



The Truth about the Islamic Scarf

Quick Facts on Hijab

- The “burka” ,or full face covering, is **not** based in Islam, but is a cultural practice of some Arabs.
- Nearly 750 Million Women around the world wear some form of scarf, whether it is in the Islamic, Christian, Judaic, or another style.
- Many Muslim women begin Hijab before their teenage years, but just as many decide to start the practice later on as well.
- Countries where Hijab is prevalent have the lowest incidences of sexual assault in the entire world.
- Women who wear Hijab have either been the leaders, or at the highest level, of many Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and even non-Muslim countries such as Italy!
- In the United States, thousands of women who wear Hijab are at every level of society, as Judges, police officers, businesswomen, and more!



Are Muslim women oppressed? Are they forced into wearing the scarf? Is the Hijab a form of male dominance over women? Do men have to wear a scarf? What is the purpose of the scarf, and why do women wear it in their driver's license and passport photos?

One of the most talked about topics in all of Islam

In the twentieth century, one of the most discussed topics, especially in regards to Islam, is the headscarf and manner of dressing of Muslim women. The basis of this interest is based upon questions about what this scarf means to Islam, and how women who wear the scarf live.

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This packet is geared towards explaining the truth behind the Islamic scarf, or the Hijab. According to Islam, Hijab is meant as a societal equalizer. It is a philosophy, that both men and women are required to follow, that indicates that individuals, of both genders, should be treated with equal rights and honor. Accordingly the religion of Islam espouses that material

wealth, physical attributes, and social “status” should not be a part of ordinary life. In fact, individuals should be allowed to interact as equals, despite circumstance.

Accordingly, Muslim men and women are enjoined to observe a simple dress code that helps facilitate this positive level of interaction. For men, covering the parts of the body traditionally associated with masculine attractiveness is required, and the same is required of women.

The most visible difference, is that Islam advocates that Muslim women are to help maintain their honor and higher esteem, by wearing a scarf to cover their hair. Mistakenly, this single aspect of the Islamic dress code is referred to as Hijab by itself, but the fact of the matter is that the concept of Hijab encompasses male and female interaction in a way the elevates society, while promoting the dignity and respect that humanity should aspire to.

Hijab is important because Hijab is the dress that covers the adornment of a Muslim woman. The Islamic definition of Hijab is the dress that covers whatever might arouse instincts. Hijab keeps a woman safe, not only with Muslim people but wherever the Muslim woman might go. Hijab does not show sexual appeal for men and women. Hijab is not old fashion like some would say. A woman needs only to be neat but dressed very well too. Hijab does not have the same rank as manners and behaviors. The importance of the Hijab is for the Muslim to behave well while wearing the Hijab. If the Muslim woman does this then her behavior will be a good impression to the clothes the woman is wearing and what religion she is following. We Muslims are not the only people to wear Hijab. The other religion is Christianity. Why would I say that? I would say that because the nuns wear them as well. The society is very large in such normal conditions. When we talk or bring up the topic of Islam and there Hijab there is no interest and all the voices come against all of us Muslims. Hijab is being fought because some society's refuse for the Muslim women to wear Hijab. When we talk about Hijab we should get the picture of a woman has good passion for Islam and good behavior.

Reflections on Hijab by a Young Muslim



The concept of *Hijab* is not a new phenomenon. Most people know that Muslim women who cover their hair and are dressed modestly are observing the *Hijab*. Most people are unaware, however, that the concept of *Hijab* is rooted in Judeo-Christian philosophy. The three Abrahamic religions share many beliefs, one of which includes *Hijab*.

According to Rabbi Menachem M. Brayer, Professor of Biblical Literature at Yeshiva University, it was the custom of Jewish women to go out in public with a head covering which, sometimes, even covered the whole face leaving one eye free. Rabbinic law forbids the recitation of blessings or prayers in the presence of a married woman with uncovered hair, since uncovering the woman's hair is considered "nudity". Dr. Brayer also mentions that a Jewish woman's failure to cover her head was considered an offence to her modesty, during the Tannaitic period (the first era in Jewish his-

Hijab in Modern Times

Why is it needed?

tory).

