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Investigating the Importance of Wearing *Hijab* by Muslim Women

ABSTRACT: In the West, many regard the “hijab” (veil) as a sign of oppression, with women forced to wear the garments by men. To throw light on this important issue, the current study focuses on the importance of wearing “hijab” by Muslim women according to “Al-Qur’an” (holy book of Islam) and “Al-Sunna” (Prophet Muhammad Tradition). It will also look at the concept, the place, and the reasons why Allah SWT (Subhanahu Wa-Ta’ala or God Almighty) ordered Muslim women to wear “hijab”. The study is theoretical in nature and qualitative approach, the existing available literatures, and research work related to the topic of “hijab” will be reviewed. The study reveals that, in the seventh century, Arabia was existed as a patriarchy that objectified women and deemed them to be worthy of some respect based on their lineage and fortune. Only upper-class women wore “hijab” then. The “hijab”, therefore, worn by them at that point was one step further taken by Islam to erase the social hierarchy implemented on women. It also revealed that there are many importance of “hijab”, such as: to obey God and to be known as respectable women. It also “hijab” frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being valued for their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. The paper also notes that in many dry and hot countries, like in the Middle East for example, “hijab” helps women keep their hair cleaner for a longer time by protecting it from wind and dirt. It also protects the hair, as well as the face, from the burning rays of the sun.

KEY WORD: Importance of Hijab; Muslim Women; Al-Qur’an and Al-Sunna; Islamic Veil.

ABSTRAKSI: “Investigasi Pentingnya Mengenakan Jilbab oleh Wanita Muslim”. Di negara-negara Barat, banyak yang menganggap jilbab sebagai tanda penindasan, dengan wanita dipaksa untuk mengenakan pakaian tertutup oleh pria. Untuk menyoroti masalah penting tersebut, penelitian ini berfokus pada pentingnya mengenakan jilbab oleh wanita Muslim menurut Al-Qur’an dan Al-Sunnah. Ini juga akan melihat konsep, tempat, dan alasan mengapa Allah SWT (Subhanahu Wa-Ta’ala) memerintahkan wanita Muslim untuk mengenakan jilbab. Studi ini bersifat teoritis dan pendekatan kualitatif, literatur yang tersedia, dan tindakan penelitian terkait dengan topik jilbab akan ditinjau. Studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa, pada abad ketujuh, negeri Arab adalah sebagai patriarki yang mengobjektifkan perempuan dan menganggap mereka layak dihargai berdasarkan garis keturunan dan kekayaan mereka. Hanya wanita kelas atas yang memakai jilbab saat itu. Jilbab, oleh karenanya, dikenakan oleh mereka pada saat itu adalah satu langkah lebih lanjut yang diambil oleh Islam untuk menghapus hierarki sosial yang diterapkan pada perempuan. Ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa ada banyak pentingnya jilbab, seperti: untuk taat kepada Tuhan dan dikenal sebagai wanita terhormat. Juga, jilbab membebaskan wanita dari anggapan sebagai objek hasrat seksual, atau dihargai karena penampilan mereka, atau bentuk tubuh daripada pikiran dan kecerdasan mereka. Makalah ini juga mencatat bahwa di banyak negara yang beriklim kering dan panas, seperti di negara-negara Timur Tengah contohnya, jilbab membantu wanita menjaga rambut mereka lebih tahan lama dengan melindunginya dari angin dan kotoran. Ini juga melindungi rambut, serta wajah, dari sinar matahari yang membakar.

KATA KUNCI: Pentingnya Jilbab; Wanita Muslim; Al-Qur’an dan Al-Sunnah; Jilbab Islami.

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INTRODUCTION

Hijab (Veil) is one of the most misunderstood, most misused, and most attacked subjects in the world at the moment. Even, no subject seems to receive more attention as an issue unique to Muslims than that of women's dress. Muslims and non-Muslims alike dwell on this issue, using women's appearances to categorize "others" in an effort to understand them. In some instances, the dress of the Muslim woman ends up meaning more to "others" than it does to the woman herself with often far-reaching political and social implications (Mahdi, 2008; Soltani, 2016; and Aytar & Bodor, 2019).

Even, among Muslims, the division and intolerance expressed regarding women's dress is one factor that impedes our growth and development as a meaningful presence in the world today. It also takes the center stage, whenever there is battle between truth and falsehood. It has always been a sensitive issue, but it recently received a great deal of attention, due to legislation and proposed legislation in several European countries, e.g. France or Germany, that ban its use in government institutions as well as educational institutions (Berger ed., 2013; Nistor, 2017; and Utami *et al.*, 2019).

