

Essay on islamic dress code

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



Islamic Dress Code

The roots of the Islamic veil can be traced to 13th Century B. C. in Mesopotamia which was by then symbol of social class to the natives and not religion (Sultan-ul-Qalam, 2006). The veil was a distinctive feature between the women in the royal harem and their ordinary counterparts. It was mandatory that all the Women in Assyria, Mesopotamia, put on the veil to cover their heads with the exemption of the prostitutes. For Assyrian schoolgirls, it was an obligation that they put on the veil at all times in the conformation of the Muslim Sharia Law. This was at a time when the reasons of wearing of the veil in famous nations like Greece and Romans were not clear. However, the practice of putting on the veil was prevalent in the Roman and Greek societies. It was at the dawn of Judaism that the veil took a religious perspective. Sultan-ul-Qalam (2006) documents that the veil was also common in Christianity and the use of this sartorial cloth can be pinpointed even in the bible. According to Sultan-ul-Qalam (2006), long before Islam, the bible was advocating for the wearing of the veil, a practice that is still going on in some orthodox Jewish religion which regard the practice as “inherently righteous”. Such were the practices that required all the Christian women to put on the veil while attending church services and any other religious gathering (Sultan-ul-Qalam, 2006).

In Islam, hijab, from hajaba, an Arabic term for 'to hide from view', has a literal meaning of a 'curtain' (Caner, 2003). The word hijab in its basic form describes a scarf or a veil worn by Muslims, especially the women as stipulated by the Islamic law as means of protection of the devout Muslim

women from sexual temptations stirred by illicit thoughts that can take a course as a result of women and men intermingling together in a place. The niqab compliments the hijab but is normally worn to cover the face leaving only the eyes.

On September 11th, four commercial planes were taken hostage by Al-Qaeda terrorists who performed a series of synchronized suicide attacks by intentionally crashing into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, whilst killing everyone on board and many people working within the building. As the American and British governments decide to combat the terrorism, Islam continues to be viewed with suspicion and hostility. These governments argue that the veil has become a symbol of terrorism.

After 9/11, it became noticeable that many countries within the west became intolerant of the idea of the veil and are becoming set on enforcing a ban on face coverings in public places. The widely expected move by the governments of France and Belgium were fairly anticipated due to their disclosure of specifically targeting the Islamic veil. The president Sarkozy of France expresses that the veil is a “ sign of enslavement and debasement” and suggests that the veil is the “ ultimate symbol of Islam’s oppression of women (Harris, 2010). As Caner (2003) writes, many westerners regard the veil as symbolic Islam oppression to the women characterised by the ‘ medieval and misogynistic’ attribute of the Islamic religion. This came amid many leaders terming the veil, especially the ‘ niqab’ worn by Muslim women to cover their faces, as an indubitable statement of separation between the

Muslim and other religions. The Muslim women on their part argue that the assertion of the wearing of hijab and niqab is a sign of oppression is rather a constructed image that does not in any way reflect the feelings that they have while putting on the veils. They further refute that the veil does not by any means symbolize subservience by their husbands. These women do not in any way see the alleged repressive or restrictive nature of the veil (Caner, 2003).

The very nature of the hijab, is loose and it outlines the silhouette of the body whilst concealing the individual. Inquiry as to what the veil and what it represents includes explanations that are beyond the veil's actual function of an ordinary cloth meant to cover parts of the female hair, face and body. While some claim that the veil is used as a way of control over women, others declare it as an artifact of cultural expression (Haddad, 2007). Some believe that the veil is used as a disguise, whilst some have only become familiar with it as a symbol of terrorism, most famously since 9/11.

As much as the veil may appear simply as a sartorially done piece of fabric or an article of clothing, it is, in fact, a concept which can be interpolated differently by individuals. Jennifer Heath (2008) attests that the veil can be perceived as an illusion, vanity, and artifice. Others perceive it to display a sense of deception, liberation, divination, imprisonment, euphemism, concealment, hallucination, depression, holiness and eloquent silence. In countries where there are legal restraints on religious outfits, it becomes an issue of women's human rights to wear what they want. With regards to a statement by a daughter of an Egyptian administrator, the hijab and

specifically the niqab provides the Muslim women with an opportunity to choose people who should see them and those who should not. The lady was quoted saying that the niqab offers her freedom as it enable her decide who to seen her and who not to which in turn offers her happiness; happiness that she could not find elsewhere in the world even as she was supplied with the all-and-sundries of life (Abdo, 2000).

Many attempts began through the wives of Arab ambassadors in Washington who spoke out to the public via the media and through publishing their true beliefs in order to correct false stereotypes about the hijab. Nuha al-Hegelan, the wife of the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, in her speech to a group of high-school teachers, was quoted saying that the veil, from the onset, has always been more than a cloth." She established how Americans have endowed it with particular significance by raising her Yves St. Laurent shawl from sitting on her shoulders and gradually placing it over her head, whilst asserting that people often perceive the veil to be a fashion when placed over the shoulder and as a symbol of oppression when used to cover that hair (Haddad, 2007). Within Saudi, Arabia, women are more capable of accessing high-end designer clothing, makeup and accessories and, therefore, demonstrate their personal fashions within indoor female settings. Women throughout the Middle East, wearing the veil have also been able to express themselves through their eyes and use luxurious makeup to exaggerate their eyes in order to articulate the female beauty as an object of desire by the opposite sex. This is analogous to the sensual movements of a belly dancer, in which her body is exposed and conversely uses a veil to cover her face except the eyes. Recently the film ' Sex and the City'

illustrated a scene within Abu Dubai which demonstrated that the Middle East is equally fashionable and glamorous as New York City. Elle magazine also lately initiated its Middle Eastern version, illustrating luxurious pages of women in conservative clothing with a fusion of Eastern and Western fashions (Treister, 2006).

