

This second interpretation finds support from a narration of Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها to the effect that the permission of further marriages remained applicable for him (even after the revelation of the present verse)

"Nor is it lawful that you replace them (the present wives) with other wives" - 52.

The clear meaning of these words in view of the second explanation of this verse is that although the Holy Prophet ﷺ is permitted to marry other women besides his present wives subject to the conditions mentioned, yet it is not lawful for him to divorce a wife and to marry another woman to replace her.

However, the meaning of these words in view of the first explanation of this verse would be that he can neither marry any woman in addition to the present wives, nor can he replace them by divorcing one and marrying another.

Towards the end of these verses it is clarified that a bond woman owned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is exempt from fifth and seventh rules in the sense that she is lawful for him, even if she is a Christian or Jew, and it is also permitted for him to replace her with another bondwoman. Lastly it has been reminded that Allah Ta'ālā is watchful of everything's reality, appearance and underlying reasons. All these injunctions and rules are based on divine wisdom and expedience, even if the wisdom is not stated specifically, and hence no one has the right to question them or raise objections against them.

### Verses 53 - 55

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرِ نَظِيرٍ إِنَّهُ لَا وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ ۖ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۖ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا

فَسَعَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ۖ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنْ تُبْذُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِنَّ وَلَا إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَائِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ ۚ وَاتَّقِينَ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ﴿٥٥﴾

O those who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal, not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, go inside. Then, once you have had the meal, then disperse, and (do) not (sit for long) being keen for a chat. This (conduct of yours) hurts the Prophet, but he feels shy of (telling) you (about it). And Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain. That is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts. And it is not allowed for you that you hurt Allah's Messenger, nor that you ever marry his wives after him. Indeed, it would be an enormity in the sight of Allah. [53] If you disclose any thing, or conceal it, Allah is All-Knowing about every thing. [54] There is no sin for them (the wives of the Prophet) in (appearing without *hijāb* before) their fathers, or their brothers, or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or their own (Muslim) women, or their slave-girls. And (O wives of the Prophet,) fear Allah. Surely, Allah is witness to every thing. [55]

### Commentary

These verses have laid down some etiquettes and rules of Islamic social behavior. The reason for mentioning them in the context of the previous verses is that these rules were initially revealed for the Holy Prophet's household and his wives, although their applicability is not specific or exclusive to him.

## The First Injunction

### Etiquettes for hosts and guests

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ نَظِيرٍ إِنَّهُ لَا وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْسِنِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ

(O those who believe, do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal, not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, go inside. Then, once you have had the meal, then disperse, and (do) not (sit for long) being keen for a chat. This (conduct of yours) hurts the Prophet, but he feels shy of (telling) you (about it). And Allah is not shy of the truth). (33:53)

This verse has laid down three rules pertaining to a situation where a person is invited to have meal in someone's house. These rules are applicable to all Muslims in general, but since they were prompted by an incident which took place in the house of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore the Prophet's ﷺ house has been mentioned in the text.

The first rule is: "لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ" "Do not enter the houses of the Prophet, unless you are permitted.."

The second etiquette is that despite invitation to dine and permission to enter the house, one should not enter the house so early as to wait for the meal's preparation; rather he should go inside the house when he is invited to do so.

The third etiquette is that once the invitees have had the meal, they should disperse and should not sit for long being keen for a chat. This direction is restricted to the general cases where guests' sitting for long after having the meal causes inconvenience to the host, either because the host wants to get busy with his own work, or because he has to serve meals to others after these guests. But where the practice and norm is that the guests remaining busy in conversation till late after they had their meals does not pose any problem for the hosts, as it has become customary in dinners and parties these days, this rule would not apply, because the next sentence of the verse has specifically highlighted the reason of this rule where it is said that this behavior brings discomfort to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In the specific incident that was the cause of the revelation of this verse, the meals were served in the ladies apartments of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the discomfort caused to the family members

because of the guests staying till late is obvious.

The verse also states that although such behavior of the guests hurts the Holy Prophet ﷺ, yet since they are his own guests, he feels shy of telling and educating them about it, but Allah Ta'ālā is not shy of telling them the truth.

The above sentence of the verse also tells us the extent to which a host is required to show respect and give honor and regard to his guests, because despite the fact that it was one of the obligations of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to teach people how they should behave when they are invited as guests, he postponed to teach his own guests this etiquette (lest they should feel disgraced) till Allah Ta'ālā Himself taught this etiquette in the Qur'ān.

### The Second Injunction - Ḥijāb for Women

وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ

And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain. That is better for the purity of your hearts and their hearts. (33:53)

This rule has also been prompted by a particular incident involving the blessed wives ﷺ, but the rule is general for the whole Ummah. Briefly, the rule states that if non-*maḥram* men have to ask anything of common use from women, they should ask them from behind a curtain - not face to face. The reason stated for this rule is that it is better for the purity of the hearts of both.

### The special Importance of Women's Ḥijāb

It is worth noting here that the men and women who are the direct addressees of these rules of ḥijāb are, on the one hand, the women who are the blessed wives رضي الله عنهما of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the purification of whose hearts has been undertaken by Allah Ta'ālā Himself as mentioned in the verse preceding the present one, and on the other hand they are the men who are the noble companions ﷺ of the Holy Prophet ﷺ many of whom have been exalted even above angels. Despite all these credentials, ḥijāb was deemed to be necessary between men and women for the purity of their hearts and to protect them from sensual scruples. Who can claim that his inner-self is purer than those of the noble companions ﷺ and the inner-selves of his women are purer than those of

the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن and thus believe that mixing of men and women would not have any bad consequences?

### The Background of the revelation of these verses

Different incidents have been related by the commentators as the background for the revelation of the these verses. But there is no contradiction between these narrations, because it is likely that all these incidents combined together constitute the reason for the revelation. As for the first verse which lays down the etiquettes of guests, its background is mentioned by Sulaymān Ibn Arqam, as reported by Ibn Abī Hatim, that it was revealed about some boorish people who would enter a house without being invited and keep waiting there for the preparation of a meal.

And Imām 'Abd Ibn Ḥumaid has reported the statement of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that this verse was revealed about some people who would look for an opportunity to enter and sit in the Holy Prophet's ﷺ house well before the time of dining, remain busy in conversation between themselves till the preparation of the meal and then would join the dining. These incidents took place before the injunction of ḥijāb when men used to enter women's apartments.

