

Islam however, teaches that a woman is to be respected according to her virtuous character and actions rather than by her looks or physical features, of which she has little or no control. She does not have to use her body and charms to gain recognition or acceptance in society, as Hijab directs self-worth away from appearance and onto qualities such as piety, virtue, modesty and intellect – attributes which are more equally accessible to all.

The Hijab in the Bible

The Hijab is not something new. Muslim women follow the example of righteous women in the past such as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Some of the evidence from the Bible includes the following two verses.

"And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head." 1 Corinthians 11:5

"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Hijab is Confidence

The Hijab...

does NOT hinder contribution to society.

is NOT a symbol of oppression.

is NOT required in places where there are only females and close male relatives.

is NOT a sign of female inferiority to men.

is NOT a means to restrict a woman's freedom to

express her views and opinions.

is NOT a means to restrict women from pursuing an education.

is NOT a portable prison.

is NOT an act of defiance, confrontation or protest against non-Muslims.

is NOT something new – it has been practiced by many righteous women historically.

is NOT against community values - community values necessitate that people should not be judged by what they wear, nor discriminated against or mistreated, based on their choice of clothing or appearance.

is NOT worn with the intention of being intimidating or anti-social.

Conclusion

Hijab is an act of obedience between a Muslim woman and her Creator. It is a source of empowerment and dignity, and millions of Muslim women around the world choose to wear the Hijab as part of their faith. Far from being oppressive, Hijab is an act of liberation, purity and most importantly, belief. Respect for women is an important aspect of Islamic teachings, and this is illustrated via the Hijab.

True equality will occur when women do not need to display themselves to be valued nor defend their decision to keep their bodies to themselves.

For more information on Islam, or to obtain more pamphlets like this one, please contact Hope & Help.



HIJAB

What is the hijab?

Is it oppressive?

Does it hinder the progress of women?



For more information on Islam, or to obtain more pamphlets like this one, please contact:

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What is the Hijab?

In an Islamic context, Hijab refers to the dress code required for Muslim females who have reached puberty. Hijab is the requirement of covering or veiling the entire body with the exception of the face and hands. Some also choose to cover their face and hands and this is referred to as the burqa or niqab. The Hijab is not required in situations where there are only females and certain male relatives present.

A century ago, hijab seemed to be on the way out in the Muslim world; today it can be seen in increasing numbers even in London, Paris, and New York. Further, despite the incessant propaganda about the oppression of women by Islam, western women are coming to Islam in even greater numbers than western men. They have found through personal experience and observation that Islam—hijab and all—is the true liberator for all humanity that brings peace to the mind, contentment to the heart, and dignity to life.

Hijab is Obedience

Although there are many benefits of Hijab, it is first and foremost a commandment from the Almighty. Therefore, wearing it is an act of faith and obedience to the Creator, as mentioned in the Quran: "Tell the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men)." Quran 33:59

The wearing of hijab, just like any other act of obedience to the Creator, brings one closer to one's Lord and helps bring a sense of satisfaction and contentment to the person wearing it. The Hijab in no way suggests that women are inferior to men.

Hijab is Modesty

Islam promotes modesty and decency and seeks to minimise immorality within society. The Hijab, amongst other things, helps attain this goal.

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: That is purer for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. They should not display their beauty except that which is apparent; that they should draw their veils over their chests and not display their beauty..." Quran 24:30-31

Note that in the above verses, it is men who are addressed first in regards to lowering their gaze and guarding their modesty. This counters the claim that all responsibility for such modesty is shouldered by women.

While Islam discourages public displays of immodest dress and sexual behaviour, being a practical religion, Islam encourages love, affection and intimacy between married couples in private.

Hijab is Protection

The wisdom behind the Hijab is to minimise sexual enticement and moral degradation in society as much as possible for both men and women. The Hijab helps protect men, women and society by creating stability in both families and communities in a number of ways:

It shields women from unwanted advances.

It shields women from perverted looks and

superficial scrutiny.

It helps to reduce the likelihood of sexual assaults against women.

It shields women from sexual exploitation based on appearance.

It shields women from temptations and harmful desires.

Hijab is Dignity

Hijab promotes a woman's femininity rather than suppressing it, and grants women dignity and self-respect for who they are, as opposed to being judged by superficial standards, such as appearance. This grants women the power to shape their own dignity via more meaningful standards, such as righteousness, knowledge and societal contribution, rather than having a consumer society dictate their worth through material means, such as how they look or how much money they earn. In the sight of the Almighty, men and women do not have to be identical in order to be equal, and this is reflected in the different roles and responsibilities which apply to each.

Hijab is Respect

In a number of societies today, many women are taught from early childhood that their worth is proportional to their attractiveness. They are compelled to follow unrealistic and demeaning standards of beauty in order to satisfy unreasonable peer pressure and community expectations. In such a superficial environment, where so much emphasis is placed on external beauty, the internal beauty of the individual counts for very little.