Dr. Brayer also explains that veil of the Jewish woman was not always considered a sign of modesty. Sometimes, the veil symbolized a state of distinction and luxury rather than modesty. The veil personified the dignity and superiority of noble

women. It also represented a woman's inaccessibility as a sanctified possession of her husband. Let us also not forget the

Christian tradition. It is well known that for hundreds of years Catholic Nuns have worn habits, a dress much like the Islamic *Hijab*. Their observance of the veil is indicated in the Holy Bible:

“Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or

prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head - it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.” (I Corinthians 11:3-10)

As indicated by St. Paul, the veil represents a sign of male authority and as well as a symbol of woman's



Muslim Women who Wear Hijab Do Not Want to Be Judged For Their Appearance, but be Respected for Their Thoughts, Ideas, and Character.

subjection to man and to God. But even though it is stated in the Bible for a woman to cover her hair, many Christians have forgotten this practice.

Unlike Judeo-Christian belief, the Islamic *Hijab* is neither a sign of man's authority over woman nor a sign of luxury and distinction of noble married women. In Islam the Hijab is a sign of modesty that

safeguards the personal integrity and honor of women.

The Quran urges the believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty and then urges the believing women to extend their head covers to cover the neck and the bosom:

"Say to the believing men that they should lower

their gaze and guard their modesty...

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..." (Quran 24:30,31)

Understanding the Origins of the Islamic Hijab

The word *Hijab* typically conjures up images of women in headscarves or long, flowing dresses covering the entire body and maybe the face.

This is not entirely inaccurate, as in Arabic Hijab literally means a cover or screen. However, in Islam it is something far greater as Qur'an describes in chapter 24, verses 30-31:

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And God is well acquainted with all that they do. 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 (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should

draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to *[blood relatives and certain others]*..."

Note that men and women are not barred from interacting with one other. Instead, they are instructed to "lower their gaze" when interacting and avoid having impure thoughts or focusing on each other's physical appearance. This helps to ensure that women and men treat each other with proper dignity and respect and do not objectify one another based on physical appearance.

"Guarding modesty" tells men and women to refrain from seeking to attract attention in regards to their looks. This places the responsibility on both men and women to interact with the opposite sex in a responsible

What is the IIC?

The Islamic Information Center is a "grass-roots" organization that has been formed for the purpose of informing the public, mainly through the media, about the real image of Islam and Muslims.

Who is running the IIC?

The IIC is run by our chairman, Imam Syed Naqvi, our committees, and supported by our volunteers. As of now, we have 50-75 people working in these active committees.

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God?

God?



France has been a world leader in suppressing Religious Freedoms by forbidding women from wearing scarves in various situations. French politicians have expressed interest in expanding the scope of the Hijab ban.

their faces, as the same verse gives an exception to 'what ordinarily appears'.

As such, the vast majority of Islamic scholars, or *ulema* conclude that women are required to cover their entire bodies and hair with loose-fitting clothing except their face and hands. Men also have to cover their own bodies in front of women, specifically areas such as their bare chest, back and private parts.

Men and women both do not have to cover in front of those from their same sex or children who have not reached the age of puberty. They also are exempted from covering in front of their immediate family, blood relatives (not cousins), parents-in-law, children-in-law and step children.

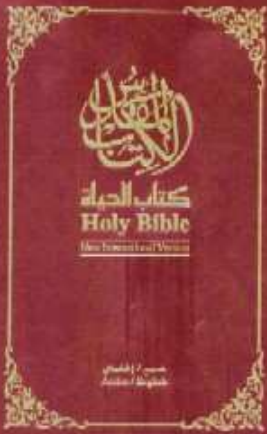
Thus, Hijab refers to a physical dress code for men and women, as well as a code of conduct so that men and women respect one another as human beings and not objects.

manner. Each should not seek to attract the other's attention with what they wear, and also should refrain from focusing on the other's physical attributes regardless of the other's appearance or clothing.

One might ask why both sexes are told to lower their gaze while only women are specifically told "...not to display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear

thereof..." This is due to physical and biological distinctions between the sexes and how they are attracted to one another.