As for the second rule relating to the ḥijāb of women, Imām Bukhari has cited two narrations about the reason for its revelation. One is narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ؓ that Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah ! you are visited by all sorts of people, and as such it appears advisable that you order your blessed wives رضى الله عنهن to observe Ḥijāb". At this, the verse of ḥijāb was revealed.

Imām Bukhari and Imām Muslim both have reported the following statement of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ :

وافقت ربي في ثلث: قلت يا رسول الله! لو اتخذت في مقام إبراهيم مصلًى، فأنزل الله تعالى واتخذوا من مقام إبراهيم مصلًى وقلت: يا رسول الله! إن نساء ك يَدْخُلْنَ عَلَيَّهِنَّ الْبُرَّ وَالْفَاجِرَ فَلَوْ حَجَبْتَهُنَّ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ آيَةَ الْحِجَابِ وَقُلْتُ لَأَزْوَاجُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا تَمَالَأْنَ عَلَيْهِ فِي الْغَيْرَةِ عَسَى رَبُّهُ، إِنْ طَلَّقَكَ أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِنْكَ، فَنَزَلَتْ كَذَلِكَ

"My opinion appeared to be in consonance with my Lord in three things. One is that I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to adopt the Station of Ibrāhīm (Maqām Ibrāhīm) as the place of your prayers (Ṣalāh). Then Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse وَأَتَجِدُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى (And take the Station of Ibrāhīm as a place of prayer). And I said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that all sorts of good and bad people appear before your blessed wives رضى الله عنهن ; it would be better if you ask them to observe *ḥijāb*. Then the verse of *ḥijāb* was revealed. And when the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن of the Holy Prophet ﷺ developed envy between themselves, I told them that if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ divorces you, it is not unlikely that Allah Ta'ālā may provide him wives better than you. So Qur'an was revealed in the same very words."

Sayyidnā 'Umar's respectful speech is worth noting that instead of saying that his Lord accorded with him in three things, he said that his opinion was found to be in consonance with Him in three things.

Another narration reported in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, also from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه is that he said:

"I know the facts about the verse of *ḥijāb* more than anybody else, because I was present when Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضي الله عنها, after her marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, entered his house and was present in the house with him, when some of the people whom he had invited for *walimah* (the dining arranged after consummation of marriage) which he ﷺ had got prepared for them, just kept sitting there and talking. The narration in Tirmidhī adds that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was also present there along with Sayyidah Zainab رضي الله عنها and she had turned her face towards the wall due to modesty. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was displeased by the people sitting there so long; he went out of the house to meet and greet other blessed wives رضى الله عنهن. When he came back, they were still there. And then they realized and dispersed. The Holy Prophet entered the house, but came out after a little while. I was present there. He recited this verse of *ḥijāb* which had been revealed just at that time.

The narrations of Ḥadīth mention these three incidents as the causes for the revelation of the verses of *ḥijāb*. There is no contradiction between them, because possibly all the three incidents combined together constitute the cumulative cause of the revelation of these verses.

### The Third Injunction

"(And it is not allowed for you that you hurt Allah's Messenger, nor that you ever marry his wives after him".) (33:53)

The first part of this verse has declared all such utterances and actions unlawful (*ḥarām*) which cause anguish or hurt to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then it is laid down that no one can marry his blessed wives *رضى الله عنهن* after him.

All the rules mentioned in this verse are though addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ or his blessed wives *رضى الله عنهن*, their application is general for the whole Ummah, except this last rule which is specific to the blessed wives *رضى الله عنهن* that they cannot marry any one after him, while the rule for the Ummah in general is that after the death of the husband, his wife can marry another person after the expiry of the period of *iddah*. The reason may be that according to Qur'ān, the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are mothers of the Muslims, and although their being mothers does not affect their spiritual offspring in the sense that, being brothers and sisters, they would not be able to marry each other, yet their motherhood was limited to their own-selves in the sense that they cannot marry anyone.

It may also be said that they Holy Prophet ﷺ is alive in his honored grave, his *ﷺ* expiry being like a husband missing from his home. That is why his inheritance was not distributed, and that is why his blessed wives *رضى الله عنهن* were not in the same situation as that of the wives of common men after the death of their husbands.

Another reason for this injunction is that according to the rule of Shari'ah, every woman in Paradise would be with her last husband. Sayyidnā Hudhaifah *رضى الله عنه* had told his wife at his death that if you wish to be my wife in Paradise, do not marry any one after me because in Paradise, a woman would go to her last husband. (Qurtubī)

So, the honor that Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon the blessed wives *رضى الله عنهن* in this world was thus preserved for them in paradise also by forbidding their marriage to anyone after him.

Besides, no husband naturally likes that his wife should marry

anyone, but for common people, the Shari'ah did not make it necessary to fulfill this desire. Allah Ta'ālā, by respecting this natural desire of the Holy Prophet ﷺ bestowed an exclusive honour upon him.

There is a consensus in the Ummah that the above rules apply to all the blessed wives رضى الله عنهن who remained in the bond of marriage with the Holy Prophet ﷺ till his expiry. However there are different views about whether or not this rule is applicable to those of his wives who were either divorced by him or who separated from him for some other reason. Qurṭubī has detailed these views.

إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (Indeed, it would be an enormity in the sight of Allah - 53). It means that causing any harm to or to hurt the Holy Prophet ﷺ in any way or to marry his wives after him would be an enormity in the eyes of Allah.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تَخْفَوْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (If you disclose any thing, or conceal it, Allah is All-Knowing about every thing - 33:54). It has been repeated again in this verse that Allah Ta'ālā knows even the intents and thoughts hidden in the hearts. So whether you disclose or conceal, Allah Ta'ālā knows it all. What is being emphasized here is that one should not let any doubt or suspicion enter one's mind or heart about the above-stated rules, and must avoid any violation of these rules.

The issue of Hijāb for women, out of the three injunctions in the above mentioned verse, needs some further elaboration which is being given below.

## Injunctions of Hijāb

### And the Islamic system for prevention of misdeeds

Immodesty, adultery and the overtures leading to them are some of those destructive evils of this world which do not only affect the individuals, but also ruin families and tribes, and sometimes destroy large countries as well. If the cases of murder and plunder in this world are thoroughly investigated, sexual emotions would be found behind the scenes. This is the reason that ever since this world came into existence, there has been no nation, religion or region that has not unanimously believed in the evil and destructive nature of these misdeeds.



The European nations in the present age, after doing away with the religions limits and breaking away from their ancient and entrenched customs and traditions, do not consider adultery a crime in itself and they have moulded their culture and society in such a fashion that sexual anarchy and immodest acts are permitted freely, but even they could not exclude the consequences of these evil acts from the list of the crimes - prostitution, rape and obscenities in public had to be declared punishable offences.

