women are beautiful beings and Purdah is there to protect that beauty.
- Here is a list of professions that are generally preferred by women: Health & Medicine; Law; Architecture; Education; Research; Childcare; Sales; IT; Journalism; Management; Business and Engineering.

- For most of these vocations Purdah can be observed without any problems. If you are unsure about this you can always ask your prospective employers. British companies are very flexible and accommodating to their employees' needs. If, however, you do find yourself in a specific situation then you should write to Huzoor and ask him for guidance.
- Our inhibitions about Purdah lie mostly within ourselves. We fear being ridiculed and do not want others to think of us as being oppressed.
- This movement against the veil in Europe has had a snowball effect. Cases of discrimination have recently been reported in the UK as well. We must remember that the ideas that the West have of a Muslim woman are based on the negative media portrayal of Islam. Images of Taliban, suicide bombers waving the Quran and female child circumcision paint a terrifying picture of the plight of Muslim women.

**Islam has been terribly misrepresented by the media. Muslim extremists have not helped either. So how do we deal with this situation? This in fact is the new Jihad and you are at the frontline of this Jihad. It is our responsibility as Ahmadi Muslim women to represent the true status of a Muslim woman by example. If we drop Purdah then we will be fuelling these misconceptions that the west have about us.**