For women, who wear *Hijab* out of religious conviction, the truth is obvious and indisputable. For others with limited knowledge or understanding of *Hijab*, it can be confusing. It is important to understand several points related to *Hijab* and modesty. The first point is that modesty had been the norm in history, up until the later part of the past century. If one were to peruse historical books of various times and ages, one would find

modest covering of women in almost every society (Elver, 2012; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Sheen, Yekani & Jordan, 2018).

The other point is that modesty is a component in several world religions, particularly in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It may come as a surprise to many that it was not Islam that invented modesty or *Hijab*. This existed in the laws of religions revealed before Islam, and remnants can still be found in the altered books of those faiths. With the final message given to Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him), the order for *Hijab* was confirmed and finalized. This is a reality since all of those revelations came from the same source, Allah (Mancini, 2012; Tariq-Munir, 2014; Al-Qurtuby, 2016; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Mary, mother of Jesus, was rarely depicted without a traditional head-covering and one would assume her to be Muslim which, of course, she was. One can still find both Jewish and Christian women today, who cover in much the same way as Muslim women. It is one of the common bonds that are shared by these three major faiths (Dossani, 2013; Al-Qurtuby, 2016; and Mohamed, 2019).

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to at least develop a basic understanding of this issue from the point of view of the *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam) and *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad). By using qualitative approach, historical method, and literature review (Tan, 2015; Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2019; and Snyder, 2019), this paper will analyse descriptively pertaining: (1) *What is Hijab?*; (2) *Hijab in the Glorious Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith*; (3) *Why Allah Ordered Muslim Women to Wear*

Hijab?; (4) *Criteria for Hijab*; and (5) *the Importance of Hijab*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is Hijab? It is pertinent to understand the word *Hijab* (Veil) before going in to further details. The English word *Scarf* and the Arabic term *Hijab* have become interchangeable; it is worth noting that *Hijab* is more than just a scarf. It is a term that covers a variety of clothing, including scarves, but also a variety of different dress styles from around the world. Many have cultural connotations, such as the Pakistani *Shalwar Khamis* or the Afghani *Burqa*, but whenever a Muslim woman covers “her adornment”, she is said to be wearing *Hijab* (Al-Ghalayini, 1960; Balogun, 2003; Rahman, 2012; Bhowon & Bundhoo, 2016; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

However, the literal meaning of *Hijab* is “a veil”, “curtain”, “partition” or “separation”. In a meta-physical sense, *Hijab* means illusion, or refers to the illusory aspect of creation. The most popular and common meaning of *Hijab*, today, is the veil in dressing for women. It refers to a certain standard of modest dress for women (Stowasser, 1994; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Rahardjo, 2019).

The usual definition of modest dress according to the legal systems does not actually require covering everything, except the face and hands in public; this, at least, is the practice which originated in the Middle East. While *Hijab* means “cover”, “drape”, or “partition”; the word *Khimar* means veil covering the head, and the word *Litham* or *Niqab* means veil covering the lower face up to the eyes. The general term *Hijab*, in the present day world, refers to the covering of the face by women (Glasse, 1989; Fayyaz, 2015; and

Jackson & Monk-Turner, 2015).

Islam is known as a religion concerned with community cohesion and moral boundaries; and, therefore, *Hijab* is a way of ensuring that the moral boundaries between unrelated men and women are respected. In this sense, the term *Hijab* encompasses more than a scarf and more than a dress code. It is a term that denotes modest dressing and modest behavior. For instance, if a Muslim woman was wearing a *Hijab*, but at the same time using bad language, she would not be fulfilling the requirements of *Hijab*. It stands for modesty (Shaaban, 1995; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Hamdah, 2017).

Hijab in the Glorious Al-Qur'an and Al-Hadith. The glorious *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam) lays down the principle of the law of modesty. In glorious *Al-Qur'an*, chapter 24 (*An-Nur*), verses 30 and 31, modesty is enjoined upon both Muslim men and Muslim women (Ali, 1989; Nasr, 2004; and Sulaiman, 2016a). In his book entitled *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Yusuf A. Ali (1989), then, translated and stated as follows:

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: and they should not display beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they must draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, or their men, or their slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their ornaments (Ali, 1989).

The following conclusions may be made on the basis of the above-cited

verses. Firstly, the *Al-Qur'anic* injunctions enjoining the believers to lower their gaze and behave modestly applied to both Muslim men and women, and not Muslim women alone (Ad-Din, 1928; Hassan, 1995; and Boulanouar, 2006).

Secondly, Muslim women are enjoined to “draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty”, except in the presence of their husbands, other women, children, eunuchs, and those men who are so closely related to them that they are not allowed to marry them. Although a self-conscious exhibition of one’s *zinat* (which means “that which appears to be beautiful” or “that which is used for embellishment or adornment”) is forbidden, the glorious *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam) makes it clear that what a woman wears ordinarily is permissible. Another interpretation of this part of the passage is that if the display of *zinat* is unintentional or accidental, it does not violate the law of modesty (Ad-Din, 1928; Hassan, 1995 and 2002; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Thirdly, although Muslim women may wear ornaments, they should not walk in a manner intended to cause their ornaments to jingle, and thus attract the attention of others (Ad-Din, 1928; Hassan, 1995 and 2002; and Hussain, 2016).

