

Women and Hijab

Hijab literally means covering and is a type of clothing that covers a woman's body. Islam instructs women to cover their bodies (except their hands and face) from non-*mahram*¹ men.

The necessity of having *Hijab* can be extracted from Quranic verses and various Hadith. Here three verses on this issue are presented.

First Verse

Allah, Most High, has stated in the Quran:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ* وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبَائِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“Tell the believing men to cast down their eyes (from indecent looks) and guard their modesty. This is purer for them. Surely Allah is aware of all they do. And tell the believing women to cast down their eyes (from indecent looks) and guard their modesty and refrain from revealing their adornments save those that are (naturally) manifest and cast their veils over their bosoms and not reveal their adornments save for their husband, father, husband's father, sons, husband's sons, brothers, brother's sons, sister's sons, their fellow women (in faith), their bondservants, their dependants (such as dullards) who do not have sexual desires, or children who do not know of women's private parts; and they must not stomp their feet in order to reveal their hidden ornaments. And repent to Allah, O believers, haply you may attain bliss.”²

These verses pertain to the *Hijab* of women and contain several issues that must be expounded:

First, they ask the faithful, men and women, to secure their eyes and not leer. Men must not stare at women and women must not stare at men.

The word *Ghudh* [غضى] means decreasing and closing. *Ghudha basar* means shortening one's gaze and not staring. Sometimes, persons look at others and looking is not their purpose. At other times, people look lustfully at others for sexual pleasure; this is called leering. Leering is a cause for human corruption and thus it has been forbidden. However, looking without hedonistic desires is not forbidden (*haram*), because it is necessary for sociability and communal living.

Next, these verses direct men and women to guard their private parts [*furuj*]. *Furuj* is plural of *farj* which means pudendum [*aurat*]. Guarding one's *farj* or covering it signifies preserving one's chastity and modesty by *ghudha basar*—meaning not staring—and observing *Hijab*.

Then, they address women and declare:

... لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا ...

“Do not reveal your adornments save those that are manifest.”

Zinat means adornment. There are various types of adornment. First are those that are detached from the body, such as earrings, necklaces, rings, hairclips, bracelets, and decorative clothes. Second are those that are applied to the body, such as eyeliner, nail polish, and hair color. Adornment spoken of in this verse encompasses both these types. Women are advised to eschew revealing their adornments for non-*mahram* men and thus prevent drawing the attention of men and arousing their sexual inclinations.

Next, the statement *إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* gives women permission to refrain from hiding their evident adornments—that are naturally obvious—such as *Surmah* (a specific type of natural eyeliner), eyebrow coloring, henna, rings, veil coloring, robes, and shoes. Since women are part of the society and have social responsibilities, naturally, non-*mahram* men see will certainly see their face, hands, and obvious adornments and covering these would be difficult. For this reason, Islam gives them permission to perform their duties without covering these.

Correspondingly, various Hadith also interpret adornments mentioned in this verse in this manner. Zurarah cited from Imam Sadiq (‘a) that he interpreted the words of God, *إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا*, in the following manner:

«زرارة، عن أبي عبدالله (ع) في قول الله عزّوجلّ: {إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا} قال: «الزينة الظاهرة الكحل و الخاتم

“Manifest adornments consist of *Surmah* and rings.”³

Abubasir states:

أبوبصير، عن أبي عبدالله (ع) قال: سألته عن قول الله عزوجل { لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا } قال: «الخاتم و المسكة و هي القلب».

“I asked Imam Sadiq (a) for the interpretation of God’s words, لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا, he stated: Manifest adornments consist of rings and bracelets.”[4](#)

After speaking of *Hijab* the Quran states:

...وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ...

Khumur (خُمُرٌ) is the plural form of *khimar* (خِمَارٌ) which is a kind of large veil or headscarf. Also, *juyub* is the plural form of *jayb* which means shirt collar.