This is evident even in today's society, where shameful sex-related industries cater overwhelmingly to men as opposed to women. However, this does not mean that Islam commands women to wear burqas and abayas that cover everything including



In the Arabic language, "God" is simply pronounced "God". In fact, the Arabic version of the Bible uses "God" as the word for God. Its simply a difference in language, not a difference in belief. Countless Arab, then, Christians and Jews worship "God" just as their counterparts in other countries worship the same God.

For many young Muslim women in America, their persistent faith has been put to the test in these trial times of the 21st century.

It has gone everything from a highly political statement in the West, to a deeply personal religious act, progressing to a requirement in such countries as Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Hijab, a form of modest dress, has become one of the most controversial topics within and outside the Islamic world. The word "Hijab" roots from the Arabic word "hajaba" meaning to hide from view or conceal. Today, the Hijab is defined as the modest covering of head and body for a Muslim woman.

For many young Muslim women in America, their persistent faith has been put to the test in these trial times of the 21st century. It reminds people of past times in the U.S. history when certain groups felt the sting of prejudice and in turn gained strength by calling attention to their ethnic or religious identities, instead of just "blending in". More women today are showing their increased faith in God and their pride in being Muslims, by not only studying the teachings of Islam but also concealing their hair and body. Covering themselves protects the morals of society, the family, and the individual. It is a deterrent for promiscuous behavior and inevitably makes it less interesting for those men who view women as objects. Muslims at times forget that God only wants what is best for them, and that nothing He ordains is without a purpose. He tells us in the Holy Qur'an to say, "... I but follow what is revealed to me from my Lord: This is (nothing but) Light from your Lord, and Guidance, and

Mercy, for any who have faith" (7 : 203).

I was explained the advantages of wearing a Hijab and I knew I needed to start soon. The purpose was there, time was flying, and conquering fears was going to be no easy task. I was well above the age of nine; it was my last year



in high school. There were many that I knew that were grown up and raised to wear a scarf, but there were also many who were not. There were some who even objected to the idea. It was solely my decision, so I decided to set the goal of beginning to wear a scarf when I would come across a new beginning in life; I would start after I graduated from high school.

Along with the many other Muslim women in the U.S., I too wanted to show my strength as a Muslim today, fearing no one but God. There was a day when a Muslim woman approached me with a question that I could not ignore, "Do you care more about what God thinks of you or the students at your high school?" The obvious answer could not be squirmed out of,

so I knew I had to do what I thought was right regardless of what others thought. Just answering the question would not be enough; I had to *act* to show that I knew the answer. Though I would be one of the only two sisters in the midst of 2,000 students wearing a scarf, it was my faith in God that let me stroll down those crowded hallways with my head held up high, not worrying what others thought about my decision. Sure, I received many glances and questions but I realized that that could be used as an opportunity to shed light on the unknown or clear the typical misunderstandings of Islam.

It was an opportunity to show my confidence and strength I had in myself, and I was grateful for it as it opened many new doors into my world. Now as I enter college with the same ratio of Muslims to non-Muslims, I see how it has changed me. The Hijab has become a part of me and who I am as a person. It is not merely a piece of cloth concealing my head and body; it has become my symbol of faith in Islam.

The modesty the Hijab brings is due to the strings it has attached. If done for the true purpose, a line of characters or virtues is embedded into the head and body once they are covered. A woman becomes aware of her surroundings and she is conscious of every step she takes outside of her home.

Representing the religion of Islam is not an easy task, for it begins with small steps in order to reach the end.

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Islamic Information Center (IIC) is a non-profit grassroots organization formed for the purpose of informing the public, mainly through the media, about the true teachings of Islam and beliefs of Muslims.

The mission of Islamic Information Center is to provide an accurate source of Islamic Information and to correct misconceptions about Islam. The Islamic Information Center disseminates information about Islam in accordance with the Divine teachings of the Holy Quran.

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“Judge me by what is IN my head, not what is ON my head.”

In ancient Iran, aristocratic women used to wear Hijab. Women from lower classes did not bother. But when Islam came, it rejected such instances of discrimination. It said that all women must wear the Hijab. In other words, it wanted to honor all women.

Wearing a headdress was a long tradition of European women, a status symbol from the upper classes that attracted the envy of those less privileged than themselves.

