

And, it is reported that Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "It is better for any of you that an iron spike be rammed into his head than that he should touch a woman who is not lawful to him." [Narrated by : Bayhaqi and Tabarani]

The head and hair must be covered, without any disagreement. There is *ijma`* (consensus) of the scholars on this, and hence any claim to the contrary is a *bid`ah*. That there is support for the *bid`ah* from a handful of contemporary individuals is of no consequence, because the *ijma`* was enacted prior to that, and also because of the clear evidences the dissenters have contradicted. Allah says, (translated), "And let [the believing women] not reveal their beauty, except that of it which is apparent, and let them clasp their scarves over their bosoms."

The application of this verse to covering the head is twofold:

- i. Women are prohibited from revealing their beauty, and the hair is certainly a site of beauty. The exception from covering (viz. for that beauty which is apparent) does not apply to the head or hair, because of the lack of any evidence to indicate it. The phrase 'that which is apparent' is *mujmal* (not of well-defined import), and requires specification (*bayan*), which is provided in the hadith in the form of clarification that it refers to the hands and the face. No such specification exists to exclude covering of the head.
- ii. Women are commanded to clasp their scarves over their bosoms, i.e. to cover their chests and necks with the scarves, in addition to the head - as opposed to merely covering the head while leaving the neck and chest exposed as was the practice of women of Jahiliyyah. [Narrated by Ibn Abi Hatim]

As for the claim that one could cover one's neck and chest, but leave the head exposed, this is inadmissible on at least two counts:

- i. The word used in the verse is *khumur*, plural of *khimar*, which is a head covering. [Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Ruh al-Ma`ani] If a piece of cloth is used for covering some other part of the body, it is not a head covering. Should it be contended that it is still, in essence, a head covering being put to another use, we shall respond that this is even further-removed from acceptability. Were it to be true, it suggests redundancy and vainness in the words of Allah, the Exalted, which is inadmissible without disagreement. If it be claimed that any type of covering can be called a *khimar*, we reply that :
  - a. the verse talks not about '*khumur*' in general, but about 'their *khumur*', i.e. the women's *khumur*, and these are the scarves which they were wearing on their heads, and thus it is established that the *khimar* here is a scarf, and not merely some covering.
  - b. one cannot look at the Qur'an in isolation; the [sunnah](#) must necessarily be consulted to explain, clarify and specify the Qur'an, and the sunnah clarifies that the head is part of the nakedness.
- ii. It is against *ijma`*

2.3.2 When a woman is alone, or in the presence of Muslim women, her nakedness is that between her navel and her knees. In the presence of mahram men, she must, in addition, cover her belly and back. [al-Hidayah / Fath al-Qadir] The obligation of covering the back is understood from the legislation concerning *zihar* - a pagan custom in which a man would liken his wife's back to his mother's back to indicate that he no longer had desire for sexual relations her. The Qur'an condemns *zihar* and stipulates an atonement for it [Qur'an, 58:1-4]. This indicates that the wife's back cannot become like the mother's back, and hence that it is not permissible to look at one's mother's back. If the back is a nakedness in this regard, it is fitting, by analogy, that the belly also be. By further analogy, this regulation is extended to other mahram women.

2.3.3 The voice of the woman is not nakedness, because the wives of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to speak to the Companions, who used to listen to the regulations of the

religion from them. But, it is forbidden to listen to her voice if one fears temptation, even in recitation of the Qur'an. Allah has said, (translated), "So, do not be soft in speech [O women], lest he in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire." [Qur'an, 33:32]

See : "[Talking to the opposite sex](#)" for more details.

2.3.4 A number of scholars have regarded the woman's entire body to be nakedness, without any exception outside of salah. This is one of the views reported from Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and is the view of most of the latter Shafi'i scholars. They view the evidence we have cited as being abrogated, and cite other evidence in their favor, including the practice of the women of Madinah, who covered their entire bodies, with the exception of one or both eyes upon the descent of the verse, (translated), "O Prophet! Tell your wives, your daughters and the believing women to draw their *jalabib* (outer garments) over themselves." [Qur'an, 33:59]

Thus, it is at least recommended, and certainly more precautionary, for women to cover their faces, hands and feet also. The word used in the verse, *jalabib* (plural of *jilbab*), refers to an outer garment which covers the body completely, and so this is also an argument in favor of covering the face. Also indicating the covering of the face is the verse, (translated), "And, when you ask them (the Wives of the Prophet) for something you need, then ask them from behind a veil; that is more pure for your hearts and for theirs." [Qur'an, 33:53]

The reasoning here is that if covering the face was a requirement for the Mothers of the Believers, whom Allah has purified [See Qur'an, 33:33], and who talked to the Companions, the best of generations, and that only on matters of religion, then it is more fitting and imperative that women beneath them in station should observe the same, especially in times of greater moral decadence in society.

