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Editorial

Hijab is Women's Shield and Fortress

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Abstract. Hijab has been applied in different forms in different civilizations and traditions since the era of first man and prophet Adam (Alayhi As-Salam). So, hijab and seclusion were practiced in many cultures long before Islam. Hijab is compulsory for women to save their modesty and chastity of all periods and times in Islam. Hijab themselves is natural for women and their innate dispositions demand it. Hijab frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being evaluated by their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. Studies indicate that girls and women may encounter sexual violence in their day-to-day social life in all cultures and societies. Hijab protects adolescent girls and women from sexual harassment. Hijab is women's shield and fortress. The obvious fact is this, that the house is a protecting and secure place for a woman in a society. Islam does not like to go outside from the house without the essential needs. If the woman goes outside because of the essential requirement, then she should cover her whole body with a long cloth and should keep her gaze down. Allah says "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms.

Keywords: hijab; women's shield; women.

INTRODUCTION

Hijab is the covering of certain parts of one's body for natural, customary or religious reasons. Hijab, especially the custom of covering the head and face, has been applied in different forms in different civilizations and traditions since ancient times, both as a means of protection from cold or heat, as an ornamental tool, and as a social and religious necessity.¹ In most cultures, dress and hijab have been seen as an element that indicates the gender, marital status, religion, profession, position and region of the person, especially the hijab has been perceived as an indicator of high status.¹

Several studies indicate that the phenomenon of women donning the hijab is one of the most ancient social phenomena.² Assyrian women-except for slaves and prostitutes-were less visible in the society as a social sanction when covered their faces outside in the 13th century before Christ. This practice continued among the Persians and passed on to the Arabs. It is known that women covered their hair in Hittites, Phrygians and Ionians in ancient communities living in Anatolia.³ The recorded women's head and face covering custom dates back to 4000 before Christ in Mesopotamian societies.³ While the Quran describes how Adam (Alayhi As-Salam) and Havva ate from the forbidden fruit and were sent to earth from paradise, it includes the following statements: "When they tasted of the tree, their shame parts became manifest to them, and they began to cover together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies."⁴ This is evidence that hijab is as old as human history.

Allah says in the Quran "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of doors).⁵ Bediüzzaman Said Nursi⁶, author of Risale-i Nur Collection⁷, interpreted this ayat as follows: This ayat enjoins the veiling of women. However, dissolute civilization opposes this command of the Quran; it does not consider the veiling of women to be natural and says it is slavery of a sort. He explained only four of the many instances of wisdom in this injunction of the Quran, showing that it is entirely natural and those who oppose it are opposing the innate disposition of

¹ Apaydın, H. Y. (2011). Hijab (in Turkish). Turkish Religious Foundation. Encyclopedia of Islam. Istanbul: TDV Publishing, Printing and Trading Business. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tesettur>

² Mizel, O. (2020). The Voice of the hijab: Perspectives towards wearing the hijab by a sample of Palestinian female university students in Israel. *Athens J Soc Sci*, 7(4), 247-262. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajss.7-4-2>

³ Gurkan, S. L. (2011). Hijab (in Turkish). Turkish Religious Foundation. Encyclopedia of Islam. Istanbul: TDV Publishing, Printing and Trading Business. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tesettur>

⁴ Surah Al-Araf. (2024). The Holy Quran. Surah 7; Ayat 22. The World's Largest Quran Portal. Retrieved from https://kuran.gen.tr/the-light-suresi-english-quran-by-a.-yusuf-ali?x=s_main&y=s_middle&kid=14&sid=7

⁵ Surah Al-Ahzab. (2024). The Holy Quran. Surah 33; Ayat 59. The World's Largest Quran Portal. Retrieved from https://kuran.gen.tr/hud-suresi-english-quran-by-a.-yusuf-ali?x=s_main&y=s_middle&kid=14&sid=33

⁶ Said Nursi. (2024). From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said_Nursi%C3%AE

⁷ Risale-i Nur. (2024). From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Risale-i_Nur

women.⁸ Nursi⁸ noted the below paragraph in the fourth instance of wisdom.

The abandoning of hijab for women does not increase marriage, it decreases it significantly. For even the most lay-about and modern youth wants his wife to be chaste. He does not want her to be modern, that is, careless in questions of dress and morals like himself, and so remains single, and even frequents prostitutes. Women are not like that they cannot restrict their husbands' behavior to the same extent. Women's most basic characteristics are loyalty and trustworthiness, since being the director of all the matters to do with the home, the woman is charged with protecting and preserving her husband's property and possessions, and his children. Carelessness in dress and morality destroys that loyalty, and her husband loses confidence in her and makes her suffer pangs of conscience. In fact, if the two qualities of courage and generosity, which are desirable in men, are found in women, it damages this loyalty and confidence and so are undesirable for women and are considered to be bad qualities. But since the husband's duty is not loyalty and stewardship, but protection, kindness, and respect, he cannot be restricted and refined, and may marry other women as well.⁸

DISCUSSION

Hijab is compulsory for women to save their modesty and chastity of all periods and times in Islam. Hijab provides protection for women, and it is mandatory from Islamic teachings. The Islamic dress code doesn't only include of a veil that covers up the neck, the head and the bosom, while the overall dress should be loose and long.⁹ Hijab gives women a sense of positive reinforcement about their appearance. However, it also connotes a sense of neutrality because it does not directly influence their perception of their bodies favorably or adversely. Hijab may also allow some Muslim women to oppose or reject normative norms of beauty, which can be perceived as empowering.¹⁰ Wearing the hijab constitutes a sense of security around them while dealing with refinement and self-cultivation, and on the other hand, paves the way for more presence in the community by increasing social security. Keeping hijab for women develops the personality, makes the individual valuable, and constitutes spiritual-psychological security, perfectionism, and ultimately the strength of the family.¹¹

Rumaney and Sriram¹² reported that hijab was found to be inextricable

⁸ Nursi, B. S. (2024). From the Risale-i Nur Collection. Flashes. The Twenty-Fourth Flash. Istanbul: Sözü. <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.203.257>

⁹ Akhter, N., & Munir, A. (2017). Hijab (veil): Protection for woman (Islamic perspective). Paper presented at: International Conference on Arabic Studies & Islamic Civilization, Selangor, Malaysia. *ICASIC Journal*, 4, 9-17.