This is really comparable to somebody collecting inflammables, sprinkling oil on them, then setting them on fire and when it bursts into flames, then prohibiting the flames and taking measures to stop them. Another example would be to kindle a fire under a cooking pot and then try to stop it from steaming and boiling.

Islam, on the other hand, when declares some harmful acts as punishable offences, it also imposes restrictions on the overtures leading to them and declares them forbidden also. In the present case the real objective was to prevent adultery and fornication. So the start was made by the rule to keep one's eyes down, by preventing free mixing of men and women, by directing women to stay inside the four walls of houses; by requiring women to cover their bodies from head to feet by means of a covering dress called '*burqa*' or simply by a longish shawl when they have to go out due to some need, and to walk on the side of the street and not to wear perfume or to wear a 'ringing ornament when going out. If someone crosses all these limits, breaks all these barriers and defies all the restrictions to do what is forbidden, then the punishment is so severe and terrifying that once it is given to some adulterer or fornicator, the whole nation would learn an unforgettable lesson.

The Europeans and their camp-followers have put forward arguments justifying their obscenities by trying to prove the *ḥijāb* for women to be harmful for the society in regard to women's health, economic and social status and by trying to prove the benefits for women being without *ḥijāb*. Their detailed rejoinder has been given by many modern scholars in their books. Here it would be adequate to understand that no crime or sin is devoid of some gain or benefit. Even stealing, robbery, cheating are very profitable in some respects. But when the destructive harms that take place as a result and consequence of these acts come to view, nobody

dares to call them profitable businesses. The absence of *ḥijāb* for women, even if it has economic gains, cannot be called beneficial by sensible and wise people when it engulfs the whole nation and the country in mischief and disorder.

### **The Golden Islamic Principle of Barring the Ways and Means for Prevention of Crimes in a moderate manner**

Just as the basic principles of faith, like belief in the Oneness of Allah, the prophethood and in the life Hereafter are common the religious systems of all the prophets, similarly crimes, obscenities and evil deeds have been held unlawful (*ḥarām*) in all revealed laws and divine religions. But in the previous religions and their laws, the ways and means which led to the violations were not declared absolutely unlawful in themselves, unless a crime or sin was committed through them. But since the Shari'ah of Islam has to be in force till the Doomsday, it has been safeguarded by Allah Ta'ālā specially in that not only the crimes and sins but even their causes and means that normally lead one to those crimes and sins have been declared unlawful themselves. For example, when drinking was forbidden, the processing, selling purchasing and presentation of alcoholic drinks was also forbidden. Similarly when interest and usury was forbidden, then all affairs involving interest or resembling usury were also declared unlawful. That is why the Islamic jurists have declared all profits derived from invalid businesses to be filthy earning like interest. To associate any being with Allah Ta'ālā (Shirk) and idolatry have been declared by Qur'ān to be the greatest injustice and unpardonable sins, so severe prohibitions have been placed on their causes and means also. Since the polytheists (*mushrikin*) used to worship the sun at sunrise, sunset and at midday, saying of prayers (Ṣalah) in those particular times would bear a resemblance to sun worshipers and this resemblance itself could lead to 'Shirk', therefore the revealed laws declared even saying of prayers (Ṣalah) and prostration (Sajdah) to be unlawful (Ḥarām) in those times. Statues and pictures of idols are very close to idolatry, so sculpturing of idol's statues and making of their pictures is forbidden and their usage is not permissible.

Similarly while forbidding adultery, all its immediate causes and means have also been declared unlawful by Shari'ah. To look at any boy or woman with sexual lust is held as a fornication through the eyes, to

hear their speech with that intent is held as fornication through the ears, to touch them as fornication through the hands and to walk in their pursuit as fornication through the feet, as recorded in authentic Ḥadīth. The injunctions of *ḥijāb* for women were revealed to safeguard one against these very sins.

But there is a very long list of causes and means - immediate and distant. if even the distant causes of a sinful act are forbidden, life would become very difficult and considerable difficulty would be faced in carrying out day-to-day affairs which is against the nature of this religion. The Holy Qur'ān's open declaration in this matter is: مَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ. It means that no difficulty has been placed on you in religion. Therefore, in the matter of causes and means, it was wisely decided that those acts and deeds which are such immediate causes of any sin that, generally, one who commits them does necessarily get involved in that sin, have been annexed with the real sin and forbidden as well. If one commits some acts and deeds that are distant causes of a sin and do not necessarily involve one generally in that sin, but they do have some share in the involvement in it, they have been declared reprehensible (makruh). Those causes which are even farther away from involving one in a sin, and which cause one's involvement in very rare cases, they have been considered permissible.

An example of the first case is selling of alcoholic drinks which has been declared as unlawful as drinking itself, because it is an immediate means of drinking. Similarly touching a non-mahram woman, although not fornication in itself, but since it is an immediate cause and means for it, it has also been declared unlawful like the fornication is unlawful.

An example of the second case would be selling of grapes to a person about whom it is known that he would make wine out of the grapes, either because he is a wine maker by profession or because he has clearly said that this is his purpose for its purchase. This is not unlawful in the same way as selling of alcoholic drinks, but this is reprehensible and not permissible. The same rule applies to renting out land or building for a cinema house or an interest-based bank that if it was known at the time of finalizing the deal or contract that the purpose of living for rent is not permissible, then renting would be Makruh Taḥrīmī (reprehensible bordering on being unlawful).

An example of the third case would be selling of grapes to the common public. While it is possible that anyone of them might make wine out of the grapes, but neither has anyone said that he will do so, nor is it in the seller's knowledge that anyone makes wine, such sale and purchase has been considered permissible under the rules.

### Important Caution

It is important to note that all those acts and deeds which have been declared unlawful by the rules because they are immediate causes or means of involving one in sin, all of them are absolutely unlawful now after the injunction, irrespective of whether these acts involved one in sin or not; their being unlawful is itself a permanent rule of the religion and its violation is impermissible.

It is easier to understand, after this introductory explanation that *ḥijāb* for women is also based upon this principle of barring the ways and means of a sin that leads to getting involved in sin. Here also the rules for the three categories of causes aforementioned would apply. For example, a young woman's uncovering her body in front of a young man is such an immediate cause of commission of sin that as per general nature of men and women, this act would almost certainly lead to commission of sin. Therefore the rules declare it to be forbidden just as fornication is forbidden. Now that this act has been ruled to be the same as fornication, it is absolutely prohibited, even if the person involved is innocent or he is positive that he would not commit the further sin because he has control over himself. The exemption of the circumstances of necessity, medical treatment, etc. do not effect its being forbidden. Even the change of times and ages do not affect it because the rule is just as applicable today in these times of evil and adultery as it was in the first period of Islam.