It is said that at the time of the Prophet of Allah (S) women wore shirts that were open at the collar and revealed a portion of their breasts. Additionally, they put the sides of their headscarves behind their ears; therefore, their ears, earrings, neck, and a portion of their breasts were bared. Consequently, this verse directs women to cast their headscarves over their open neckline in order to cover their ears, earrings, neck, and breasts.

Tabarsi interprets this verse thus:

“*Khumur* (خُمُرٌ) is the plural form of *khimar* (خِمَارٌ) which is a kind of veil or headscarf that falls over one’s neck and neckline. This verse instructs women to cast their headscarves over their breasts in order to cover their necks, since formerly, they would cast their headscarves behind their heads, which caused their breasts to be revealed.”[5](#)

Following this statement, the Quran states:

...وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ...

In order to completely observe modesty and prevent social corruption, women are advised to refrain from walking heavily to keep non-*mahram* men from hearing the sounds of their adornments. This is because such sounds may cause men to become sexually aroused and hence cause problems in the society, especially for youths and single men.

Several important ethical and Islamic issues can be derived from this verse:

1. Men and women (who aren’t married to each other) must abstain from visual indulgence and looking

at each other in a lustful manner. People must not look at one another for sexual pleasure.

2. Women must not reveal their hidden adornments to men.

3. Women are obligated to wear their veil or headscarf in such a manner that their ears, earrings, their neck and the surrounding area, and their breasts are completely covered.

4. In order to honor public modesty and counteract moral corruption, women are advised to tread softly so the sounds of their steps do not cause corruption in men.

5. Women are not required to cover their obvious adornments.

Second Verse

Allah, the Exalted, has stated in the holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and believing women to draw their veils (cloaks) close unto themselves. This is better so that they may be recognized (as modest women) and therefore not be molested and Allah is much-forgiving and merciful.”⁶

The dictionary of *Qamus* defines *jalbab* (جَلْبَاب) as a loose shirt or garment for women or a garment worn on top of other clothes, which covers the other clothes completely. It is also defined as a veil or headscarf. *Raghib* has defined *jalbab* as a shirt and scarf in his book, *Mufradat*. Moreover, in *Al-Munjid*, *jalbab* is defined as a loose shirt or garment.

Therefore, this verse may be interpreted thus: Tell women to wear their robe such that it covers the whole body and hides it from the eyes of outsiders. If they do so, they will be known as chaste women. Thus, they will avoid the attention of strangers and will not be molested.

This verse indicates that Muslim women must wear conservative, concealing, and plain clothes when leaving their house and thus prevent ethical and social corruption. Such conduct is advantageous to women, men, and youths in general.

Third Verse

The Quran states:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا *

...وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ

“O women of the prophet! You are not as other women, if you are pious. So speak not tenderly to make those who have sickness in their heart lustful, but speak in a normal manner. And stay in your homes and do not flaunt yourselves as in the Age of Ignorance.”⁷

In this verse, women are given three recommendations:

1. That they not speak in a tender and soft manner since speaking in this manner may incite the lusts of impure men
2. That they stay at home
3. That they not display themselves before outsiders without the necessary covering and not flaunt themselves and show off their beauty and cosmetics

Even though this verse addresses the wives and daughters of the prophet, its instructions apply to all women.

It must be said that the statement *قَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ* does not mean that the wives of the Prophet (S) and other women must always stay at home and never leave the house; because, as I have previously stated, women are true members of the society and have responsibilities that necessitate leaving the house. Moreover, at the time of the Prophet (S) women would exit their homes and they would present themselves at mosques.

They would listen to the words of the Prophet (S) and would ask their religious questions. Indeed, many women are narrators of Hadith and many narrators transmit Hadith from them. They would participate in battles and would treat and minister to the wounded. The Prophet's (S) wives would also participate in battles, although they were not commissioned to fight.

It was not the manner of the Prophet (S) and his followers to confine women to their homes, nor does this verse intend such; rather, it means that women must be devoted to their homes and regard it as their true place. Moreover, they should favor household management, parenting, and caring for their husband. They must feel responsible for household issues and eschew loitering, walking aimlessly in the streets, unrestraint, and imprudence.

Maharim

Maharim⁸

There are two types of men in regard to each woman: *mahram* and non-*mahram*.

