



## *Which “Burka” are you defending?*

As the debate on the veil rages on with [Sarkozy speaking out against the Burka](#), Muslims need to think of the significance of *which veil* they are defending. Before we even examine the hypocrisy of the Western media through its constant attacks on Islam and the Hijab, we need to examine which values and principles are we standing up for?

It is a sad reality that in today’s nude and sex crazed society, only a tiny proportion of Muslim women observe the 'true Hijab'. The vast majority of our women, especially from the 'iPod' generation have totally failed to realise the real purpose and ethos of the veil and Hijab. So what compels me to make such a statement? Is this based on facts or am I just “ranting” on? Before I go on to answer this, let us look at the purpose of Hijab (and by Hijab I refer to the entire body – including the face – *without reference to any particular Fiqh context* – I will leave the technical bits for our jurists).

### *The purpose of the Hijab garment*

The purpose of any garment that represents the Hijab is as follows:

- a) The garment must ensure that the figure must not be revealing. To put it in 'fashion terms', the garment must not be figure hugging.
- b) The purpose of Hijab is to ensure that a woman does not attract unnecessary attention. Thus the garment must be of a nature where men would not follow the first 'mistaken' glance by a more 'eagle eyed' second glance.

c) Is the garment that represents the noble act of Hijab a fashion item? Does this garment have to compete with the "trendy and lewd" clothing on display at catwalks? The answer is very obvious. The Hijab garment most certainly has never been intended to be a fashion item. This garment's purpose was to promote modesty and stop men from casting lustful glances. The clothing of the fashion world is there to arouse the carnal desires of man, and to make him blow his brains out in fantasy land.

d) Just as the garment needs to be 'low key', any 'accessories' that a woman dons must also be of the same nature. Thus high heeled shoes are certainly not a perfect match for our Hijab garment and neither is emptying your perfume bottle before leaving home an option. How can one claim to be upholding the noble act of Hijab when one can 'smell' her from across the road or where you can associate a particular fragrance to a particular individual?

The ultimate conclusion is that this (Hijab) garment is there to uphold the lady's honour, protect men from lustful glances and ensure modesty is observed.

After describing the garment of Hijab, it is now evident that the following **cannot** constitute to a Hijab:

1. If the garment is figure hugging and tight, then this is no longer classified as a Hijab. Those women who wear such garments are merely fooling themselves with the notion that they are observing modesty according to the tenets of Shariah. Just as passions are aroused from certain types of clothing, **this garment is no different.**
2. If your garment is not figure hugging, but its style, colour and embroidery is such that it attracts attention, then you need refer to a competent scholar to verify its integrity as a Hijab garment.
3. Is your footwear of a nature that attracts attention? Does the odour of your perfume linger in the air for some time after you have walked past? Your garment may be Shariah compliant, but your footwear or perfume could let you down in fulfilling the ethos of a Hijab.

### *The "real" Muslimah*

My heart goes out to the 'real' Muslimah who observes the 'true Hijab'. The real Muslimah's garment does not reveal her figure, thus men do not cast lustful and stealing glances. The

real Muslimah's garment is not a fashion item that is competing with brands such as Miss Sixty and Austin Reed.

The real Muslimah's garment is loose; no man would give her a second glance in the street. In fact, those who steal glances at the 'fashion Hijabis' respect this real Muslimah. They know in their heart of hearts that this is the real lady. This is the one who wishes to protect her modesty. This is the one who has no time for the designer figure hugging garments. The real Muslimah does not splatter herself with a bottle of DKNY or Issey Miyake.

All who claim to uphold the mantle of modesty by wearing a Hijab need to contemplate and honestly reflect into which category they fall in? Are you wearing a garment of mercy or is your garment more worthy of a Miss Sixty label?