The second category of the causes would be that women step out of the four walls of their houses wearing *burqa'* (dress which covers from head to feet) or a longish shawl to cover their bodies completely from head to feet. This is a distant cause of *fitnah* (mischief). The rule in this case is that if doing so would cause *fitnah*, then it is not permissible but if there is no apprehension of *fitnah* in doing so, then it is permissible. Therefore this rule is subject to change depending upon circumstances and times. Such outings of women were not cause of mischief during the period of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ. That is why he had given permission to women to go to mosques after having covered themselves completely from head to feet, subject to certain conditions and he had forbidden people from preventing women from going to mosques. Even at that time, although women were being persuaded to offer their prayers in their own homes, because, for them, the reward of offering prayers in their homes is greater than the reward of offering their prayers in mosques, but they were not disallowed from saying their prayers in mosques because there was no apprehension of *fitnah*. The noble companions رضي الله عنهم, after the expiry of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, realized that going of women to mosques, even if they are covered from head to feet, was no longer free from apprehension of *fitnah*, so they evolved a consensus among themselves and stopped women from joining the congregation in mosques. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها stated that if the Holy Prophet ﷺ could see the circumstances prevailing today, he would, most certainly, have stopped women from going to mosques. This tells us that the decision of the noble companions was no different from that of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, rather the rule itself changed according to the change in conditions as laid down by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The rules regarding Ḥijāb for women have been stated in seven verses of the Holy Qur'ān - three in Sūrah An-Nūr earlier, four in Sūrah Al-Aḥzab out of which one is mentioned earlier, the second is under review and the other two would come later, wherein the determination of the category of Ḥijāb, details of the rules and the exemptions have been stated in detail. Similarly, in more than seventy *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the verbal and practical orders of Ḥijāb have been stated. All these injunctions, rules and regulations have been collected by the author in a booklet titled "Tafsīlul Khitāb fī Tafsīrī 'Āyat- il-ḥijāb" in Arabic language, already published as a part of Sūrah Al-Aḥzab in "Aḥkām- ul Qur'ān", some important extracts of which are being reproduced below.

## The Advent of Ḥijāb in Historical Perspective

Free mixing among men and women has never been considered appropriate in the entire history of the world from Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to the last prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ, and it is no peculiarity of the people following religious codes; in fact, such mixing has not been held as proper in good families universally.

At the time when Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was traveling through Madyan, two women are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān who were standing aside, holding their flock of goats while waiting for their turn to take these to the water trough. The reason given for this is no other but that these women did not like to push and shove into the crowd of men, instead, preferred to remain content with whatever water was left. The first verse of Ḥijāb was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضى الله عنها. Even before its revelation, a narration appearing in the Jami' of Tirmidhī describes the position in which she was sitting in the house: وَهِيَ مُوَلِّيَةٌ وَجْهَهَا إِلَى الْحَائِطِ (and she was [sitting] with her face turned towards the wall).

This tells us that, even before the revelation relating to Ḥijāb, the custom of free mixing among men and women, no-holds-barred dates, rendezvous, get-togethers and chats did not exist among good people anywhere. The First Age of Ignorance marked by personal display (*tabarruj*) by its women referred to in the Qur'ān was something peculiar to bondwomen and women of loose character - certainly, not in good families of Arabia. They saw it as low and reprehensible. The whole history of Arabia bears testimony to this. In India, among the adherents of Hindu, Buddhist and other polytheistic faiths, free mixing between men and women was not tolerated. All those claims of working with men shoulder to shoulder, parading in bazaars and streets, free mixing of men and women in almost every department of life and the chain of intimate contacts in parties and clubs are the product of immodesty and obscenity among Europeans - a disease they too have been afflicted with after having veered away from their past. In those earlier days of theirs, they too were no victims of this situation they are in. Allah Ta'ālā has created women physically different from men. Similarly, He has also placed in their temperaments the essential ingredient of natural modesty which automatically inclines them to maintain a certain aloofness from the general run of men and to remain properly covered. This screen of natural and temperamental modesty has always been present there between women and men since the very beginning. In the early period of Islam too, the mutually imposed absence of free mixing - a forerunner of the Ḥijāb - was of this very nature.

This particular kind of the Ḥijāb of women - that the real place for

women be within the walls of the home and when they have to go out to take care of a need valid in the sight of the Shari'ah, then, they go out after having covered their whole body - was instituted after the hijrah to Madīnah in the Hijrah year 5. Relevant details follow.

By a consensus of the scholars of Muslim Ummah, the first verse about this kind of Ḥijāb is the one mentioned above: لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ (do not enter the houses of the Prophet - 53) and this verse was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab bint Jahsh رضى الله عنها and her entry into the home of the prophet as his blessed wife. As for the date of this marriage, Ḥafiz Ibn Hajar in Isabah and Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr in Isti'ab have reported two sayings that it took place in the Hijrah year 3, or in the Hijrah year 5. Ibn Kathīr has preferred Hijrah year 5. Ibn Sa'd has reported Hijrah year 5 also from Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه, This very view seems to be the preferred one from some narrations of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها as well. And Allah knows best.

In the cited verse, women were ordered to observe Ḥijāb and men were ordered to ask from them, if they have to ask for something, from behind the Ḥijāb. Here, particular emphasis has been placed on the observation of Ḥijāb in the sense that non-maḥram men and women have to remain apart, however, should there be the need to talk to women, men could do so from behind a Ḥijāb, curtain or something that obstructs the view.

Revealed in the noble Qur'ān there are seven verses about the Ḥijāb of women and its details. Out of these, four have gone by right here in Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb while three of them have already appeared in Sūrah An-Nūr (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). It is universally agreed upon that the first verse to have been revealed about Ḥijāb is this very verse: لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ (Do not enter the houses of the prophet, unless you are permitted for a meal - 53). The three verses of Sūrah An-Nūr and the initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb where the blessed wives have been commanded to stay in their homes though appear earlier in the order of the Qur'ān, yet in terms of their revelation, they come later. It has been explicitly said in the initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb that the said command has been given at a time when the blessed wives were divinely given the right to choose one of the following two courses. If they wanted to have extended worldly means, they should take a divorce from the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, and if they preferred the benefits of the Hereafter and were willing to remain satisfied with whatever worldly means were available to them in their present state of life, then, they could stay married to him.