Hijab comes from an Arabic word "hajba" meaning to hide from view.

Wearing a Scarf Has Been A Sign of Dignity, Honor, and Respect for Thousands of Years in Many Cultures

Islam invites the faithful to understand the meaning behind the practical rules and external forms of worship. Although Hijab aids the person who wears it by protecting her superficial physical form from becoming a commodity, undesired exposure and sexual manipulation, its true meaning is to show respect for the divine essence within them. Verse 7:189 of the Quran describes human

beings as being created from a single soul. That entity is the spirit of the Almighty. 15:29 *I blew unto him from My Spirit.*

Knowledge of the benefits and inner truth associated with Hijab not only facilitates an inner journey, it also identifies an individual with a broad and ever-growing sisterhood belonging to Islam. Knowing that you are a servant of the Lord and having a culturally useful garment to manifest it complement each other as a form of dignity. Hijab is the state

of people who are present in society, engaged in life and work leading normal lives while at the same time claiming her right to an inward journey with full attention the divine. The word Hijab has been used in various verses of the



Holy Quran including: 42: 51 *No person can speak to the Lord except through revelation from behind a partition (Hijab) or through a messenger by the permission of the Lord.*

The Prophet is addressed thus: 17: 45 *And when you recite the Quran, between you and those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement a Hijab (partition) is established.*

Whenever there is mention of a higher truth beyond the material world, the issue of Hijab arises. In other words, when you have an expensive pearl,

you begin to talk about a shell. The Islamic view is that a human being's essence is priceless and cannot be trivialized by the marketplace or turned into a cheap trinket for just anyone's lust and pleasure.

The true spiritual and divine meaning of Hijab is protection and preservation of humanity's priceless gem namely: *I blew unto him from My Spirit. 15:29 and, of the best stature 95: 4.*

H i j a b does not mean seclusion, but

rather being present in society, while at the same time being free from "all except the Lord." With an entire chapter in the Holy Quran devoted to her example, Mary the mother of Jesus is central to the heart of Islam.

Mary: 17 *And remember in the book when Mary withdrew from her community and settled down in an eastern location and sought a Hijab, (partition) then our spirit appeared before her in the form of a human being.*

After withdrawing from her community and resting in an eastern location away

(in Hijab) from others, Mary (P) then reached the level of understanding the Spirit. She was able to see the essence of a human being *from My Spirit* in the form of a physical human being. Hijab was the preliminary step toward reaching this stage for the Lord to send His spirit down to Mary.

Observing Hijab is a way of having control over the outward journey of the material world where power, consumption, speed and noise can overcome humanity. What is emphasized in Islam is that while a believer is actively present vibrantly serving with total physical and mental abilities, his/her heart and soul are journeying towards God. Although Mary (P) has been chosen as an example in the Holy Quran this status of observing Hijab applies to all believing women.

The Holy Quran mentions some aspects of the prophets and true servants of God who sought to withdraw from the community such as Abraham (P), Moses (P), Mary (P) and the story of the people of the cave (the early Christians). They establish a relationship with the world and its material practices around them from behind a Hijab in which they are in.

6:162 *Say (Abraham) my prayer, my actions, my life and my death is for the Lord of the worlds.*

A Muslim women's Hi-

jab is a symbol of such presence while being absent, and an exercise for this type of mixture and intermingling with the material world. By having contact from within the Hijab, women are able to undertake their social responsibilities while at the same time preserving their beauty and the essence of humanity. Boundaries are set establishing a distance between a world of illusion and darkness and world of truth and light.

