

Responsibility of Hijab for Man and Woman

Let us scrutinize the required important matters for both sexes in order to specify the difference in responsibility between them concerning this framework of Islamic *hijab*.

Both man and woman are responsible according to the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"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. And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not display their ornaments except what appears there of, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their or name except to their husbands..." (Holy Qur'an, 24:30-31).

The great jurists (*fuqaha*) have cited explanations for these edicts:

- A.** A woman must cover her body and hair from the sight of non-*mahram* man.
- B.** It is unlawful for a man to look at the body and hair of a non-*mahram* woman with the exception of her face and hands. It is also unlawful for a man to look her hair and this verdict is applied on a woman concerning looking at men other than her father, son, uncle, grandfather , brother and those related to them.
- C.** It is forbidden for a man to look at the details of the face of a non-*mahram* women, or her hands with sexual desire and vice versa.
- D.** It is lawful for a man who wants to marry a woman to look at her in order to be acquainted with her physical qualities and vice versa.
- E.** It is lawful for both a man and woman to look at the body of their *mahrams* (except for the genital region) so long as it is not with sexual desire, but to look with sexual desire, is forbidden (*haram*) whether they are *mahram* or not.
- F.** It is obligatory for a woman to cover her body and hair from the sight of a non-*mahram* men (i.e., those with whom she is legally allowed to marry).

G. It is unlawful for a man to be alone with a non-*mahram* woman in a place where nobody else can enter if they fear that they may commit *haram* acts; but there is no objection for a man to be alone with a non-*mahram* woman when other are not prohibited from entering the place, even if the other are a mature rational child or in the state of security from committing corruption.

H. It is unlawful for a non-*mahram* man to touch a non-*mahram* woman nor a non-*mahram* woman may touch a non-*mahram* man such as shaking hands and so forth.

I. If there is a necessity for a man to touch a woman, and vice versa, such as medical cure or saving a drowning person, and there is no a female doctor for the woman or a male doctor for man, it is lawful for both sides to touch or look at the other side for tests, cure or the like.

J. It is lawful for non-*mahram* men to hear the voice of non-*mahram* women on condition that hearing should not be with sexual desire or as a cause for committing *haram* acts and it is permitted for a woman to make her voice heard through discourse or address by a non-*mahram* man on condition that her voice should not mislead or seduce listeners, because it is *haram* for a woman to talk to men in an excited and agitating manner.

K. It is recommended for a woman to keep her beauty and elegance for her husband because attractiveness and beauty represent an important side in the life of woman and an essential source among the sources of the happiness of matrimonial life.

L. It is forbidden for a woman to imitate men (by dress, actions or behavior) and vice versa.

M. It is forbidden for a woman to perfume herself and go outside her home, i.e. it is forbidden that her perfume is noticed by non-*mahram* men while passing among them or mixing with them.

If we examine carefully these legal responsibilities which fall under the frame of Islamic *hijab*, we will find that both men and women share the task of responsibility regarding this rule, with the specification concerning women in covering their body. This shows strongly that Islam aspires to establish clean relations between the two sexes; spread purity and dignity among people; and safeguard the society with healthy relations. It is not among its intentions to disgrace a woman's dignity among people or prevent her from performing her role in life as it is clear through the above mentioned laws concerning Islamic *hijab*.

If we want to judge strictly the matter of covering woman's body and we have said it is correct to say that both men and women hold the same task in the general framework of Islamic *hijab*, the question comes: Why a woman alone bear the burden of covering her body and without man to do so?

The fact, which no fair-minded person can doubt, is that the reason for the specification of covering a woman's body alone relates to her sentimental and physical qualities. Because the temptation side of woman is much stronger than a man; she has the competent side for sensibility; and she has instinctive

tendencies for showing herself off. Thus, ornaments and beautification are among her first specifications. If they are unrestricted, she may cause, knowingly or unknowingly, and innocent person to commit a *haram* act, thought or deed.

This natural characteristic of woman and which makes her more able to attract, tempt and fascinate man towards herself, is the main reason Islam tackles this point through *hijab*. Therefore, it is not normal to ask a man to cover his body like her; whereas man in general does not possess these specific characteristics, nor is he naturally prone to decorate and beautify himself in order to draw attention of woman. Still, Islam does require a man to dress in an appropriate manner so as not to expose unnecessary parts of his body.

On the subject of attraction, two sure things exists, one in a woman and one in a man. That which exists within a woman is the desire to show herself off, it is a part of her nature. That which exists in a man is an inclination towards looking, not just looking but flirting and receiving pleasure from it. Both of these things exist. Will Durant says that there is nothing in the world more firm and more persevering than a man's desire to look at a woman.

It is also clear that men and women are sexually stimulated in different ways. A woman, being a naturally sensitive and tender-hearted creature, requires touching and tactile movements in order to stimulate her. A man, on the other hand, is a much coarser creature, tough and virile with a strong imagination. He can be stimulated by a mere look. A woman covers herself to keep from showing off her body and the man cannot see anything which will stimulate him sexually. How clever Islam is to adopt *hijab* in society! So it completely conforms with the innate natures of woman!

In accordance with this reality of attraction, we see that Islam also forbids acts such as sodomy among men and lesbianism among women because each of the two decrees has its own subject and background like other legal decrees which rely on certain backgrounds necessary for them. These are the true centres which addresses in order to build this positive edict; the blessed Islamic *hijab*.

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