Fashion designer Hind Beljafla is renowned for designing abayas in order to match the exclusive shoes and handbags of the high-spending women in the Middle East. Harrods has started selling her collection of elegant versions of the black Islamic abayas which uses splashes of colour, embroidery, leather and metal studs on the sheer black robes. Several of her clients have requested to have abayas created in order to match their designer handbags and high-heel shoes such as Chanel, Christian Dior, Hermes and Gucci, to be worn on various occasions (Bloomberg, 2010). Furthermore, these top Milan and Paris fashion houses realized the marketable potential for Muslim women's clothing and subsequently set new standards for style. These global brands such as Fendi and Gucci are introducing Islamic elements in some of their recent collections and, therefore, making it evident that Muslims are no exception in the up and coming fashion conscious world. Some designers are trying to tap into the Muslim market by designing scarves and accessories and just recently top fashion house Christian Dior have tried to remake the Islamic garments like the Abaya (Bloomberg, 2010). All these illustrations depict the instances of code-switching of the niqab both in descant and as attire.

In 2006, after the controversial suspension of a teaching assistant in the United Kingdom who practiced the wearing of naqib made, a UK administrator made controversial remarks about the veil. The former British Foreign Secretary was quoted demanding that all the Muslims visiting his office should put off the veil since he felt uncomfortable talking to somebody he was not able to see. These sentiments stirred a debate based on the integration of the Muslim with other non-Muslim adherents that led to the banning of both the hijab and the naqib. The Muslim adherent, however, stood to defend their stance citing the liberation and equalizing force of the hijab and the naqib. In unison, the Muslim women defended the hijab with claims that through the hijab, they are able to manifest their religious faith, and since it is a religious dictate, they have no choice but to put the veil as a sign of obedience to the Quran laws given to Prophet Mohammed by God.

To the Muslim women, the hijab serves a scintillating role of protecting the women. Women modesty and marital harmony can only be drawn from the veil, perhaps the foremost reason as to why the wearing of the hijab has always occupied the epicentre of the Muslim religion and the way of life. Marital harmony; the Muslim argue that most marriages are broken down on the grounds of infidelity by both parties, husband and wife. However, with the naqib covering most of the parts of the face except the face, support by the hijab that covers all the body downwards, it is almost hard for the opposite sexes to notice each other, an admiration that is the key root to infidelity. Mernissi (1987) affirms that with the societal changes brought about by modernization, the seduction power of women is vastly enhanced with the aid of a plethora in a variety of available ornaments which to a great

extent betters women charming and most importantly the powers. However, to the Muslims, the only way to ameliorate the continual worsening infidelity prevalence is to use the veil as referring to it as an ‘ effective anti-seduction device’.

There is an unfounded belief by the Muslim women ascribed to the hijab terming it ontologically as a source of empowerment and liberation to the women. Sultan-ul-Qalam (2006) confirms the liberating power of the hijab by documenting that hijab is believed to possess a liberating force that enables women escape suffering wherever they go hence rendering them the determinants of future generations. This is a converse corollary belief that tends to refute the negative perceptions by many about the hijab.

Illatively, it is evident that Arab and Muslim women are associated with up and coming fashions and designers and are now not only recognized with violence but with money and style which was not noticed before September 11th. Although, Muslim women in the veil have been casted away in the shadows of the west prior to the attacks since the fatal incidents Muslim women in the veil have become recognized not only as oppressed victims of their terrorist husbands, but as style icons capable of expressing herself through. Much as people might think that the Muslim religion oppresses its women by demanding that they put on the hijab, the women on their part do not see any problem putting this religious apparel. Apart from empowering them, these women think that the niqab and hijab offers them a liberation avenue with a further cumulative effect of granting them freedom. This attire with magnificent sartorial finishing bases its root deep into the 13th Century

B. C. in Mesopotamia has since been a substantial component of the Islamic women wardrobe with designers recently coming up with fashionable design as a means of bettering their returns also promoting the Islamic culture of putting on the veil. Even though the hijab might be receiving a lot of criticism from the western worlds, the hijab can, in actuality, be an outstanding means of curbing the flaring levels of HIV/AIDS infection in worse hit countries. The fact the hijab protects Islamic from sexual temptations as a result of mingling with the males presents a good insight of how sexual temptation in both women and men can be minimised translating to HIV/AIDS control. This can work exceptionally well in African countries with high-infection rates of HIV and AIDS. Apart adhering to the dictates of the Quran, the Muslims also put on the hijab and the niqab as a way on manifesting their Islamic faith. From the above discussion, we additionally see that the much as the hijab and niqab are experiencing criticisms from administrators and human right specialist, the Muslim seem to be unmoved by these sentiments accompanying these criticisms, quite astonishingly, the Muslims have always stood to defend their stance with regards to this apparel that they uphold with much religious reverence.

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