That which has been stated regarding the *Hijab* of women pertains to non-*mahram* men. Observing *Hijab* is not obligatory before *mahram* men. *Mahram* men consist of:

1. One's father's father, grandfather, and all direct paternal ancestors
2. One's mother's father, grandfather, and all direct maternal ancestors
3. One's brother and his children and descendants
4. Children of one's sisters and their descendants
5. One's paternal uncle, his paternal uncle, and so on
6. One's maternal uncle, his maternal uncle, and so on
7. One's husband and father-in-law
8. One's father-in-law's and mother-in-law's father, grandfather, and so on
9. One's husband's sons and their descendants
10. One's sons and all their descendants
11. One's daughter's descendants
12. One's sons-in-law and their sons-in-law, and so on

These individuals may see a woman's body⁹ and women are not obliged to cover themselves in front of them. Of course, this is only on the condition that they do not look upon her for sexual pleasure; otherwise, one cannot even look upon one's *mahrim* or children. Moreover, if it is for pleasure, women must not even look at other women, and men must not look at other men.

[The Limits of Hijab](#)

The necessity of *Hijab* is one of the indisputable commandments [*ahkam*] of Islam and all religious jurists [*fuqaha*] are unanimous in this issue. Women are required to cover their bodies from non-*mahram* men using chadors,¹⁰ abas,¹¹ long shirts, robes, overcoats, loose coveralls, montoes, veils, headscarves, or any other means that can cover the whole body. Islam does not enforce any specific form of covering.

There is no disagreement regarding the necessity of observing *Hijab*. However, there is dispute among religious jurists regarding covering the face and the hands up to the wrists. Some religious jurists regard covering these obligatory or at least advise precaution [*ihhtiyat*]. Even so, most religious jurists do not consider covering these areas obligatory and cite various rationales for its

superfluity:

Reason One

Hadith that directly and explicitly refute the necessity of covering the face and hands:

«مسعدة بن زياد قال سمعت جعفرًا عليه السلام و سئل عما تظهر المرأة من زينتها قال: «الوجه و الكفين

Mas'adah ibn Ziyad said: "I heard from (Imam) Ja'far ('a) that in answer to a question about the apparent adornments of women he replied: 'The face and two hands.'" [12](#)

مروك بن عبيد، عن بعض أصحابنا، عن أبي عبدالله (ع) قال: ما يحلّ للرجل أن يرى من المرأة إذا لم يكن محرماً؟
«قال: «الوجه و الكفّان و القدمان

In answer to a person who asked, "Which parts of a woman can a man who is not *mahram* look at?" the noble Imam Sadiq ('a) answered, "The face, two hands, and two feet." [13](#)

عليّ بن جعفر، عن أخيه موسى (ع)، قال: «سألته عن الرجل ما يصلح أن ينظر إليه من المرأة إذا لم يكن محرماً؟»
«قال: «الوجه و الكفّ و موضع السوار

Ali ibn Ja'far said, "I asked my brother, Musa ibn Ja'far ('a), 'Which parts of a non-*mahram* woman can a man look at?' he replied, 'The face, hands, and the area of a bracelet.'" [14](#)

عليّ بن سويد، قال: قلتُ لأبي الحسن (ع): إنّي مبتلى بالنظر إلى المرأة الجميلة يعجبني النظر إليها. فقال لي: «يا
«عليّ! لا بأس إذا عرف من نيّتك الصدق: و إيّاك و الزنا: فإنّه يحق البركة و يهلك الدين

Ali ibn Sawid said, 'I said to Musa ibn Ja'far ('a), 'I have been afflicted with looking at a beautiful woman and I like to look at her at all times, what should I do?' He answered, 'O 'Ali! It has no problem if you have good intentions, but I warn you of fornication because it repels blessings and destroys one's religion.'" [15](#)