It has also been mentioned in this event of choice that, among the wives given this choice, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضى الله عنها was also included. This tells us that her marriage was already solemnized before the revelation of this verse. The said verse came after that. Similarly, there are the verses of Sūrah An-Nūr that carry details relating to Ḥijāb. These are, though earlier in the order of the Qur'ān, but in terms of their sequence of revelation, they too have been revealed with the incident of *Ifk* which came to pass on return from the battle of Banī al-Mustaliq or Muraisi'. This battle took place in the Hijrah year 6 - and the injunctions governing the Islamic legal Ḥijāb came to be enforced from the time when the verse of Ḥijāb was revealed in relevance to the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها. The verses of Sūrah An-Nūr relating to Ḥijāb have already appeared in Sūrah An-Nūr (Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI).

### **The difference between the injunctions of *Satr-ul-'Aurah* and Veiling of Women (Ḥijāb)**

The part of the body, of a man or woman, called '*awrah* عورت in Arabic, *satr* (ستر) in Urdu and Persian is something the concealing of which is obligatory for everyone - legally, naturally and rationally - and is, after the initial article of Faith (Imān), the foremost obligation which must be carried out necessarily by concealing the private parts of the body. This duty has remained an obligation since the very beginning and has been a standing obligation in all religious codes brought by the noble prophets عليهم السلام. In fact, even before the advent of religious codes when, because of the tasting of the forbidden fruit in Jannah, the Paradisical apparel of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' came off leaving the cover-worthy parts of the body uncovered, even in that situation which was beyond his control, Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام did not take it as permissible. Therefore, both of them, Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā', covered their private parts by placing a string of leaves over them. Thus, their '*awrah* came to be concealed. This is what is meant by the verse of the Qur'ān: طِفْقًا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ (and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise - 7:22). From the



coming of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام into this world right up to the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ, the concealment of 'awrah has remained obligatory in the religious code of every prophet. There could be a difference in the precise determination and limitation of body parts to be concealed, but the essential obligation of *satr* is decisively established in all religious codes of the prophets. Then, this obligation applies to all human beings, men and women, in its own right - whether or not there be someone else to see. For this reason, should there be a person who offers his Ṣalah in naked state in the darkness of night - then, despite the fact that nobody is seeing him, his Ṣalah will not be acceptable, if he does have with him something to wear that is sufficient to cover the private parts of his body (*Satr*) - (Al-Baḥr - ur-Rā'iq).

There is no difference of opinion in the fact that it is obligatory to cover those parts of the body which are included in 'awrah' before people, even when one is not performing Ṣalah. But, in a state of privacy where no one is around to look, even there, it is not permissible, according to the correct view, to sit naked with one's coverable parts ('awrah) exposed without a need recognized by the Sharī'ah, (Al-Baḥr from Sharḥ al-Munyah).

This much was about the injunction of *satr-ul-'awrah* (the concealment of the coverable parts of the body) which has been obligatory from the advent of Islam, rather, from the very beginning, in all religious codes of the noble prophets, and in which, men and women are equal, equal in private and in public, just as it is not permissible to be naked before people, it is also not permissible to stay unnecessarily naked when alone or in private.

### **The second issue - the Ḥijāb of women**

Ḥijāb essentially requires that women do not appear before male strangers without proper cover. About this issue, at least this much has always remained established among prophets and the righteous and noble persons that there should be no free mixing between male strangers and women. In the incident about the two daughters of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān (Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:23, Part 20) that when the girls went to water their goats on the public well in the locality, they found it crowded with people who were watering their own flocks. It appears in the Qur'ān that these girls were standing aside, aloof from them. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, who was passing by as a traveler, saw the

girls standing so aloof from others. When he asked them about the reason for it, they told him two things:

1. 'Right now, there is a crowd of men out there. We shall water our goats when these people will have finished watering gone'.

2. 'Our father is old and weak' which indicates that coming out to water domestic animals was not the job of women in terms of the commonly recognized practice. But, it was because of the old age and weakness of the father, or because of the absence of any other man around, they had to do this job.

This state of the daughters of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام pointed out in the noble Qur'ān tells us that, even during that time and in their religious code too, free mixing of men and women and their working together shoulder to shoulder was not liked. In fact, any job which caused free contact with men was just not entrusted with women. However, keeping this whole thing in view, it appears that the injunction requiring women to observe regular Ḥijāb was yet to be enforced formally. Similarly, during the early period of Islam, the same situation kept prevailing. It was in the Hijrah year 3 or 5 that women were obligated with the observance of Ḥijāb before male strangers, the details of which appear later.

Now we know that the *satr* of 'awrah and the Ḥijāb of women are two separate issues and different from each other. *Satr-ul-'awrah* (concealment of coverable parts) has always been obligatory. The Ḥijāb of women was made obligatory in the Hijrah year 5. *Satr-ul-'awrah* is obligatory on men and women both while Ḥijāb is obligatory on women only. *Satr-ul-'awrah* is obligatory both in public and in private while Ḥijāb is obligatory only in the presence of male strangers. These details have been provided for the reason that by the jumbling of both these issues so many doubts rise impeding the understanding of the rulings and injunctions of the Qur'ān. For example, the face and the palms of a woman are excluded from *Satr-ul-'awrah* under the authority of consensus (*ijma'*). Therefore, should the face and palms remain uncovered in the state of Ṣalāh, the Ṣalāh is permissible, as agreed upon and as borne by consensus. As for face and palms, these are exempt in accordance with definitive textual authority. The feet have been

exempted by Muslim jurists on the analogy of face and palms.

But, whether or not the face and palms are exempted in the observance of Ḥijāb before male strangers is a matter in which difference exists, details of which have appeared earlier under the commentary on the verse of Sūrah An-Nūr: لَا يُدْرِكُنَّ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا (and must not expose their adornment except that which appears thereof - 24:31), a summary of which will follow later.

### **The degrees of Islamic legal Ḥijāb and the injunctions relating to them**

The sum of seven verses of the Qur'ān and seventy narrations of Ḥadīth about the Ḥijāb of women seems to be that the real objective desirable in the sight of the Shari'ah is Ḥijāb-ul-ashkhas i.e. physical hiding of women from strangers. In other words, women and their movement should remain hidden from the sight of men, something that can be accomplished by means of the four walls of homes or tents or hanging curtains. All forms of Ḥijāb allowed other than this are all restricted by or conditional with the ground of need, time of need and measure of need.