One of the verses in the *Al-Qur'an* protects a woman’s fundamental rights. Verse (*Ayah*) 59 from the Chapter (*Surah*) *Al-Ahzab* in the *Al-Qur'an* reads – as translated and cited in Syed Abu Ala Maudoodi (1972) and Muhammad Asad (1984) – following here:

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when outside): that they should be known (as such) and not molested (Maudoodi, 1972; and Asad, 1984).

In this verse, Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) orders His Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him) to order his wives, his daughters, and all believing women that when they want to go out, they should cover, with a full veil, their bodies, their heads, and their necks. The verse fragment, “to draw their *Jalalib*” talks about the *Jilbab* (Maudoodi, 1972; Asad, 1984; Sulaiman, 2016a; and El-Malibary, 2019).

So, what is a *Jilbab*? It is a dress that covers the whole body of a woman from the top to the bottom. It is worn over the normal clothes. This is clear from the report of Imam Muslim, or his full name was Muslim bin al-Hujjaj bin Muslim al-Qushairi (1393 AH [*Anno Hijriah*]), saying that Um Attyah RA (*Radhiallau Anh* or God Bless Her) said as follows:

Oh messenger of Allah, one of us may not have a “Jilbab”. The prophet said, let her sister lend her one of her “Jilbabs” to wear (al-Qushairi, 1393 AH).

What does “to draw their *Jalalib*” mean? The scholars among the companions and others had different opinions. Imam Al-Hasan said, to cover half her face; Ibn Abbas and Qatadah said, to put it over her forehead and turn it around to cover her nose, even if she still shows her eyes, but it covers the chest and the majority of the face. Others said, to cover all her head and her face except for one eye (*cf* WAMY, 1998; Hanbal, n.y.; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

The *Hijab*, being obligatory, upon the Muslim women came in two places in the *Al-Qur'an*: the one that just talked about from *Surah* (Chapter) *Al-Ahzab*; and in another place Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) says in the *Al-Qur'an*, Chapter 24, Verse 31, as following here:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, and protect their private parts and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent, and to draw their veils all over their "Juyub" and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women, or their right hand possessions, or the "Tabi' in" among men who do not have desire, or children who are not aware of the nakedness of women.

And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful (cited in Ali, 1989).

This verse came with many details that are related to the Muslim woman and in what situation she has to wear *Hijab* (Veil) and what situations she does not have to wear it and other issues that we will clarify:

Firstly, this verse orders the believing women to lower their gaze; it is not allowed for them to look at men with a look of desire, and if it happens that she sees what is not allowed for her to see, then, she should not keep looking. The first look, which is unintentional and completely casual, does not carry any sin (Akhter & Munir, 2017; Nisa, 2017; and Nistor, 2017).

This applies to men also, because Allah orders men in the verse before this verse, what can be translated as, "(O' Mohammed) tell the believing women to lower their gaze [...]" Imam Muslim, or his full name was Muslim bin al-Hujjaj bin Muslim al-Qushairi (1393 AH [*Anno Hijriah*]), reported that Jarir RA (*Radhiallau Anh* or God Bless Him) said, "I asked the Prophet (SAW) about the unintentional casual look, he ordered me to look away" (al-Qushairi, 1393 AH).

Secondly, this verse also ordered the believing women to protect their private parts from *zina* and nakedness (Hoffman-

Ladd, 1987; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Lamrabet, 2019).

Thirdly, this verse also ordered the believing women not to show their *zeenah* or adornments, except for what naturally may be shown. The scholars among the companions and other differed about what is meant in this exception (Ramli & Elatrash, 2017; Wati & Saputra, 2018; and Lamrabet, 2019).

Ibn Mas'oud said that it is the outside clothes. Imams Al-Hasan al-Basri, Ibn Seereen, and Ibrahim An-Nakha'i adopted the same opinion as Ibn Mas'oud. Sa'eed Ibn Jubair said that it is the outside clothes and the face. Ibn Abbas, Ibn Omar, Ae'shah, Ata', Al-Awza'i said, it is the face and the two hands. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah said, it is the eye outline, the coloring of the hands and the ring. Ibn Atiah said, it is what shows up in necessity (cf Al-Tirmidhi, 1352 AH; Hasan, 2011; and Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b).

