Hijab, a Divine Value

Tell the believing men that they shall subdue their eyes, and safeguard their private parts“ (from being seen). This is purer for them. God is fully Cognizant of everything they do. And tell the believing women to subdue their eyes, and safeguard their private parts (from being seen). And they shall not display their beauty and ornaments, except what is apparent of it. And they shall draw their scarves over their bosoms ” (Holy Qur’an, Surah an-Nur, 24:30, 31)

Throughout the whole history of the human race, people have wanted to change the appearance of their bodies. Archeological evidence and contemporary practices around the world have shown that humans add clothing, paint or jewelry and even alter the shape of their body parts.

The Functions of Clothing

Man without clothes appears to be a peculiarly, perhaps uniquely, naked animal, or a hairless naked ape. There is, however, a false implication in this title, which is that other apes are clothed by hair or fur. That is apart from not being up righting which requires less covering. The question, therefore, is why people adorn their bodies, why people wear and have worn clothes, and what are the functions of clothing?

In general there are two main theories in regards to the function of clothing:

1. Seduction

It may be surprising to learn that some of psychologists of today suggest that the motivation of wearing clothes is precisely that of immodesty or exhibitionism. They argue that it is the job of clothing to attract attention to the body rather than to deflect or repel that attention. The body, then is more openly on display according to this theory.

Rudofsky[1], for example, is explicit on this matter; he argues that the woman has to keep her mate ‘perpetually excited by changing her shape and colours. Women`s clothes, he says, are governed by the Seduction Principle and men`s clothes are governed by the Hierarchical Principle.

His theory has also been associated with what has become known as the ‘theory of the shifting erogenous zone`. Erogenous zones or body hot spots are different parts of the body of a female, which are seen as more attractive. Such as hair, breast, bottom, legs, etc.

Protection .2

According to this theory the primary motivation of clothing has been to protect the body against physical and psychological (moral) dangers;

a. Physical danger:

weather: cold, hot,

accidents: in dangerous occupations such as sports and some other crafts,

human or animal enemies.

b. Psychological (Moral) danger against:

indecency and immodesty

sexual assault

family dissolution

to achieve modesty and concealment.

The problem of the issue of the Hijab is the realisation of the need for protection. Once the individual realises that the modest dress protects the person from all of the possible waiting dangers, the practice of Hijab becomes unavoidable.

The Functions of Clothing in Divine Religions

Divine religions have been prescribed to lead and guide human kind to prosperity and salvation. That is to help him enjoy a peaceful life both in this life and the hereafter.

To this end, they have supported the theory of protection. They teach clothing should serve the purpose of modesty and concealment. A woman with a modest dress is more secure. By modest dress she secures herself as well as society.

Divine Religions and Women`s Head Cover[2]

1. Woman`s Head Cover in Judaism

In the Jewish tradition when a Jewish woman[3] did go out in public, she always went out with a head covering which also covered the whole face, leaving one eye free.

Going out without a head covering was considered so shameful that it was grounds not only for divorce by the husband, but divorce without the obligation to pay the Ketubah.[4]

“ These are they that are put away without their Ketubah... if she goes out with her head

uncovered.” In fact, Rabbi Meir is quoted as saying that it is a duty for a husband to divorce a woman who goes out without her head covered.

In the Book of Daniel (written after 160 B.C.E.) there is a clear evidence that it was customary for women to cover their heads and faces in public.

“ Now Susanna was a woman of great beauty and delicate feeling. She was closely veiled, but those scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty.”

A Jewish woman in Palestine before and after the Common Era[5], and probably also later in Babylonia , then always appeared in public with their head and face largely covered.[6]

In connection with the previous resources the Talmud[7] relates the following:

“Kimhit, the mother of seven sons who successively held the office of high priest, was once asked by what merit of hers she was so blessed in her sons. Because, she said: the beams of (my home have never seen my hair.” (Yoma 47a

Face Cover in Judaism

Veil, a cover for the face, or a disguise, from the earliest times has been a sign of chastity and decency in married women. As the sign of chastity they had to cover their faces with veils in the presence of strangers. The putting on of the veil marked the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

Rebekah, the bride, covered herself with a veil on meeting Issac, the groom, (Gen.xxiv.65).

A widow did not wear a veil (Gen. xxxviii.19).

In modern times the bride is covered with a veil in her chamber in the presence of the groom, just before they are led under the canopy. This remaining tradition, resembles the idea that as if !.the groom is the first whose eyes could celebrate seeing the bride`s face and hair

Christianity and Woman`s Head Cover .2

“If a woman does not wear a veil, let her hair be cut; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then let her wear a veil.” 1Corinthians, 11:6.[8]

“Judge for yourselves. Is it becoming for a woman to worship God without covering for her head? Does not nature itself teach you that long hair is disgraceful for a man but glorious for a woman? For her hair is granted her for a covering. In case, however, anyone seems anxious to dispute the matter, we do not observe such a practice, neither do the churches of God.” . 1Corinthians, 11:13

Woman`s Head Cover in Islam

" And they shall not display their beauty and ornaments, except what is apparent of it. And they should draw their khemaars over their bosoms, and shall not relax this code in the presence of other than…" (Qur'an, Surah an-Nur, 24:31)

The term 'Khemaar` in Arabic means whatever clothes which may cover the head, like scarf. The context of the Ayah clearly shows that head covering is an issue out of discussion, perhaps because it has already been mentioned in the previous Scriptures.

The Ayah is asking for something more, i.e. to make the scarf or whatever women are covering .their hair with, long enough to be able to draw it over their bosoms and necks

Notes:

[1] Malcolm Barnard, 'Fashion as Communication` p. 54.

[2] Although, modest dress in divine religions is not merely a head cover, in this examination I decided to present the head cover only for it is the most vividly symbol of Hijab seen by observers.

[3] By woman here is meant a married woman. However, since the usual marriage age for a girl was 13, the distinction is not terribly significant.

[4] A marriage contract, containing among other things the settlement on the wife of a certain amount payable at her husband`s death or on her being divorced. 'The Jewish Encyclopedia`1909 prepared by more than 600 scholars and specialists.

[5] The period coinciding with the Christian era.

[6] Leonard Swidler, women in Judaism, 1976 p.p. 121-123.

[7] The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara, constituting the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism. Talmûd in Hebrew means learning, instruction, from lâmad, to learn.

[8] Corinthians (ke-rîn thê-en), two EPISTLES of the NEW TESTAMENT, 7th and 8th books in the usual order, written to the church at CORINTH by St. PAUL . First Corinthians (A.D. 55?) is .one of the longest, most important epistles