Thus, the first degree of Ḥijāb - which is the really desired objective of the Shari'ah - is that women stay in their homes. But, the Shari'ah of Islam is a comprehensive and complete social system in which full consideration has been given to all human needs. Then, it is all too obvious that women will face inevitable circumstances when they have to go out of the house at some or the other time. For this purpose, the second degree of Ḥijāb, in the light of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, seems to be that they should go out wearing a *burqa'* or long *shawl* concealing their whole body. To see their way, they leave only one eye open from inside the sheet, or use a patch of net before the eyes as is placed in a *burqa'* for this purpose. On occasions of need, this second degree of Ḥijāb too - like the first one - is agreed upon among all Muslim scholars and jurists.

From some narrations of Ḥadīth, there seems to emerge a third degree of Ḥijāb as well - in which the views of Ṣaḥābah, the Tabi'in and the jurists of Muslim community differ - according to which women, when they go out from the house, of necessity, they can let their face and palm remain open before people subject to the condition that their entire body is

concealed. A detailed description of these three degrees of Islamic legal Ḥijāb follows.

### The first degree of Ḥijāb from people by virtue of staying home

According to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, this degree is the one really desired. It stands clearly proved by the verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb under study right now: **وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ** (And when you ask any thing from them (the blessed wives of the Prophet), ask them from behind a curtain - 53). Still more explicit is the very initial verse of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb, that is: **وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ** (And remain in your homes.) The manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ put the guidance given in these verses into practice hardly leaves room for any further explanation.

We have already come to know that the first verse about the Ḥijāb of women was revealed at the time of the marriage of Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها. As in the narrations of Ḥadīth, Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه said, "I know this event of Ḥijāb more than anyone else for the reason that, at that time, I was present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When this verse requiring the observance of Ḥijāb was revealed, he put a sort of make-shift curtain from a sheet and had thus made Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها seated hidden behind it - not that he would conceal her personally in a *burqa* or long sheet.

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه appearing under the Background of Revelation described earlier also seems to indicate that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه simply wished that the blessed wives stay inside, away from the sight of men - as is evident from the words he used on this occasion: **يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْكَ الْبَرُّ وَالْفَاجِرُ** (among those coming to you there are [all sorts of people] the righteous and the sinning).

According to a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها appearing in the chapter of the battle of Muthah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was informed of the Shahadah (martyrdom) of Sayyidnā Zayd Ibn Harithah, Ja'far and 'Abdullāh Ibn Rawahah رضى الله عنه, he was in the Masjid. His blessed face showed signs of intense grief and shock. I was watching what was happening there from inside my room through a crack in the door.

This proves that, the Ummul-Mu'minin, even at the time of such a shocking occurrence, did not come out in a *burqa* to join the crowd of

people, instead, witnessed the proceedings from a crack in the door.

And in the chapter on 'Umratu 'l-Qada' in Kitāb- ul-Maghazī of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari, it appears that the nephew of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, Sayyidnā 'Urwah Ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه, and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه were sitting in the Mosque of the Prophet fairly close to the outer side of the living quarters of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and were busy talking about the 'Umra visits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه says that, during that time, we could hear the voice of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah doing her *miswak* and clearing her throat coming out from inside the living quarters. Onward from here, mentioned there are the 'Umra visits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. From this narration too, we learn that soon after the revelation of the verses of Ḥijāb, it had become the regular practice of the blessed wives that they would observe Ḥijāb virtually by staying at home.

Similarly, there is a Ḥadīth in the chapter on the battle of Ṭa'if in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ gargled in a utensil of water and gave it to Sayyidnā Abu Mūsā and Bilāl رضى الله عنه to drink and wipe their faces with. Ummul-Mu'minin, Sayyidah Umm Salāmah رضى الله عنها was watching this incident from behind a curtain. She called the two blessed souls from inside the curtain asking them to spare a little from that *tabarruk* for their mother (meaning for herself).

This Ḥadīth too testifies that soon after the revelation of the order of Ḥijāb, the blessed wives used to stay inside homes and behind curtains.

### Special Note

Also noteworthy in this narration is the fact that even the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were fond of his *tabarrukat* (plural of *tabarruk* meaning something blessed) just like other Muslims. This too is a singularity of his sanctified person alone, otherwise, the informal relationship a husband has with his wife would have made it habitually impossible to maintain this degree of reverence.

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه in Kitāb-ul-'Adab of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhari, he and Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه were once going somewhere with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He was riding a camel. Ummul-Mu'minin, Sayyidah Safiyyah رضى الله عنها was also riding with him. En route, the camel stumbled all of a sudden and, according to the

report of Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah, when he and Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah fell down from the back of the camel, Abū Ṭalḥah presented himself before him and submitted, 'May Allah accept me as ransom for you, are you hurt?' He said, 'No, you take care of the woman.' The first thing Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah did was to hide his face with a piece of cloth, then he reached Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah and threw a sheet of cloth over her after which she stood up. Then, in the same manner, keeping her hidden behind proper cover, he had her mount her camel.

In this event too which came suddenly in the form of an accident, there is a lesson. It provides testimony to the fact that the noble Ṣaḥābah and the blessed wives gave great importance to the matter of Ḥijāb. The attention paid and the care and concern shown in this incident hardly leave any room for further explanations.

A Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ud رضي الله عنه in Jami' of Tirmidhī reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا خَرَجَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ اسْتَشْرَفَهَا الشَّيْطَانُ (قال الترمذی هذا حديث حسن صحيح غريب)

When a woman comes out (of her house), the Shaytan marks her out (that is, makes her a means of spreading evil among Muslims) - (Tirmidhī has termed this Ḥadīth as *ḥasan*, *ṣaḥīḥ*, *gharīb*).

And Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Ḥibban have also reported the following additional words in this Ḥadīth: وَأَقْرَبُ مَا تَكُونُ مِنْ وَجْهِ رَبِّهَا وَهِيَ فِي فَرْجِ بَيْتِهَا (And [a woman] is closer to her Rabb [Lord] when she is [hidden] in the midmost [section] of her house.

Present in this Ḥadīth too is the evidence of the fact that the real thing for women is no other but that they stay in their homes and do not go out (occasions of need remaining an exception).