¹⁰ Rahaman, M., & Rahaman, M. Z. (2023). Muslim women and hijab: A study into the subjects of female identities, empowerment, and body image. *Shodh Disha*, 62(6):110-116.

¹¹ Hasanvand, A. (2023). Hijab and chastity and their role in psychological security. *Islam and Health Journal*, 8(1): 13-19.

¹² Rumaney, H., & Sriram, S. (2023). Not without my hijab: experiences of veiled Muslim women

from the varied sub-systems of the respondent's ecology. Positive response to the veil at home, neighborhood, and on social media promoted the hijab, while negative responses at work and in educational settings impeded it. Though the degree of physical veiling fluctuated, commitment to the veil strengthened over time. The primary reason for veiling was religion, but secondary reasons such as empowerment, advocacy, and protection were cited in favor of the practice.¹² Muslim women wearing hijab have touted their freedom to move about easily in their societies without the harrowing eye of men seeking to sexualize their bodies. They have also boasted feeling self-respect and dignity when wearing the headscarf in accordance with their personal moral beliefs.¹³ Hijab frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being appraised for their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. There is many importance of wearing a hijab, such as to obey Allah and to be known as respectable women. Also, no longer slave to consumerism, hijab liberates women from the need to conform to unrealistic stereotypes and images dictated by the media.¹⁴ Additionally, women wearing hijab have expressed that dressing modestly and covering their hair, minimize sexual harassment in the workplace. The aura of privacy constituted by hijab is indicative of the great value Islam places upon women.¹⁴

Today, hundreds of millions of girls and women in many developing and developed countries across the world wear hijab of different shapes and models. However, recently, Hodge et al.¹⁵ reported that American Muslim women who wear the hijab more frequently have an increased likelihood of experiencing religious discrimination. Also notable is the finding that Muslims with high English proficiency are disproportionately more likely to encounter religious discrimination, which suggests they may be more attuned to the implicit and explicit verbal and behavioral messages directed at Muslims.¹⁵ Women wearing hijab also face employment discrimination.¹⁶ Therefore, it is necessary to be cognizant of the discrimination Muslim women who veil may encounter in society and the effects such discrimination can have on their mental and physical health. The overarching need, however, is advocacy to constitute a society free of religious discrimination, and to work toward a cultural milieu that honors the

in India. *Human Arenas*, 6, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-021-00193-3>

¹³ Slininger, S. (2014). Veiled women: Hijab, religion, and cultural practice. *EIU Historia*, 23, 68-78.

¹⁴ Sulaiman, K. D. Q, Rafiu, F. G. (2020). Investigating the importance of wearing hijab by Muslim women. *INSANCITA: J Islam Stud Indones Southeast Asia*, 5(1), 1-18.

¹⁵ Hodge, D. R., Zidan, T., & Husain, A. (2023). Are females who wear the hijab more likely to experience discrimination?: A national study of perceptions among American Muslim women. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2023.2211786>

¹⁶ Ahmed, S., & Gorey, K. M. (2023). Employment discrimination faced by Muslim women wearing the hijab: exploratory meta-analysis. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 32(3), 115-123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2020.1870601>

right of women to wear the hijab free from harassment.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, hijab has been applied in different forms in different civilizations and traditions since the era of first man and prophet Adam (Alayhi As-Salam). So, hijab and seclusion were practiced in many cultures long before Islam. Hijab is compulsory for women to save their modesty and chastity of all periods and times in Islam. Hijab themselves is natural for women and their innate dispositions demand it. Hijab frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being evaluated by their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. Studies indicate that girls and women may encounter sexual violence in their day-to-day social life in all cultures and societies.¹⁸ Hijab protects adolescent girls and women from sexual harassment.¹⁹ Hijab is women's shield and fortress.²⁰ The obvious fact is this, that the house is a protecting and secure place for a woman in a society. Islam does not like to go outside from the house without the essential needs. If the woman goes outside because of the essential requirement, then she should cover her whole body with a long cloth and should keep her gaze down.²¹ Allah says "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms."²²

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¹⁸ Tora, A. (2013). Assessment of sexual violence against female students in Wolaita Sodo university, Southern Ethiopia. *J Interpers Violence*, 28(11), 2351-2367.

¹⁹ Çaksen, H., & Çaksen, F. (2023). Hijab protects adolescent girls and women from sexual harassment. *J Pediatr Neurol*, <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0043-1769481>

²⁰ Nursi, B. S. (2024). From the Risale-i Nur Collection. Flashes. The Twenty-Fourth Flash. Istanbul: Sözü. <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.203.257>

²¹ Akhter, N., & Munir, A. (2017). Hijab (veil): Protection for woman (Islamic perspective). Paper presented at: International Conference on Arabic Studies & Islamic Civilization, Selangor, Malaysia. *ICASIC Journal*, 4, 9-17.

²² Surah An-Nur. (2024). The Holy Quran. Surah 24; Ayat 31. The World's Largest Quran Portal. Retrieved from https://kuran.gen.tr/the-light-suresi-english-quran-by-a.-yusuf-ali?x=s_main&y=s_middle&kid=14&sid=24

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