The majority of scholars, such as: Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Ash-Shafi'i, and Imam Al-Awza'I, said that what is meant with the exception is the face and the hands. They based their opinion on the evidence like the one reported by Imam Abu Da'ud, or his full name was Sulaiman bin al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani Abu Da'ud (1372 AH [*Anno Hijriah*]), on the authority of Ae'ishah RA that said, "*Asma', the daughter of Abu Bakr, came to the Prophet wearing thin clothes*". When the Prophet saw that, he looked away and said, "*Oh Asma', if a woman reaches puberty, she should not show anything from her, except this and he pointed to his face and his hand*" (cf Da'ud, 1372 AH; Hasan, 2011; and Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b).

Imam Abu Hanifah added the feet to this exception, because it is more difficult

to cover the feet than the hands, and many of the women of *At-Tabi'in* did not cover their feet when they worked in the country (cf El-Guindi, 1999; Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b; and Aslan, Hermansen & Medeni eds., 2013).

Fourthly, this verse also ordered the believing women to place their head cover on their necks. Ibn Jubair said, Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) ordered them to cover their necks and their chest, so that nothing will be shown. The women in those days used to cover their heads and let the cover go down on their backs, like they used to do during the days of *al-Jahiliyah* (pre-Islamic period), this way their necks and some of their chests used to be shown (cf Hasan, 2011; Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b; and Wati & Saputra, 2018).

Imam Al-Bukhari, or his full name was Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari (n.y.), and other scholars, reported that Aisha RA said, "*May Allah bestows His mercy on early emigrant woman, when Allah reveled: And to draw their veils all over 'Juyubihinna', they tore their woolen dress and they used it as 'Khimar'*" (cf Al-Bukhari, n.y.; Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b; and Noorwali, 2020).

Fifthly, this verse forbade the believing women not to stomp with their feet on the ground when they walk, so that they do not sound off their bracelets if they wear them (Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b; Muhtarom, 2015; and Noorwali, 2020).

Sixthly, this verse finished with an order to the believers men and women to repent to Allah SWT that leads to success and happiness in this life and the Hereafter (Sulaiman, 2011 and 2017b; Wati & Saputra, 2018; and Noorwali, 2020).

Therefore, without a doubt, God in His

wisdom advises the believers to dress and behave in a way that elevates their status, both in this life and the Hereafter. Most Muslims do not view modest dress as an imposition meant to oppress either women or men. Indeed, many women who voluntarily wear *Hijab* (Veil) actually feel liberated: free from society's rules about women's looks, free from being slaves to fashion, free to reserve their beauty for their husbands, and so on (Al-Ghalayini, 1960; Slininger, 2014; and Sulaiman, 2016b and 2017b).

Why Allah Ordered Muslim Women to Wear Hijab? This question comes many times from Muslims and Non-Muslims alike. Allah is the Creator, the One who created men and women. He is the One who knows what's good or bad for His creation in this life and the Hereafter. Muslims believe that Allah is the wisest and behind all of His commands there are much great wisdom. The human mind may reach some of this wisdom and others times may not reach it. Regardless of whether or not a Muslim reaches this wisdom, the Muslim must follow and obey the commands of Allah. This is the true meaning of *Ibadah* (Islamic obligation), which is total submission to Allah's commands in all aspects of our lives, big or small. This answer can be used to answer other similar questions about the commands of Allah in life (Muhtarom, 2015; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Aytar & Bodor, 2019).

It narrated Thabit ibn Qays: A woman called Umm Khallad came to the Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him), while she was veiled. She was searching for her son, who had been killed (in the battle). Some of the Companions of the Prophet

Muhammad SAW said to her: “*You have come here asking for your son, while veiling your face?*” She said: “*If I am afflicted with the loss of my son, I shall not suffer the loss of my modesty*”. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said: “*You will get the reward of two martyrs for your son*”. She asked: “*Why is that so, oh Prophet of Allah?*” He replied: “*Because the people of the Book have killed him*” (Da’ud, 1372 AH:14/2482; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Jiyad, 2018).

In another *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), Yahya related to me, namely Sulaiman bin al-Ash’ath al-Sijistani Abu Da’ud (1372 AH [Anno Hijriah]), from Malik from Hisham ibn Urwa that Fatima bint al-Mundhir (*Radhiallaahu Anh* or God Bless Him) said that we used to veil our faces, when we were in Ihram in the company of Asma bint Abi Bakr As-Siddiq RA. This again proves that not only the wives of Rasulullah SAW wore the *Niqaab* and that even though in *Ihram* women are not supposed to wear *Niqaab*, but if men are there they still have to cover the face (cf Da’ud, 1372 AH; Ad-Daqr, 1998; and Haddad, 2007).¹

Another *Al-Hadith* narrated that Aisha, *Ummul Mu’minin* RA, who said that the riders would pass us, while we were with the Messenger of Allah SAW. When they got close to us, we would draw our outer cloak from our heads over our faces. When they passed by, we would uncover our faces (cf Da’ud, 1372 AH; Haddad, 2007; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Also, it was recorded by Ibn Majahi