مفضّل بن عمر، قال: قلتُ لأبي عبدالله (ع): جعلتُ فداك، ما تقول في المرأة تكون في السفر مع الرجال ليس فيهم
لها ذو محرّم، و لا معهم امرأة، فتموت المرأة، ما يصنع بها؟ قال: «يُغسل منها ما أوجب الله عليه التيمم، و لا
تمسّ، و لا يُكشف لها شيء من محاسنها التي أمر الله بسترها.» قلت: فكيف يصنع بها؟ قال: «يغسل بطن كفيها، ثمّ
«يغسل وجهها، ثمّ يغسل ظهر كفيها

Mufadhhal stated, "I said to Imam Sadiq ('a), 'May I be sacrificed for you! What must be done regarding

a woman who traveled with non-*mahram* men and died with no accompanying women?’ He answered, ‘They must wash [*ghusl*] the areas of *Tayammum*, but they must not touch her and must not expose that which Allah has appointed to be covered.’ Mufadhhal said, ‘Then what should be done?’ He replied, ‘First, one must wash the inner surface of her hands, then her face, then the outer surface of her hands.’”¹⁶

Reason Two

Some Hadith do not plainly mention the face and hands although they indirectly denote the fact that covering the face and hands is not obligatory.

احمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر، عن الرضا (ع)، قال: سألته عن الرجل يحلّ له أن ينظر إلى شعر أخت امرأته؛ فقال: «لا، إلا أن تكون من القواعد». قلت: أخت امرأته والغريبة سواء؟ قال: «نعم». قلت: فما لي من النظر إليه منها؟ فقال: «شعرها و ذراعها».

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abinahr said, “I asked Imam Ridha (‘a) if a man can look at the hair of his wife’s sister. He answered, ‘No, unless his wife’s sister is old and decrepit.’ I then said, ‘A wife’s sister and non-*mahram* women are the same?’ He answered, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘So what parts of an old woman may I look at?’ He answered, ‘Their hair and arms.’”¹⁷

The fact that the narrator of this Hadith asks about the permissibility of looking at the hair of one’s wife’s sister but does not ask about looking at her face shows that he regarded its permissibility certain, or else asking about looking at her face had precedence. Additionally, from the fact that in reply to the question regarding the extent one can look at an old woman, the Imam answered, ‘her hair and arms’ and did not add her face, shows that he too regarded the permissibility of looking at a woman’s face an obvious fact that did not need explaining, otherwise, he should have mentioned it.

احمد بن محمد بن أبي نصر، عن الرضا (ع)، قال: «يؤخذ الغلام بالصلاة وهو ابن سبع سنين، ولا تغطّي المرأة شعرها منه حتى يحتلم».

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abinahr cited from Imam Ridha, “A boy is made to pray at seven years of age but women cover their hair from him when he starts having involuntary ejaculations of semen during sleep [*ihtilam*].”¹⁸

عبدالرحمن بن الحجّاج، قال: سألت أبا إبراهيم (ع) عن الجارية التي لم تدرك متى ينبغى ألا تغطّي رأسها ممّن ليس «بينها وبينه محرم؟ ومتى يجب عليها أن تقنّع رأسها للصلاة؟ قال: «لا تغطّي رأسها حتى تحرم عليها الصلاة».

Abd ur-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj said, “Regarding a girl who is not yet mature, I asked Imam Musa ibn

Ja'far ('a), 'When must she cover her head from non-*mahram* men and when must she veil her head for *salat*?' He answered, 'She need not cover her head until the age that prayer becomes prohibited for her [due to menstruation].'¹⁹

These two Hadith indicate that the necessity of covering one's head and hair is an effect of physical maturity; however, nothing is said of the necessity of covering the face. If it was truly obligatory, stating this fact would have precedence. Thus, it is demonstrated that covering one's face is not obligatory for women.

Reason Three

As I have indicated, it can be discerned from the statement *لَا يُبَدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* that covering the hands and face is not obligatory since various Hadith of the *Ahl ul-Bayt* state that applying *Surmah* and wearing rings are instances of *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* and need not be covered. Hence, covering the face and hands, which are the locations of these adornments, must not be necessary.

