

WHY DO MEN NOT HAVE TO OBSERVE THE VEIL?

In actual fact, when the Holy Qur'an defines the veil, it is men who are addressed first:

“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.”

(24:31)

“Islamic teachings are crystal clear that women are not inferior to men in any way whatsoever. Thus, where the Holy Quran mentions ‘believing men’ it also mentions ‘believing women’. This is true equality.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (May Allah be his Helper), Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, 24 February 2018, UK

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. Far from being a liberation, to ban the veil would be a gross injustice on those who wear it of their own accord. Indeed, when a government seeks to legislate citizens' clothing, it is a slippery slope to receding even more fundamental human rights.

THE AHMADIYYA MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, also known as Lajna Ima'illah, is a women's auxiliary organisation of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. It was established in 1922 by the second successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (May Allah be pleased with him) as an empowered women's organisation whose main goal was to promote religious and secular education amongst women and to support those lacking in these areas and help them in the spirit of sisterhood.

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UNDERSTANDING



THE ISLAMIC VEIL

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The Islamic veil is seen by many as a symbol of oppression and subjugation, the icon of a faith perceived as misogynist and sexist. We are often presented with the idea that Muslim women are considered unequal to men in Islam and that they are repressed, living in subordination to men with little individual rights.

Consequently, in Western society the veil has become increasingly controversial over time and many misconceptions regarding its true purpose have arisen. Many now consider that Muslim women require liberating from the veil, a garment that for them embodies their oppression.

Modesty and chastity are central tenets of the Islamic faith and both men and women are encouraged to inculcate these virtues through establishing certain codes of behaviour and dress.

The Holy Qur'an first addresses 'believing men' to be chaste and restrain their gaze before it addresses women:

“And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they disclose not their natural and artificial beauty except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-coverings over their bosoms, and that they disclose not their beauty save to their husbands...”

(24:32)

Islam is a universal religion and prescribes no specific dress code for Muslim women. Instead, it furnishes us with guidelines that we can adopt our own national or ethnic dress to. 'The veil' has no one shape or form, rather Muslim women around the world have a diverse array of dress that keeps in accordance with Quranic instructions.

Observance of the veil is part of a Muslim woman's faith. The purpose of the veil is not to limit women but to promote the idea that all individuals should be appreciated for their intelligence, personality and endeavours, rather than for their physical beauty.

IS THE VEIL UNIQUE TO ISLAM?

A modern day misconception is that the veil is worn only by Muslim women. In truth, the veil has long been a part of a vast number of religions and cultures. In Christianity, we find the most iconic image of a holy woman observing the veil in Mary, mother of Jesus (peace be upon him). Her veil represents her modesty and piety. Today, many Jewish, Hindu, Christian and Sikh women among others also practice some form of veil.

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 does not hinder Muslim women from 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 other colleagues in 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 OF WOMEN BY MEN?

The veil represents a woman's devotion to God, not her subservience to men. By wearing the veil, a woman is willingly adhering to God's commandment and the teachings of Islam which grant women full rights and status.

However, 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.

“It is often alleged that Purdah [Islamic code of modesty] takes away women's rights. However, we know that this is not the case and the truth is that Purdah and Hijab actually establish the true dignity, independence and freedom of women. Hijab does not only give women physical security but is also a key means of giving them spiritual security and purity of heart.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (May Allah be his Helper), Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, 26 October 2014, UK

