Women in Islam

Some extreme Muslim groups have misinterpreted the Qu’ran and have treated women poorly as a result, however, In the divine relationship between men and women, Islam has assigned a position of dignity and honor to women. Such beneficent regulation is essential for peace, comfort, happiness, continuation of the species and progress. The Holy Quran emphasizes that God in His perfect wisdom has created all species in pairs, and so men and women have been created of the same species; as is said: “He created you from a single being; then of the same kind made

its mate.” (39:7)

***The Hijab:***

There are a myriad of reasons why women wear a hijab (or a head covering), but the easy, one sentence answer is, because they believe God has made it an obligation for believing women. In the Quran God tells the believing men and women to lower their gaze and to dress modestly. He (God) specifically addresses women when He asks them not to show off their adornment, except that which is apparent, and draw their veils over their bodies. (Quran 24:30-31)

These verses of Quran are known as the verses of hijab and it is the consensus of Islamic scholars that they make the wearing of hijab mandatory. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar do enforce a dress code. Women there are expected to cover their hair and wear some sort of loose fitting, full-length garment over their clothes. However, for the majority of Muslim women around the world, to cover, or not to cover, is a freely made choice. God requires Muslim women to dress modestly and to wear the hijab in public and in the presence of men who are not close relatives.

While those who seek to ban hijab refer to it as a symbol of gender based repression, the women who choose to wear 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.

Hijab frees women from being thought of as sexual objects of desire or from being valued for their looks, or body shape rather then their minds and intellect. No longer slaves to consumerism, hijab liberates women from the need to conform to unrealistic stereotypes and images dictated by the media. Women wearing hijab have expressed that dressing modestly and covering their hair, minimises sexual harassment in the workplace. The aura of privacy created by hijab is indicative of the great value Islam places upon women.

It is true that in some families and in some cultures women are forced to wear hijab but this is not the norm. The Quran clearly states that there is no compulsion in religion (2:256). Women who choose to wear hijab do not make the decision lightly. In fact many women testify that they faced great animosity from their Muslim or non-Muslim families when they decided to cover. Across the globe there are numerous instances of women having to defend their right to wear the hijab.

<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/2770/> // <http://www.alislam.org/library/WOMANINISLAM.pdf>

***Questions to discuss:***

* What is a hijab?
* What are specific reasons why women wear a hijab?
* Why do some people disagree with women wearing a hijab?