Moreover, the statement *وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ*, which is mentioned in this same verse, also indicates the inessentiality of covering the face because it advises women to cast their veil or headscarf over their necks and breasts and says nothing about covering their face, which shows that it is not necessary. Additionally, in the Hadith from Mas'adah ibn Sadaqah, which was previously mentioned in this discussion, the face and two hands were enumerated as instances of *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا*.

Reason Four

Various Hadith and historical facts reveal that at the time of the Prophet of Allah (S), it was not traditional for women to cover their face and they would go about in public places with their faces uncovered. Men would see their faces, they would talk to each other, socialize and barter, and women would listen to Hadith from the Prophet (S) and cite them to men.

There are hundreds of female narrators of Hadith, including even the wives and daughters of the Prophet (S). 'Ayishah, Hafsa, Umm Salamah, and Fatimah ('a) have cited hundreds of Hadith and this necessitates men seeing women's faces and hearing their voices. The Prophet of Allah (S) neither commanded women to cover their faces, nor did he forbid men from looking at their faces and hearing their voices, unless it was with sexual and lewd intentions.

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Ansari has said: One day the Prophet of Allah ('a) went to see Fatimah ('a) while I was with him. When he came to the door of her house, he knocked and declared, 'as-Salamu 'Alaykum.' From within the house, Fatimah ('a) said, 'Alayk as-Salam, O Prophet of Allah!' The Prophet (S) said, 'May I enter your home?' Fatimah ('a) replied, 'You may.' The Prophet of Allah (S) said, 'Shall I enter with my companion?' Fatimah ('a) replied, 'O Prophet of Allah! I do not have on my headscarf.' The Prophet (S) said, 'Cast the extras of your cloak on your head.' Fatimah ('a) did so. Then the Prophet of Allah (S) said, 'as-Salamu 'Alaykum.' Fatimah ('a) replied. Then the Prophet (S) said, 'Shall I enter with

my male companion?’ She answered, ‘Please enter.’

“The Prophet of Allah (S) entered the house and I too entered.

“My eyes came across the face of Fatimah (‘a), which was yellow like turmeric. The Prophet of Allah (S) declared, ‘O daughter! Why is your face yellow so?’ She replied, ‘O Prophet of Allah! It is from intense hunger.’ The Prophet of Allah (S) prayed, ‘O Lord who satiates the hungry, satiate Fatimah daughter of Muhammad!’ I swear by Allah! After the prayer of the Prophet of Allah (S), I looked at the face of Fatimah (‘a). Blood flowed into her face and it became red and after that she no longer felt hungry.[20](#)

This narrative shows that Fatimah’s (‘a) face was uncovered in such a way that Jabir first saw its yellowness and after the prayer of the Prophet (S), its redness.

Sa’d Iskaf cites from Imam Baqir (‘a), “A young man of the *Ansari*[21](#) encountered a woman in the streets of Madinah. In those times, women would cast their headscarves behind their ears. The *Ansari* youth stared at her until he came to her and passed her, and then he looked at her from behind. Suddenly, his head hit piece of sharp bone or glass that was sticking out of the wall. His face was cut and blood flowed upon his chest and clothes. The youth said, ‘I swear to God! I shall complain about this woman before the Prophet of Allah (S).’

The youth came into the presence of the Prophet of Allah (S). The Prophet asked, ‘Why are you thus bloody?’ The youth recounted the tale. Just then, Gabriel came upon the Prophet (S) and revealed unto him verse 30 of Surah Nur (This verse and its subsequent verse were explicated in detail at the beginning of this chapter).

This account shows that at the time of the Prophet (S) and the advent of Islam, not only did women leave their faces uncovered, they also cast their headscarves behind their ears. Consequently, their ears, earrings, necks, and breasts were apparent. The affair of this *Ansari* youth took place in this period, which was when he took his complaint to the Prophet (S) and the verse of Hijab was revealed unto the Prophet (S).

This verse advises women to cast the fringes of their headscarves around their necks so that their ears, earrings, necks, and breasts are covered. However, interestingly, no instruction was given regarding covering the face and this demonstrates its inessentiality. In order to prevent ethical and social corruption and the recurrence of incidents similar to the affair of the *Ansari* youth, the verse of Hijab counsels men and women to cut off their stares and shun leering and lecherousness.