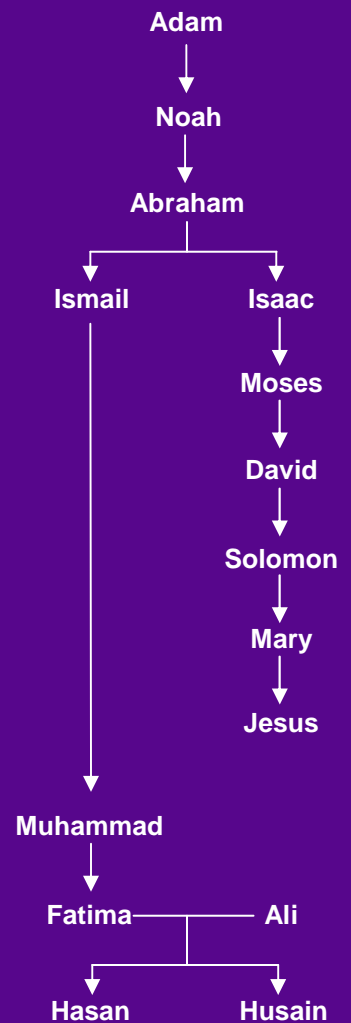
Hijab symbolizes God's glory as the protection of woman's beauty, purity and dignity while she is simultaneously descending in the material world and appearing in the society and community. Divine majesty, awe and glory create a barrier and a Hijab which prevents outsiders from having access to the sacred area.

To men, who tend to manifest more of the glory of the Lord instead of beauty, Islam recommends practicing modesty, softness and beauty in order to reach the level of being a complete human being.

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their chastity since this will lead to their purity.



Before addressing women, the Quran commands men to refrain from lustful and covetous looks towards women outside marriage. The man and woman's true essence is one and the same given that it is defined by its relationship to the core essence of humanness, humanity and the soul. Therefore, both personify divine beauty and glory.



The Ahlul Bayt Muhammad

Fatima
Ali
Hasan
Husain

Prophet Muhammad and his immediate family members are referred to as the "Ahlul Bayt" and hold a special place in the hearts of all Muslims. Their role in Islamic history is remembered with great pride.

The Scarf and a Woman's Identity

The subject of identity seen by many is one of the most important subjects in the world today. Within human history, each one of us has sought to look at, develop, and understand the identities of the people around us in order that we're able to live with human beings in a way which is known as a peaceful coexistence. When looking for an identity, we find that virtually every area of our lives is governed by the individual having an identifier around him. Even at the most trivial level, a passport, a bus pass, or a driver's license, are all forms of identifiers which within our lives today are seen as vital components of our every move.

Innately within a human being, there is a constant search to identify his or herself with something. What that thing is—be it metaphysical or physical in nature—is the constant search for an identity. And among one of the most important identifiers today is the idea of clothing. As an example, there are certain individuals who will not travel unless they have a bag with 'LV' written all over it. Or you find those who have a small badge with the letters of **PRADA**. Because clothing is and has always been a piece of identity for every human being; accordingly, the concept of Hijab is seen today as one of the main identifiers of the world. And therefore, when a person sees a

woman in Hijab, her first identity is that of a Muslim.

In addition to being an identifier for Muslims, Hijab continues to liberate women from the media perception of beauty and using women as a commodity. To be liberated is not doing what you want, when you want to do it; but



rather, in Islam, liberation is engaging in what is right without fearing what others may think. Similarly, control is not putting a piece of cloth on a woman; control is when TV, movies, and magazines tell people what to wear and how to be attractive. When a woman spends thousands of dollars to look skinny and live by standards of fashion designed by men—a patriarchal society will undoubtedly continue to exist among us. It is at this level that Hijab is a threat to consumerism because it forces an individual to look into

her soul rather than striving for a narrow-minded image of what she should look like according to the standards of men.

Hijab, like every other concept in Islam, has a two-sided aspect—physical and spiritual. A head covering in itself is not sufficient in acquiring modesty and therefore, an attractive mannerism and humbleness are vital when attempting to liberate oneself from the media norms of sex, violence, and drugs.

In this manner, the honor of representing Islam through this garb holds a great responsibility. In a world where vulgarity and arrogance are at their peak, the uniformed need to be modest both physically and socially is what gives Hijab the fundamental need in societies today. Though interestingly, in many societies Hijab is continuously portrayed as a means of oppression through the concealment of hair and skin. On the contrary, the concept of this covering is not an entity to hide a woman; it is to expose her. Because of her garb, when she is disclosed as a Muslim, her modest demeanor becomes a teacher for society as to what is morality and ethics. And it is this physical covering working as an equilibrium with the social humbleness taught by Islamic values that demonstrate the essence of what morality is.