### *Understanding the purpose of Hijab*

It is very important that we realise the purpose of Hijab. Many a time a young person may don a Hijab garment, however she does not realise the 'essence' of this great deed. Thus it is essential that parents educate their child about the reality of Hijab, and most importantly the choice to don this garment must be an informed choice and not something that has been inherited through family values or Madrasa rules. The latter is quite common today; many institutions to some extent enforce the veil on their female students (which by default leads to wearing the "entire" Hijab garment). In this world of "Islamic Academia", all energies are directed towards the "product image", and there is no concern whatsoever over the overall product quality.

Another phenomenon we witness today is the "fashion show" that unfolds before our very eyes when our respected Imams and scholars hold speeches and conferences for what is nothing but to help us purify our souls and focus on the life of the hereafter. Almost every young Muslimah is under pressure to be conscious of her Hijab style, and we see envious glances when someone has managed to display their latest acquisition from Dubai. The spiritual discourse has almost become secondary despite its great importance.

On her blog, [Shelina Zahra Janmohamed](#) states:

*"Sadly, the wearing and the manner of wearing the headscarf has come to symbolise the problems we face as Muslims today - (1) the responsibility is put onto women to show the 'image' of Islam (2) it is all*

*about following the 'legal' technicalities of Islam, in this case covering the head (3) ensuring we are fulfilling the 'spirit' of the faith is forgotten, in this case the ethos of modest dress is overlooked”.*

I may not agree with everything she says, however I do agree on this point that we are totally failing to understand the *ethos of modest clothing*. As Allah SWT is our creator and lawmaker, only he has the power to determine what decent and modest clothing is. Muslims assign this right to Allah alone and this is the essence of "Islam" (absolute submission to the will of Allah). Thus the plethora of boutiques, Hijab shops, dressmakers that suffocate most high streets in densely populated Asian areas should not dictate our choice of modest clothing. In their eagerness to make a quick buck, they do not realise the true scale of their losses (in the hereafter).

So, let us not fall into the trap of our European friends and neighbours, their idea of liberation is based on their desires, and not upon any divine injunction. Thus they define liberation of women as a woman walking semi-naked in public, swimming topless, patronising in bars and clubs, smoking, drinking, dancing in discos and having sex with anybody she feels like. She is free to murder her unborn child (most probably conceived from a one night stand or from an unknown partner from her multiple partners). Her body can grace the pages of the tabloid press, satisfying the lusts of tabloid readers. All this in their tiny minds is liberation, defined by their desires. In reality this is nothing but regarding a woman as a sex object. Islam has given women true respect, honour and dignity. She is not there to be devoured by human wolves.

Where “they” failed to “liberate” our women by getting them to discard this garment of modesty, honour and dignity, this has sadly been supplemented by our own “designer Hijab garments” that are probably more provocative than a Marc Jacobs leather dress.

### *Modesty is a branch of Iman*

Haya’ (modesty) is a major element of Islam. Modesty encompasses far more than the clothes one wears. Modesty is one of the branches of Iman, and those who have no shame are the ones who “do as they wish”. Both of these statements can be found in prophetic traditions (Ahadith).

Often forgotten is the fact that the modern Western dress is a new invention. Looking at the clothing of women as recently as fifty to sixty years ago, we see clothing *similar* to Hijab garments. These active and hard-working women of the West were not inhibited by their

clothing which consisted of long, full dresses and various types of head covering. These were respectable women, who attended church and who were quite god-fearing.

Hijab is not merely a covering dress but more importantly, it is behaviour, manners, speech and appearance in public. Dress is only *one facet* of the total being. Your style of walking, manners, dress, speech, are all elements that make up the Hijab (for both men and women). It is these characteristics that will elevate our status in the hereafter and it is these characteristics we should be defending.

Nicholas Sarkozy need not be that worried if we are to see more and more flirtatious young Hijabis gracing the streets of Paris and London. Who knows, once he realises there are “different Burkas” he may want Carla Bruni to take up designing a few for the Hijab fashion industry?

There will inevitably be many more Sarkozys who will be standing up to “defend” the freedom of our mothers and sisters, for us the fundamental question is which “Burka” are we going to be defending?

***I know which “Burka” I am defending and standing up for; do you?***

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Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009 / 24<sup>th</sup> Ramadhan 1430 A.H.