And in a Ḥadīth; the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: لَيْسَ لِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ فِي الْخُرُوجِ (For women, there is no share in going out except when inevitable) - reported by Ṭabarānī, as quoted by Kanz, p. 283, v. 8)

And says a narration from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه: 'Once I was present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked the noble Ṣaḥābah, أَيُّ شَيْءٍ خَيْرٌ لِلْمَرْأَةِ? What is better for women? The Ṣaḥābah kept silent. They said nothing in response. Later, when I went home, I repeated the same

question before Faṭimah رضى الله عنها. She said, لَا يَرَيْنَ الرَّجَالَ وَلَا يَرَوْنَهُنَّ [that is, it is better for women that] 'neither they see men, nor are seen by them.' When I reported the answer given by her to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he said, صَدَقَتْ إِنَّهَا بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي (She said it right. Of course, she is a part of me).

The reason why Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was left behind in the wilderness during the event of Ifk was no other but that the Ḥijāb of the blessed wives was not simply restricted to the *burqa'* or long sheet, in fact, even while traveling, they used to be in their camel-litter (*shughduf* or *hawdaj*). This *shughduf* itself was mounted on the camel and was dismounted as such. A *shughduf* is like a miniature roomette for the traveler. During the course of this event, when the caravan started leaving, the attendants following their usual practice mounted the *shughduf* on the back of the camel assuming that the Ummul-Mu'minīn was already in there. But, the truth of the matter was that she was not there in it, rather, had gone out of it for physical relief. It was in this misunderstanding that the caravan departed and the Ummul-Mu'minīn was left behind in the wilderness.

This event too is a strong evidence of the fact that the sense of Islamic legal Ḥijāb as understood by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed wives was but that women stay in their homes and, if traveling, in their *shughduf* (camel-litter), their presence was not to be exposed before men. Then, this was the care and concern shown regarding the observance of Ḥijāb from men in the state of travel. From this, one can imagine the level of importance of Ḥijāb when a woman is in her normal residence.

### The second degree of Ḥijāb with *burqa'*

On occasions of need, when a woman has to go out of her house, she is required to be covered up from the head to the feet in some *burqa'* or long sheet in a manner that no part of the body is left exposed. This has its proof in the verse (59) of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb that is coming up a little later: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ (O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them - 33:59). The original word used by the Qur'ān for 'shawls' is *jilbāb* (plural: *jalābīb*) which is a long sheet in which a woman gets to be hidden from the head to the feet. (This has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه)

Ibn Jarīr has, citing his own chains of authority, has reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه the manner in which a *jilbāb* is used, that is, a woman should be wrapped therein, from the head to the feet, and that her face and nose too be hidden behind it - leaving only one eye uncovered to see the way. A detailed explanation of this verse will appear later. Here, the only purpose is to point out that, on occasion of need, when a woman has to go out of the house, then, she has to opt for this degree of Ḥijāb, that is, she be covered up with a *jilbāb* or something similar from the head to the feet, and that her face too - with the exception of one eye - be hidden.

This form too is permissible on occasions of need in accordance with the consensus of the jurists of the Muslim community. But, there are Ṣaḥīḥ (sound) *aḥadīth* where some restrictions have been placed even on the choice of this form, for example, she should not be wearing perfume, or ringing ornaments, and that she should walk on the side of the street and that she should not enter a crowd of men.

### **The third degree of Islamic legal Ḥijāb about which jurists differ**

The third degree of Ḥijāb is that the whole body of the woman is hidden from the head to the feet, but the face and palms remain open. The question whether this degree of Ḥijāb (where face and palms are exposed) is permissible has been a matter of difference of opinion between Muslim jurists which has emerged from different interpretations of the words إِلَّا مَظَاهِرَ (except that which is open) occurring in Sūrah An-Nūr (24:31) Some commentators have interpreted these words to mean the face and palms, and therefore they have exempted them from Ḥijāb, and have held that it is permissible to leave them open. (as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās). But there are others among them who take the expression to mean *burqa*, *jilbāb* etc. These commentators hold it impermissible to expose face and palms. (as reported by Sayyidnā Ibn Mas‘ūd). But, even according to those who have called it permissible, the permissibility is subject to the condition that there should be no apprehension of *fitnah* (situation resulting in some evil consequence). Since the face of a woman is at the center of her beauty and embellishment, therefore, the absence of any apprehension of *fitnah* is a rare likelihood. Ultimately, for this reason, under normal conditions, opening the face etc. is not permissible even according to the first group of commentators.



Three Imāms - Mālik, Shafi'ī and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal - out of the four took to the strict position and held it absolutely impermissible to expose face and palms, whether or not there is an apprehension of *fitnah*. As for Imām Abū Ḥanifah, he has, though, taken a different view, yet he has subjected it to the condition that there is no apprehension of *fitnah*, and since this condition remains customarily missing, therefore, Ḥanafī jurists too have not permitted the opening of the face and palms before non-Maḥrams.

The citations regarding the views of the four Imāms have been given in detail with reference to authentic books of these schools in this humble writer's treatise entitled *Tafsīl-ul-Khitāb*, published as part of the major work on *Aḥkam-ul-Qur'ān*. Since the original ruling of the Ḥanafī jurists opts for the exemption of the face and palms from Ḥijāb, therefore, a few citations of the Ḥanafī jurists are being given here in which it is mentioned that, due to the apprehension of *fitnah*, exposing face and palms is forbidden :

إِعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا مُلَازِمَةَ بَيْنَ كَوْنِهِ لَيْسَ عَوْرَةً وَجَوَازِ النَّظَرِ إِلَيْهِ، فَحُلُّ النَّظَرِ مُنَوِّطٌ بِعَدَمِ خَشْيَةِ الشَّهْوَةِ مَعَ انْتِفَاءِ الْعَوْرَةِ، وَلِذَا حُرِّمَ النَّظَرُ إِلَى وَجْهِهَا وَوَجْهِهِ الْأَمْرَدِ إِذَا شَكَّ فِي الشَّهْوَةِ وَلَا عَوْرَةَ. (فتح القدير، ص ١٨١ ج ١)

"Let it be understood that there is no incumbency between the non-cover-worthiness of a certain part of the body and the permissibility of looking at it, because the permissibility of looking at it depends on there being no apprehension of sexual desire - although, that part of the body is not included under 'awrah (that which is coverable). For this reason, casting a look at the face of a female stranger (non-Mahram woman) or at the face of a beardless boy is forbidden when there is no doubt about the emergence of any sexual desire, although, the face is not included under 'awrah (that which has to be hidden)." (Fath-ul-Qadīr, page 181, volume 1)

From this observation of Fath-ul-Qadīr, we also come to know the exact meaning of the 'apprehension of sexual desire' i.e. for all practical purposes, though there may not exist any actual desire, but one may have a reasonable apprehension that such a desire will develop by looking at the face, it will be included in the *fitnah*. When such a doubt does exist, then, it is forbidden to look not only at the face of female strangers,

rather, even at the face of beardless boys. In addition to that, another explanation of the 'apprehension of sexual desire' appears in Jami' ar-Rumuz where it is said: 'It means that one's inner self is inclined to be close to her.' It is obvious that the absence of such a degree of inclination was rare even during the time of the early forbears of Islam (*salaf*). That the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when he saw Sayyidnā Faḍl ﷺ looking at a woman, had turned his face to the other side with his own blessed hands is mentioned in Ḥadīth and is a clear proof of it. So, in this age infested with all sorts of corruption, who can claim to be immune to this apprehension?