(1371 AH) and Sulaiman bin al-Ash’ath al-Sijistani Abu Da’ud (1372 AH) narrated, and cited also by other scholars, that Al-Albani stated that it was *hasan* (right), due to corroborating evidence. Also, in a narration from Asma, who was not the wife of Rasulullah SAW, covered her face at all times in front of men (Majahi, 1371 AH; Da’ud, 1372 AH; Haddad, 2007; Ghani, 2011; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Shaikh Ibn Uthaimin, in his *tafseer* (interpretation) of this *Al-Hadith*, explains that this *Al-Hadith* indicates the compulsion of the concealing of the faces as an order of *Shari’ah* (Islamic law), because during the *Ihram* (sacred dress of Muslim pilgrims) it is *wajib* (compulsory) NOT to wear the *Niqaab* (a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear). So, if it was only *mustahab* (recommended) to cover the face then Aisha and Asma RA would have taken the *wajib* over the *mustahab*. It is well known by the *Ullima* (Islamic scholars) that a *wajib* can only be left, because of something that is also *wajib* or *fardh*. So, Aisha and Asma RA covering the face, even in *Ihram* in the presence of strange (*ghair mahraam*) men shows that they understood this to be an act that was *wajib* or *fardh* or they would not have covered the face in *Ihram* (Ghani, 2011; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Ramli & Elatrash, 2017).

In *Sahih* (Authentic) Al-Bukhari, or his full name wa Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari (n.y.), in Volume 1, Book 8/347, it was narrated by Um ‘Atiya RA that we were ordered by the Prophet Muhammad SAW to bring out our menstruating women and veiled women in the religious gatherings and invocation of Muslims on the two *Eid* festivals. These

¹See also, for example, “How Islamic is the Islamic Veil: A Fatwa on Furdah” in *New Age Islam*, on 22 June 2009. Available online also at: <https://www.newageislam.com/islamic-ideology/a-fatwa-on-purdah/how-islamic-is-the-islamic-veil-a-fatwa-on-purdah/d/1494> [accessed in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria: October 1, 2019].

menstruating women were to keep away from their *Musalla* (little mosque). A woman asked, “*O Allah’s Apostle! What about one who does not have a veil (the veil is the complete cover with only one eye or two eyes showing)?*”. He said, “*Let her share the veil of her companion*” (cf Al-Bukhari, n.y.; Ghani, 2011; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Wati & Saputra, 2018).

Shaykh Muhammad bin Saalih al-Uthaymeen (1421 AH), in *tafseer* of this *Al-Hadith*, explained that this *Al-Hadith* proves that the general norm amongst the women of the *Sahaba* (Companion of Prophet Muhammad) RA was that no woman would go out of her home without a cloak, fully concealed, and if she did not possess a veil, then it was not possible for her to go out. It was for this reason that when the Prophet Muhammad SAW ordered them to go to the place for *Eid Salah* (Praying in the Last Pasting Month), they mentioned this hindrance (cf al-Uthaymeen, 1421 AH; Farook, 2018; and Abdul-Wahid, 2019).

As a result, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said that someone should lend her a veil, but did not say they could go out without it. If the Prophet Muhammad SAW did not allow women to go to a place, like the *Eid Salah*, which has been ordered by *Shari’ah* for women and men alike, then how can people let women to out to market places and shopping centers without where there is open intermingling of the sexes, without a veil (Katz, 2014; Farook, 2018; and Abdul-Wahid, 2019).

Criteria for Hijab. Point-1, there are basically 6 (six) criteria for observing *Hijab* (Veil), as following here:

A. Extent. The extent of body that should be covered is different for men and women. The extent of covering obligatory

on the male is to cover the body at least from navel to the knees. For women, the extent of covering obligatory is to cover the complete body, except the face and hands up to the wrists. If they wish to, they can cover even these (Ad-Din, 1928; al-Ghazali, 1990; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Some scholars are of the view that face should also be covered. Others view the face covering as an optional (references are available to explain this); however, it is up to an individual to adopt whichever view he/she chose to, both views are correct. This is the only criteria which is different for men and women. All other five criteria are same for men and women (Hasan, 2011; Slininger, 2014; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

B. The Clothes Worn Should Be Loose and Should Not Reveal the Figure. This criterion, though same for both men and women, yet is more critical for women. We can see in abundance nowadays, women wearing revealing dresses (Aziz, 2010; Hasan, 2011; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

The Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him) strictly condemned this. Refer to following *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) – based on the *Sahih* (Authentic) Muslim, Volume 5:5582(2128) – it was narrated that Abu Hurairah RA (*Radhiallaahu Anh* or God Bless Him) said that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said as follows:

There are two types of the people of Hell, whom I have not seen: People having whips, like the tails of cows, with which they strike the people; and women who are clothed yet naked, i.e. scantily dressed, with their heads like the humps of camels leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise nor smell its “Jannah”’s fragrance, and its fragrance may be detected from such and such distance (cited in al-Qushairi, 1393 AH).