[Philosophy of Hijab](#)

As previously stated, one of the certain commandments of Islam is the necessity of covering. However, an important question is, ‘What is the philosophy of Hijab? Why has Islam thus taken away the freedom of women? And, is not this an injustice?’

In reply, it must be said that the object of Islam in legislating Hijab is fortifying the holy foundations of family, preventing sexual deviations and their detrimental consequences, ensuring social health and security, facilitating the cleansing of the social environment, and decreasing moral corruption. Moreover, not only is this amount of limitation not disadvantageous to women, it is in the overall interests of women, their children, husbands, and all members of the society.

In order to clarify this issue, I shall state several premises.

First Point

We must bear in mind that women and men are two pillars of the society, and that individual welfare, tranquility, and comfort is greatly based upon the health, security, and purity of our living environment. Thus, assuring the health, security, and purification of the environment from corruption is our mutual responsibility and we must cooperate and work together to attain these goals.

Second Point

Women are delicate and exquisite creatures and are naturally fond of make-up, adornments, beauty, flaunting, ostentation, and charming others. They wish to take over the hearts of men with their allure; however, men crave variety and are very weak against their sexual desires. Their sexual desires are easily excited and they eventually lose control. When these unruly and rebellious desires are aroused, even reason, law, and religion are generally useless in harnessing them.

Everything about women is arousing to men—especially young men: their adornments, their pretty clothes, their delicate voices, their allure and coyness, their bodies, hair, and even the warmth of their bodies can kindle this wild instinct.

Third Point

There are many men in the society that cannot marry due to poverty, unemployment, low income, continuing education, military service, and a large number of other reasons. The tally of these individuals, who are at the juncture of adulthood and the outburst of sexual instincts, is rather high. The regretful situation of these people who are part of the society cannot be disregarded.

Considering the previous points, the following question arises: What is in the best interests of women—uninhibitedness and absolute freedom in dress and behavior or observing Hijab and enduring some restrictions?"

In order to arrive at a correct answer, it is better that we consider two hypothetical communities and compare their pros and cons.

Community A

In this community, women have complete freedom regarding their apparel and their association with men. In order to satisfy their natural tendencies, they are flamboyant and gaudy, they leave their homes made-up, half-bare, and with beautiful, colorful, and voguish clothes. With absolute liberty, they socialize and consort with all sorts of men in public places.

They ravish the hearts of every male, intentionally, and unintentionally, with their scanty clothes, their beauty, and their allure and wherever they go, they drag behind themselves a caravan of hearts. Those that are not married inhabit cinemas, cabarets, dance parties, parks, and the streets until midnight hours in complete freedom. Furthermore, those who are married go wherever they want with or without their spouses with the excuse of freedom as their right.

In this community, boys and girls are free to associate with one another, become close friends, and even have sexual relationships. Men are also completely free to consort with women as they please. They can have relations with any willing woman or anyone they are able. Together they can go to theatres, nightclubs, parties, wander the streets and places of ill repute, and indulge in all sorts of debauchery.

The women of such communities are free in adornment, degeneracy, exiting their homes, associating with any men, and having sexual relations; however, these freedoms come with a price and have the following consequences:

Instability of the sacred foundations of family; indifference of men and women toward the home and family; suspicion of spouses towards one other and trying to police one another; family conflicts; abundance of illegitimate or vagrant children with no guardians; accrument of mental illnesses; increase of murder, crime, and suicide; escalation of the number of unmarried women and men; postponement of the age of marriage; indifference of young men and women toward establishing families; inclination of youths toward various moral corruptions and sexual deviations; upsurge of divorce statistics; and superabundance of men and women who must inevitably live alone and suffer loneliness.

Cases of such societies with disrupted families are evident in the West. Put aside raw emotions and thoroughly contemplate the matter. Is such a community truly in the interests of women, men, youths?

