



Question:

WHY SHOULD WOMEN COVER CERTAIN PARTS OF THEIR BODIES ?

Answer:

Women have been identified in the Qur'an as a "zeenah" i.e. adornment and beauty for all mankind.

" The love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well bred horses and cattle and tilth, is made to seem fair to men; this is the provision of the life of this world; and Allah is He with Whom is the good goal (of life). (3:14)

Since women are described as an adornment or attraction (zeenah), they are required to cover certain parts of their bodies. Keep it in mind that a woman being an adornment for mankind is quite evident all over the world in all societies. The media is an example where she is quite promoted and made as an attraction in place of men. Now since women are an open attraction to mankind because of their bodily features, they are required to cover some parts of themselves in public. But before we see what the physical ingredients of her dress are, let us see what Qur'an identifies as the best dress.

WHAT IS THE BEST DRESS ?

" O children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty and clothing that guards (against evil), that is the best. This is of the communications of Allah that they may be mindful." (7:26)

Above verse says that the best dress is the garment of "taqwa" or piety. Before wearing any physical garment we should adorn ourselves with the garment of "taqwa" as without it we become prone to the vile intentions of satanic people. (see 7:27)

INGREDIENTS OF WOMEN`S DRESS IN PUBLIC

The areas of body which are to be covered by women in public, are mentioned in 24:31. Allah informs us through His messenger:

" And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants not having need (of women), or the children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women; and let them not strike their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may be known; and turn to Allah all of you, O believers! so that you may be successful."(24:31)

From the above verse the following points are derived: 1. Women have two types of "zeenah" i.e. beauty and adornment. (a) "ma zahara minha" What is already apparent from

their adornment and beauty. (b) "ma yukhfaina min zinata hunne" That which is hidden from their adornment. 2. They have to cover their whole self publicly except those areas which are apparent from their adornment. -ma zahara minha- These areas are the exposed areas which if covered will restrict daily work and have to be uncovered for performing ablution. (see 5:6). The other type of adornment of a woman identified in the above verse is that which has been called as "ma yukhfaina min zinata hunne" That which is hidden from their adornment. This type of adornment is the one which becomes apparent when a woman strikes her feet or walks. Allah has ordered that this type of adornment be covered at all times. Thus, the dress should be loose enough so as not to reveal the shape and features of the body which become obvious when the woman strikes her feet or walks.

3. They are to place their covers or shrouds over their bosoms .In chapter 33:59 they are also ordered to bring over them their garments while going in public:

" O Prophet! say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their over-garments; this will be more proper, that they may be known, and thus they will not be given trouble; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (33:59)

In public she is to take "Jilbaab" or arment over herself according to above verse.

4. With her bosoms covered well, and dress loose enough so as not to reveal her hidden adornment, she is to maintain this type of dress in public in front of all acquaintances. The only exceptions are:

- (1) Husband
- (2) Fathers (It includes grandparents as well)
- (3) The Fathers of their husbands
- (4) Their sons
- (5) The sons of their husbands
- (6) Their brothers
- (7) Their brother's sons
- (8) Their sister's sons
- (9) Their women
- (10) Their slave girls
- (11) Those under their authority other than skillfull men
- (12) Small children who are not aware of women's nakedness.

HOW ARE BELIEVING WOMEN TO BEHAVE WITH UNRELATED MEN ?

In talking with strange men the believing women are informed about the type of behaviour they should maintain.Allah informs us through the Nabi:

" O wives of the Prophet! you are not like any other of the women; If you will be on your guard, then be not soft in (your) speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a good word. "(33:32)

"Burka" NOT MANDATORY

While identifying the parts of a woman's body which should be covered, the Qur'an also gives us evidence to refute the claim of those who associate "Niqab" (Veils, face covers) as an ingredient of a women's dress code ordained by Allah.

Mary the mother of Jesus` example is mentioned in the Qur'an as the woman chosen and purified above all the women of all the worlds.

" And when the angels said: O Marium! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of of the world." (3:42)

She has been called as an example for the believers and her conduct is called to exemplify:

"And Allah sets forth an example to those who believe . . . And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration and she accepted the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was of, the obedient ones. (66:11-12)

In observing her behavior mentioned in the Qur'an, we see that as she appears from seclusion with young Jesus, her people recognised her. Now had she been wearing a "Niqab" to cover her face, her people would not have identified her immediately as she had appeared from seclusion. This informs us that she was not covering her face i.e. not wearing a "Niqab", as mentioned in the following verses:

"And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: O Mary! surely you have done a strange thing. O sister of Haroun! your father was not a bad man, nor, was your mother an unchaste woman. But she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle? He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet;" (19:27-30)

Mary's recognition by her people indicates that she was not wearing a "Niqab" to protect her face from being seen. In the Qur'an there is further evidence which negates the practice of wearing "Niqab". After Allah informs Nabi (SAW) about marriage with certain relations, He further reminds:

"It is not allowed to you to take women afterwards, nor that you should change them for other wives, though their beauty be pleasing to you, except what your right hand possesses and Allah is Watchful over all things." (33:52)

In the above verse it is clearly mentioned that Nabi (SAW) was also in a position to see the "Husn" i.e. Beauty of women and this clearly establishes that women not related to the Nabi

did not wear "Niqab" or veils to cover their faces when they used to appear in front of him. We must realize that attributing anything to Allah which He has not ordained is a very serious action on our part. Allah has informed us through His messenger that attributing anything to Allah which He did not make obligatory is "haraam" i.e Forbiden, as the following verse states:

" Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know." (7:33)

"Niqab" has not been made mandatory by any verse of the Qur'an, it is a cultural practice of pagan tribes and unbelievers. The Qur'an also identifies unbelievers who used to cover themselves up with their garments. Allah informs us through Noah:

" And whenever I have called them that Thou mayest forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride." (71:7)

We should strive to inform and reform ourselves through Qur'anic guidance.

CAN WOMEN TALK TO MEN TO WHOM THEY ARE NOT RELATED (NOT MARRIED) ?

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ?

In the Qur'an we have the example of Moses (p) as he is shown to hold a conversation with two women who are not married to him yet. This conversation clearly indicates that women can talk to men who are not related to them, provided it is only for important tasks and not a complacent speech, as complacency in speech is not allowed by verse 33:32. The following verses identify the conversation of Moses with the two women who are not related to him.

"And when he came to the water of Madyan, he found on it a group of men watering, and he found besides them two women keeping back (their flocks). He said: What is the matter with you? They said: We cannot water until the shepherds take away (their sheep) from the water, and our father is a very old man. So he watered (their sheep) for them, then went back to the shade and said: My Lord! surely I stand in need of whatever good Thou mayest send down to me. Then one of the two women came to him walking bashfully. She said: My father invites you that he may give you the reward of your having watered for us. So when he came to him and gave to him the account, he said: Fear not, you are secure from the unjust people. " (28:23-25)

The above example which depicts the conversation of a messenger of Allah with two unmarried girls is a clear indicator that women can talk with men who are unrelated to them

provided it is only for important tasks and is done within the limits ordained by Allah.

#### CAN WOMEN WORK TO EARN A LIVING ?

Although the responsibility to provide for the family has been laid upon the man, but if required, women can also work to make a living:

"And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; surely Allah knows all things." (4:32)

#### RESPECTING THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS- MEETING PEOPLE WITH PERMISSION

"O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your own houses until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates; this is better for you, that you may be mindful. But if you do not find any one therein, then do not enter them until permission is given to you; and if it is said to you: Go back, then go back; this is purer for you; and Allah is Cognizant of what you do." (24:27-28)

#### BELIEVING MEN TO MAINTAIN PROPER CONDUCT AS WELL

" Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do." (24:30)The believers guard their chastity, this trait of theirs is further clarified in chapter 23.

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers. And who keep aloof from what is vain, And who are givers of poor-rate, And who guard their private parts, except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for they surely are not blameable. But whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits;" (23:1-7)

From the verses the dress code can be summed up as follows;

- Dress should be loose enough so that the obvious parts of the body are not made apparent with a woman's movement. (24:31)
- An extra covering (khummar) should be taken over the bosoms. (24:31)
- Only those parts which are already apparent from a woman's adornment, i.e. those areas which are obvious whether a woman walks or remains still (24:31) are to be kept exposed.
- While talking they should not be too complacent in speech. (33:32)
- She should not bedeck herself too much as she is already made an adornment for mankind. (33:33) & (3:14)

One important reason that the Qur'an gives as to why believing women should maintain a proper dress code is given in (33:59) That (dress code should be maintained) so that they may be recognized and should not be molested."

## WHAT ABOUT THE TRADITION OF HEADCOVERS AND VEILS ?

The headcovers are clearly mentioned not only in the Qur'an but also in the BIBLE as St.Paul's instructions.

"But every Women who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head,for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.For if a woman is not covered let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered."  
(1 Corinthians 11:5-6)

Also traditional Jewish teachings have the type of dress that is famous today among many women i.e. only the eyes showing. It should be noted that in the Qur'an we are also informed about some unbelievers who are 'covering themselves up with garments' . Can you identify these people ?

"Now surely they fold up their breasts that they may conceal (their enmity) from Him; now surely, when they use their garments as a covering, He knows what they conceal and what they make public; surely He knows what is in the breasts." (11:5)

" And whenever I have called them that Thou mayest forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride"  
(71:7)

O Allah! Guide us to the straight path! The path of those who have your blessing, not those who qualify themselves for your punishment and nor those who are astray!Reference:

Reference: [www.al-shia.org](http://www.al-shia.org)

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