And Imām Sarakhsi, the famous Ḥanafī scholar, has concluded his detailed discussion on the issue by saying:

وَهَذَا كُلُّهُ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنِ النَّظَرُ عَنْ شَهْوَةٍ، فَإِنْ كَانَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ إِنْ نَظَرَ اسْتَهْوَى لَمْ يَحِلَّ لَهُ  
النَّظَرُ إِلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْهَا. (مبسوط، ص ١٥٢، ج ١٠)

And all this (the permissibility of looking at the face and palms) is restricted to a situation where one does not look at a woman with sexual desire. And if the person doing it knows that his looking at the face of a woman may motivate sexual inclinations, then, it is not lawful for him to cast a look towards any part of her body. (Mabsūt, page 152, volume 10)

And in Kitāb-ul-Karāhiyah of Radd-ul-Muḥtār, 'Allamāh Shāmi has said:

فَإِنْ خَافَ الشَّهْوَةَ أَوْ شَكَّ إِمْتِنَاعَ النَّظَرِ إِلَى وَجْهِهَا، فَحِلُّ النَّظَرِ مُعَيَّدٌ بِعَدَمِ الشَّهْوَةِ  
وَالْأَفْحَرَامِ، وَهَذَا فِي زَمَانِهِمْ، وَأَمَّا فِي زَمَانِنَا فَمُنْعٌ مِنَ الشَّائَةِ إِلَّا النَّظَرُ لِحَاجَةٍ  
كَقَاضٍ وَشَاهِدٍ يَحْكُمُ وَيَشْهَدُ وَأَيْضًا قَالَ فِي شُرُوطِ الصَّلَاةِ وَتَمْنَعِ الشَّابَةِ مِنْ  
كَشْفِ الْوَجْهِ بَيْنَ رَجَالٍ لَا لِأَنَّهُ عَوْرَةٌ بَلْ لِخَوْفِ الْفِتْنَةِ.

"If there exists an apprehension or doubt of sexual desire, looking at her will stand forbidden, because the lawfulness of looking is tied up with the absence of sexual desire, and when this condition is missing, it will be haram (forbidden) - and this is how it was during the time of the early forbears of Islam (*salaf*). But, as for our time, looking at women stands prohibited in an absolute sense - unless looking is needed for a valid reason recognized by the Sharī'ah, such as, in the case of a judge or witness who have to give a verdict or evidence." And in Shurut-us-Ṣalāh, the author has further observed, "A young

woman is prohibited from leaving her face open before (non-Maḥram) men not because the face is included in the 'awrah, but because of the apprehension of *fitnah*."

The gist of this debate and difference among jurists is that Imām Shafi'ī, Imām Mālik and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, may Allah have mercy on them, have held the act of glancing at young women as prohibited absolutely, because it is usually a cause of *fitnah*, even though in a particular case it does not cause *fitnah* in actual terms. This approach has many precedents in Sharī'ah. For instance, since traveling is usually a cause of difficulties, therefore, traveling itself has been held as a 'difficulty' for allowing concessions meant for difficult situations; thus a person may enjoy all concessions in Ṣalāh and fasting etc. when traveling, even if he does not face any difficulty during his journey and finds it more comfortable than his home. Similarly, since one is unconscious while asleep and wind would pass usually, therefore, sleep itself has been taken by the Sharī'ah as passing of wind, and it is held that every sleep invalidates wudu', whether or not wind has passed in reality.

But, Imām Abū Ḥanifah did not hold the exposure of a woman's face and palms as *fitnah* in itself. Instead of that, he subjected the prohibition to the existence of *fitnah* in actual terms. In other words, this would be a situation in which there exists the apprehension or the probability of being attracted towards the woman seeking nearness to her. If so, it would stand prohibited; where this probability does not exist, it will be permissible. But, as we already know, the absence of such probability in this time of ours is absolutely rare. Therefore, the Ḥanafī jurists of later days, too, ultimately gave the same ruling given by the other three Imāms, that is, it is prohibited to look even at the face and palms of a young woman.

Now the outcome of this presentation is that, by a consensus of the four Imāms, this third degree of Islamic legal Ḥijāb, which stipulated that a woman appears before men after having covered her whole body in a burqa' or sheet etc., but leaving her face and palms exposed, stands prohibited. Therefore, what remains now of Ḥijāb is no more than its first two degrees. One of these is the real objective, that is, women remain inside their homes and do not go out without need. The other is going out

covered with *burqa'* or sheet on the basis of need, only at a time of need and to the extent of need.

### Ruling

In the injunctions of Ḥijāb mentioned above, there are some exceptions. For example, some males identified as Mahrams are exempted from Ḥijāb and very old women too are somewhat exempted from the purview of the common injunction of Ḥijāb. Some of its related detail has appeared in the commentary on Sūrah An-Nūr. (Mā'arif-ul-Qur'ān, volume vi) Some of it will appear later in the verses of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb where this exemption finds mention.

In view of the importance of the issue of Ḥijāb, we have reproduced a few essential points from our treatise entitled Tafsīl-ul-Khitāb fi Aḥkam-il-Ḥijāb, something sufficient for common readers. Should someone be interested in an exhaustive treatment of the subject, it could be seen in the treatise under reference. This treatise has been published in Aḥkam-ul-Qur'ān under the section dealing with the Tafsīr of Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb. (And Allah, the Pure, the High, knows best).

### Verse 56

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ  
وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

**Surely, Allah and His angels send blessings to the Prophet. O those who believe, do pray Allah to bless him, and send your Salām (prayer for his being in peace) to him in abundance. [56]**

### Commentary

In verses previous to this, some peculiarities and distinctions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were mentioned as an adjunct to which the command to observe Ḥijāb was revealed while some injunctions of Ḥijāb will also appear later on. In between, the present verse contains a command to do something for which all these peculiarities and distinctions have been instituted in his blessed person, that is, the recognition and expression of the greatness of the station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as an invitation to imbibe into one's own self the virtues of reverence, love and