Community B

In this society, women have an active role on the stage of life. They occupy suitable jobs with necessary facilities and in this way perform their duties to the society. Like men, women have a great presence in schools, colleges, universities, research centers, hospitals, clinics, laboratories, legislative offices, government departments, and other important and suitable offices. They completely observe Hijab and covering—except their hands and faces. They do not apply make-up and adornments before entering public places and their place of work. They leave their homes covered, plain, and without cosmetics and they make their adornments, cosmetics, and allure exclusive to their husbands and use them in the

privacy of their own home.

They accept these restrictions selflessly and in good will in order that the environment is free of deviation and corruption. They do this with regard to the state of youths and men who do not have the power to marry. They observe Hijab so that men do not become indifferent towards their own wives due to seeing the beauties of other women, and so that these men do not turn their hearty families into a scene of a battlefield with excuses and quarrels.

They accept this limitation so that young men and women—who are the children of these same women—are safe from corruption, sexual deviations, and mental illnesses; and so they may marry and establish a family at a suitable time and with the availability of necessary resources and facilities.

They accept this limitation to help fortify the foundations of family—a thing of which they are also a part—and thus reduce the tally of divorce, living single, and distressed and guardianless children.

In this community, most families have good interrelations, the relationships of spouses are relatively genial, and there are fewer disputes. Moral corruption and sexual deviations are comparatively low among youths. Young men and women are interested in marriage and establishing the holy institution of family. The amount of divorces and single men and women is not high. There are fewer vagrant youths and children without guardians.

In this society, parents feel more assured of the purity of their children from immorality, sexual divergence, and mental disorders.

Is living in such a community in the better interests of women or the first? Any thoughtful person would regard the second community superior.

Islam also regards living in the second community better and healthier. This is why it has legislated Hijab and has asked women to observe it and cover their adornments and beauties from non-*mahram* men.[22](#)

The Prophet (S) has forbidden women to beautify themselves for males other than their husbands and has stated:

عن النبي (ع) في حديث المناهي، قال: «و نهى أن تتزيّن لغير زوجها، فإن فعلت كان حقاً على الله أن يحرقها بالنار.»

A woman must not adorn herself for any save her spouse, and if she were to do so, it would be a just reward for Allah to burn her in the Fires [of Hell].[23](#)

Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a) has stated:

جابر بن يزيد، قال: سمعت أبا جعفر محمد بن عليّ الباقر (ع) يقول: «و لا يجوز لها أن تتطيّب إذا خرجت من بيتها.»

A woman must not perfume herself when she wants to exit her house.[24](#)

He has also stated:

جابر بن يزيد الجعفي، قال: سمعت أبا جعفر محمد بن عليّ الباقر (ع) يقول: «و لا يجوز للمرأة أن تصافح غير ذي محرم إلا من وراء ثوبها.»

It is not permissible for a woman to shake hands with a non-*mahram* save over her clothing.[25](#)

In order to cleanse the social environment, Islam does not suffice with legislating Hijab. In addition to this, it enjoins men to shun leering and to cast their eyes away from watching non-*mahram* women.

The Quran states:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

“Tell the faithful men to shorten their glances and guard their private parts; this is purer for them (it helps keep their purity). Surely, Allah knows all they do.”[26](#)

Imam Sadiq (‘a) has stated:

عليّ بن عقبة، عن أبيه، عن أبي عبدالله (ع) قال: سمعته يقول: «النظرة سهم من سهام إبليس مسموم، وكم من نظرة أورثت حسرة طويلة.»

Looking at non-*mahram* persons is a poisonous arrow of the arrows of Satan and many (such) gazes entail lingering regret.[27](#)

He has also stated:

عقبة، عن أبي عبدالله (ع)، قال: «النظرة سهم من سهام إبليس مسموم، من تركها لله عزوجل لا لغيره أعقبه الله.» أمنأ و إيمانأ يجد طعمه

Looking at non-*mahram* persons is a poisonous arrow of the arrows of Satan and to whoever abandons it for Allah and none save Him, God shall bestow the pleasure of security and faith.[28](#)

Again he has stated:

«عن الكاهلي، قال: قال أبو عبد الله (ع): «النظرة بعد النظرة تزرع في القلب الشهوة، و كفى بها لصاحبها فتنة

A look after a look nourishes lust in one's heart and is enough to cause strife (or temptation) for its owner.[29](#)

Noble Sadiq ('a) has also stated:

قال الصادق (ع): «من نظر إلى امرأة فرفع بصره إلى السماء، أو غضّ بصره لم يرتدّ إليه بصره حتّى يزوجه الله من الحور العين.»