C. The Clothes Worn Should Not Be Transparent Such that One Can See Through. This criterion, again, though same for both men and women, yet it is more crucial for women. The fact is that woman is such a beautiful, delicate, and attractive creation of Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) that it needs to be guarded carefully. Hence, the criterion becomes more crucial, when it comes to women. Nevertheless, let us study the following *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) to understand the importance of not wearing transparent clothes (Hanbal, 1955; Nisa, 2017; and Ramli & Elatrash, 2017).

It was narrated from Dihyah bin Khalifah al-Kalbi that he said that some pieces of *Qabati* (fine Egyptian linen) were brought to the Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him) and he gave me a piece of it and said: “Cut it into two and make a ‘Qamis’ with one, and give the other to your wife to cover herself with it”. When he turned away, he said, “Tell your wife to put a cloth under it, so that it cannot be seen through” (cf Da’ud, 1372 AH; Granja, 2013; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

D. The Clothes Worn Should Not Be So Glamorous as to Attract Opposite Sex. This is applicable to both men and women equally (cf Boulanouar, 2006; Kusciati, Susilorini & Febriary, 2013; and Sulaiman, 2016a and 2017a).

E. The Clothes Worn Should Not Resemble that of Opposite Sex. This is again a very big concern rising rapidly in our society. Women are mostly attired in men’s dressings, such as jeans, trousers, etc. Some sections of males are also adopting cross-dressing, such males are now in abundance who assume styles of females.

The Prophet Muhammad SAW has cursed such persons. Refer to following *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) on this matter, Abu Da’ud, or his full name was Sulaiman bin al-Ash’ath al-Sijistani Abu Da’ud (1372 AH [*Anno Hijriah*]), said as follows:

It was narrated that Abu Hurairah RA said that the Prophet SAW cursed men, who wear women’s clothes and women who wear men’s clothes (Da’ud, 1372 AH, Volume 4, *Al-Hadith*:4098).

F. The Clothes Worn Should Not Resemble that of the Unbelievers. In this context, they should not wear clothes that are specifically symbolic of un-believer’s religion, like *dhoti* or *saffron* coloured costume or any other such dress, etc. (Hasan, 2011; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Abdul-Wahid, 2017).

Point-1, List of people in front of whom a woman is allowed to be without *Hijab* (Veil). *Al-Qur’an* (holy book of Islam), in chapter 24, verse 31, stated as follows:

And tell the believing women to lower their “gaze” (from looking at forbidden things) and protect their private parts and not to show their adornment (zinat), except only that is apparent, and to draw their veils all over their bodies, and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers, or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons, or their women (sisters in Islam), or female slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O’ believers, that you may be successful (cited in Ali, 1989; and Rizvi, 2018).

This verse confirms the list of *Mahrams* (generally a person whom one cannot marry). In front of these, a woman needs

not wear *Abaya* (the outer cloth used for *Hijab* or Veil) on her body and the head scarf. However, she still has to maintain the *Satr* (the parts of the human body which are obligatory on the believers to be hidden from everyone else, except his/her partner in marriage), i.e. cover her bosom and/or other body curves with any big cloth, like shawl etc. When among others (other than these people), every Muslim women has to observe *Hijab*, i.e. she has to cover her body and head by a big *Shawl* or *Abaya* over her inner clothes (Packard, 1993; Hussain, 2016; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Point-2, Exemption for some. Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) has ordered *Hijab* (Veil), due to a certain reason. And He exempts some. Let us see for ourselves. In the *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam), chapter 24, verse 60, Allah SWT said as follows:

And as for women past child-bearing, who do not expect wed-lock, it is no sin on them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show their adornment. But to refrain is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower (cited in Rizvi, 2018).

This verse indicates that women, who fall in this category, have a choice of not wearing their *Abayas* or *Burkhas* (an enveloping outer covering/garment worn by Muslim women to cover themselves in the presence of men other than the husband/father of the woman), when they go out. However, it does not in any way permit them to go out in indecent dresses, they have still to guard their adornment. Some people argue: *Decent clothing is what "Hijab" (Veil) refers to. What is the use of this "Abaya", or extra clothing over the main clothes?* (Mutahari, 1981; Tariq-Munir, 2014; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

This beautiful verse answers this

question also. It is clearly stated that Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) allows women past certain age to discard their outer clothing i.e. *Abaya* or *Burkha* etc. Therefore, it is mandatory that the woman, who observes *Hijab*, she wears an outer clothing like *Abaya* or a *Burkha* etc. That is what *Hijab* asks for (Waseem, 2015; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Bhuiyan, 2018).