He who looks at a woman and immediately looks up to the sky or casts down his eyes, Allah will wed him to a houri (in paradise) before his gaze levels again.[30](#)

The Prophet of Allah (S) has declared:

«عن رسول الله (ص) قال: «من صافح امرأة حراماً جاء يوم القيامة مغلولاً، ثمّ يؤمر به إلى النار

He who shakes hands with a non-*mahram* woman shall come chained on the Last Day and will then be cast into the Fire.[31](#)

He stated elsewhere:

«قال رسول الله (ص): «من فاكه امرأة لا يملكها، حبسه الله بكلّ كلمة كلّها في الدنيا ألف عام

He who jests with a woman who is not his, for every word he has spoken to her in the world, Allah shall imprison him for one thousand years.[32](#)

Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali ibn Abu Talib ('a) has stated:

«عن عليّ (ع) قال: «لا يخلو بامرأة رجل، فما من رجلٍ خلا بامرأة إلا كان الشيطان ثالثهما

A man must not go into a secluded place with a woman, because no man goes into a private place with a woman save that the third of them is Satan.[33](#)

Musa ibn Ja'far has cited from his forefathers from the Prophet of Allah (S) who stated:

موسى بن جعفر، عن آبائه (ع)، عن رسول الله (ص) قال: «من كان يؤمن بالله و اليوم الآخر، فلا يبيت فى موضع
يسمع نفس امرأة ليست له بمحرم.»

He who has faith in Allah and the Last Day shall not sleep in a place where he hears a woman breathing who is not *mahram* to him.³⁴

1. – The word non-mahram denotes males that are not close family members in front of whom women must cover themselves and behave modestly. The relationships of mahram men (close family members) are explained in more detail and mentioned in verses in ensuing sections. [trans.]
2. – Surah Nur 24:30–31.
3. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 201.
4. – Ibid.
5. – Majma' ul-Bayan, vol. 7, p. 138.
6. – Surah Ahzab 33:59.¶
7. – Surah Ahzab 33:32–33.
8. – Maharim is the plural form of mahram. Maharim are close relatives with whom one cannot be married. Additionally, one's spouse is a closer form of mahram. Women are only obliged to cover their private parts before maharim and before their spouse they are not required to cover at all. [trans.]
9. – They may see her entire body save her private parts; even so, modesty is always a rule of thumb. Naturally, one's husband may look at any part of his spouse's body for pleasure or otherwise. [trans.]
10. – A chador is a type of loose cloth that covers the whole body except the face and hands. [trans.]
11. – An aba is a type of robe traditionally worn by Arabs. [trans.]
12. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 212.
13. – Ibid, vol. 20, p. 201.
14. – Nur uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 590.
15. – Ibid.
16. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 2, p. 522.
17. – Ibid, vol. 20, p. 199.
18. – Ibid, vol. 20, p. 229.
19. – Ibid, vol. 2, p. 228.
20. – Tafsir-e Nur uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 587.
21. – Ansar literally means helpers. It is the denomination of the new Muslims of Madinah (then called Yathrib) who invited the Prophet (s) and his followers to live in their city away from the persecutions of the idolaters of Mecca. [trans.]
22. – Surah Nur 24:31.
23. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 212.
24. – Ibid, p. 220.
25. – Ibid, p. 222.
26. – Surah Nur 24:30.
27. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 191.
28. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, p. 192.
29. – Ibid, p. 192.
30. – Ibid, p. 193.
31. – Ibid, p. 198.
32. – Ibid, p. 198.
33. – Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, vol. 14, p. 265.
34. – Wasa'il ush-Shi'ah, vol. 20, p. 185.

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