Point-3, No *purdah* among husband and wife. Allah SWT has created this exceptional relation, where a woman and man have no *hijab* between them. It is clearly mentioned in glorious *Al-Qur'an*, chapter 2, verse 187: "They are *libas* (i.e. body cover, screen, dress) for you and you are the same for them" (Sulaiman, 2016a; Wheeler, 2017; and El-Malibary, 2019).

All these references from the *Al-Qur'an* and authentic *Al-Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW give a beautiful, meaningful, and clear explanation of requirements of *Hijab*, both for men and women (Al-Khayat, 2003; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Rashid, 2017).

The Importance of Hijab. The majority of Muslim women wear *Hijab* (Veil), to obey God, and to be known as respectable women, as stated in the *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam), chapter 33, verse 59 (*cf* Wadud, 1999 and 2000; Muhtarom, 2015; and Sulaiman, 2016a). However, in the last 30 years, *Hijab* has emerged as a sign of Islamic consciousness. Many women see wearing the *Hijab* as indicative of their desire to be part of an Islamic revival, especially in countries where the practice of Islam is discouraged or even forbidden (Muhammad, 2010; Hassan & Harun, 2016; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

While those who seek to ban *Hijab* refer to it as a symbol of gender based repression, the women who choose to don

a scarf, or to wear *Hijab*, in the broadest sense of the word, do so by making personal decisions and independent choices. They view it as a right and not a burden. Nor do these women regard *Hijab* as a sign of oppression. Women, who wear *Hijab*, often describe themselves as being “set free” from society’s unrealistic fashion culture (Karwai, 2006; Aziz, 2010; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Hijab frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being valued for their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect. No longer slave to consumerism, *Hijab* liberates women from the need to conform to unrealistic stereotypes and images dictated by the media (Smith, 1984; Sulaiman, 2011; and Stacey, 2019).

Women wearing *Hijab* have expressed that dressing modestly and covering their hair, minimize sexual harassment in the workplace. The aura of privacy created by *Hijab* is indicative of the great value Islam places upon women (Doi, 1994; ITE, 2002; and Stacey, 2019).

Besides the above mentioned six criteria of clothing, *Hijab* also includes moral conduct, behaviour, attitude, and intention of the individual. *Hijab* of clothing has to be accompanied by *Hijab* of eyes, *Hijab* of heart, *Hijab* of tongue, *Hijab* of thoughts, and *Hijab* of intentions. And this aspect is so important, when it comes to women that all the above mentioned *Hijabs* (of heart, eyes etc.) come in to play (Jackson & Monk-Turner, 2015; Shakona *et al.*, 2015; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

How? Here is one example: Suppose two sisters are twins, equally beautiful, and they are walking down a street. One of them is in *Hijab*, while other one is in

a mini skirt or a tight jeans or any other revealing dress. If a hooligan faces them, whom will he tease? Every listener should ask himself/herself. Naturally, he will tease the scantily clad girl. This shows that the revealing dress will act as an invitation for the hooligans (Doi, 1983; Shiqqa, 1990; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

This is the importance of *Hijab*. The glorious *Al-Qur’an* has laid down this requirement to help women, to save them from molestation, and to guard their modesty. But what a pity; present day woman will do anything to fight in favour of wearing, such dresses and abandoning *Hijab*. And, the husbands feel a great pride and honour, if their women are attired in Western clothing. On the contrary, they feel a bit ashamed of ensuring that their women observe *Hijab* (Sulaiman, 2006; Hoyne, 2010; and Aslan, Hermansen & Medeni eds., 2013).

Also, according to Amina Wadud (1999 and 2000), and other scholars, that God is very fair to women; and uses the *Al-Qur’an* to prove their argument by explains that God has made it clear that he would favor one human over the other based only on the level of *Taqwa* (Piety or God-Fearing), each one possesses. They noted that many of the reforms implemented by Islam were created for the benefit of women, and not men, as a result of the existing and rocentric norm, which had already provided for the male’s needs and wants. They pointed also out that Islam in its core aims to provide its followers with equity rather than equality, a base for a more just form of living and human interaction (*cf* Wadud, 1999 and 2000; Wati & Saputra, 2018; and Maham & Bhatti, 2019).

For instance, in the seventh century, Arabia was far from an ideal society. It

existed as a patriarchy that objectified women and deemed them to be worthy of some respect based on their lineage and fortune. According to Leila Ahmed (1992), and other scholars, that only upper-class women wore *Hijab* in pre-Islamic Middle East. It was a means to differentiate between “respectable” women, and women who were considered publicly available; thus, were not allowed to wear the *Hijab* (Ahmed, 1992; Tariq-Munir, 2014; and Hwaij, 2018).

During the life of Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or Peace be Upon Him) only his wives were required by God to wear the *Hijab*. Because Muslims consider the deeds of Prophet Muhammad to be *Sunnah* (recommended, meaning something that one deserves a reward in the next life for doing), *Hijab* along with the *Jilbab* (a long dress for men) is considered by many Muslims to be part of the *Sunnah* (An-Nasāi, 1981; Ramadan, 2007; and Musa, 2008).

The *Hijab*, therefore, worn by all Muslim women at that point was one step further taken by Islam to erase the social hierarchy implemented on women by the social system of the pre-Islamic era. The connection between the history of *Hijab* provided by Leila Ahmed (1992) and the exegesis of the *Al-Qur'an* by Amina Wadud (1999 and 2000) showed how equity was achieved through *Hijab* during that time period. Nearly 1440 years have passed since Islam instituted the wearing of the *Hijab*, yet it is a practice that is still very much alive and is adopted by many Muslim women around the world (*cf* Ahmed, 1992; Wadud, 1999 and 2000; and Sulaiman, 2016a).

Spirituality, Muslims rely on both the *Al-Qur'an* and the *Al-Sunnah* (tradition

of Prophet Muhammad) to guide their life. They abide by the teachings of the *Al-Qur'an* and follow the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad SAW in his actions and *Al-Hadith* (words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad). Consequently, many Muslim women embrace the veiling act adopted by the wives of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in submission to God's command, as a way for them to express their own surrender to God by pursuing a similar lifestyle to that of the Prophet and his wives. In doing so, they feel closer to God and spiritually more satisfied (Sulaiman, 2006; Musa, 2008; and Andrabi, 2011).

According to Abu Hwaij Oula (2012), and other scholars, some argue that the *Hijab* in this day and age creates many difficulties for women, especially in the Western world. They wonder why a woman would sacrifice her own comfort and convenience by wearing *Hijab*, so that she shows submission to God. His answer is one word and that is “love” (Oula, 2012; Hwaij, 2018; and Killian, 2019).

Still, according to Abu Hwaij Oula (2012), and other scholars, when one loves, one is bound to sacrifice almost anything in order to achieve a higher and superior spiritual connection with the loved one, be it a human or God. They, equally, narrated a story of one of friends who wears *Hijab* once told that wearing the *Hijab* not only provided her with inner peace and power, but was also reflected in her health and mental stability (Oula, 2012; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Hwaij, 2018).

The Muslim woman found that once she began wearing *Hijab*, she felt emotionally healthier and emphasized her point by letting them know the depression

that she used to suffer from have almost ceased to occur. But, *Hijab* has outer benefits in addition to inner benefits (Fayyaz, 2015; Sulaiman, 2016a and 2017a; and Aytar & Bodor, 2019).

Finally, it is important to point out that *Hijab* has many benefits for the hair and face. In many dry and hot countries, like in Middle East for example, *Hijab* helps women keep their hair cleaner for a longer time by protecting it from wind and dirt. It also protects the hair, as well as the face, from the burning rays of the sun (Oula, 2012; Sulaiman, 2016a; and Killian, 2019).

CONCLUSION ²

This study focused on the importance of wearing *Hijab* (Veil) by Muslim women according to *Al-Qur'an* (holy book of Islam) and *Al-Sunna* (tradition of Prophet Muhammad). To throw light on this important issue, it was looked at the concept, the place, and the reasons why Allah SWT (*Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* or God Almighty) ordered Muslim women to wear *Hijab*. The paper revealed that, in the West, many regard the *Hijab* as a sign of oppression, with women forced to wear the garments by men.

It also revealed that, in the seventh century, Arabia was existed as a patriarchy

that objectified women and deemed them to be worthy of some respect based on their lineage and fortune. Only upper-class women wore *Hijab* then. The *Hijab*, therefore, worn by them at that point was one step further taken by Islam to erase the social hierarchy implemented on women. According to our opinion also, there are many importance of *Hijab*, such as: to obey God and to be known as respectable women. It also, *Hijab* frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire, or from being valued for their looks, or body shape rather than their minds and intellect.

The paper also notes that in many dry and hot countries, like in the Middle East, *Hijab* helps women keep their hair cleaner for a longer time by protecting it from wind and dirt. It also protects the hair, as well as the face, from the burning rays of the sun.

It concluded that if two sisters are twins, equally beautiful, and they are walking down a street. One of them is in *Hijab*, while other one is in a mini skirt or a tight jeans or any other revealing dress. If a hooligan faces them, whom will he tease? Every listener should ask himself/herself. Naturally he will tease the scantily clad girl. This shows that the revealing dress will act as an invitation for the hooligans.³

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³**Statement:** We, the undersigned, state that this article is our original work. It is not the result of plagiarism, because the sources we referenced and quoted are actually listed in full in the Bibliography or References. We are ready to be sanctioned academically, if what we declare is, it turns out that in the future, violating the applicable rules.

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