Even if the face is not considered a nakedness, it is obligatory to cover it if there is a danger of *fitnah*. [Radd al-Muhtar]

## 2.4 The `Awhrah of a Child

Al-Tharvi provides the following information :

2.4.1 A very small child has no `awrah [based on a hadith extracted by Bayhaqi. Hafiz al-Zayla'i has mentioned in Nasb al-Rayah that it is not strong. Mufti Muhammad Taqi al-'Uthmani, the editor of *I'la al-Sunan* mentions that its narrators are trustworthy, although there was some disagreement over one of them. In either case, if there is no authentic narration on a matter, many scholars take by even a weak narration.]

2.4.2 Then, when the child starts to have a sense of feeling/shame (which varies from one child to another; some suggested an age of 4 years), the `awrah is the front and back private parts.

2.4.3 The `awrah gradually increases with age (according to some) until the age of ten.

2.4.4 At the age of ten, it becomes the same as the `awrah of an adult. This is to accustom the child to covering the `awrah, and is by analogy from the hadith about ordering children to perform salah when they are ten years old. It is not technically a fard on the child, but it is a fard on the parents to enforce it.

## 2.5 Further, General Regulations

In addition to covering the required parts of the body, the following should also be observed :

2.4.1 *The clothes should not be transparent.* The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "There are two categories of the inhabitants of Hell that I have not seen: People with whips like the tails of cows, with which they beat people, and women who are clothed yet naked, swaying, and moving out of Allah's religion; their heads are like an inclined camel's hump. They will not enter Heaven, nor smell its fragrance, though its fragrance can be smelt from such and such a distance." [Narrated by : Muslim, Ahmad, Malik.]

2.4.2 *The clothes should not be tight* to the extent that they reveal the shape of what they are supposed

to be covering.

It is reported that Usamah ibn Zaid was given a piece of *Qibtiyyah* cloth by the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Later, the Prophet asked Usamah why he was not wearing it. Usamah replied, "O Messenger of Allah! I gave it to my wife for a garment." The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "Tell her to make a lining for it, for I fear it may describe her frame." [Narrated by : Ahmad and Bazzar]

#### 2.4.3 *The clothes should not be of those characteristic of the unbelievers*

"Whoever imitates a people is one of them." [Narrated by: Abu Dawud, Ahmad, Bukhari, Tabarani and Bazzar]

"And differ from the allies of Satan with all that you are able." [Narrated by : Tabarani]

#### 2.4.4 *The clothing should not be characteristic of the opposite sex*

"The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) cursed those among women who imitate men, and those among men who imitate women." [Narrated by : Bukhari]

#### 2.4.5 *The clothing should not be worn for vanity or fame*

2.4.6 Men may not wear silk, gold or silver, with the exception of a silver ring.

2.4.7 Women's clothing should not be such as to attract undue attention to them, as with extremely bright colors.

## References

Much of the text of this article has been adapted from the following two sources:

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Substantiating evidences and discussions were taken mainly from:

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# The Lawful and the Prohibited

## The Lawful and the Prohibited

[See also : "Prohibition and Permission" from *Mukhtasar al-Quduri*]

### ✚ Prelude

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### ✚ Avoiding Doubtful Things

## Prelude

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has said : Allah, the Mighty, the Majestic, has said : "Whoever adopts enmity towards one of My awliya' (sing waliyy : friend or ally), I announce war on him. My servant does not draw nearer to Me by anything more beloved to Me than that which I have made obligatory upon him. And, My servant continues to draw nearer to Me by [performing] supererogatory/extra deeds until I love him. Then, when I love him, I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. If he is to ask something of Me, I will surely give him, and if he is to seek refuge with Me, I will surely grant him refuge." [Bukhari]

This hadith informs us that Allah has certain beloved people, who are called awliya. These people have a special status before Allah, such that their hearing, sight and limbs all become occupied with worship of Allah. Their supplications are readily answered, and Allah grants them protection when they seek it.

Naturally, this status of wilayah is one we would all like to attain, and the hadith indicates to us how we might do this. Firstly, one must perform all of the obligations (fard, wajib), which includes avoiding all of the prohibited deeds (haram). These are the first priority, and hence to neglect these while busying oneself with supererogatory deeds is clearly a delusion. We should beware of Satan who may make us busy ourselves with supererogatory good deeds, at the expense of forfeiting the obligations.

When one is performing all of the obligations and avoiding all of the prohibitions, then he may attempt to perform whatever he is capable of from among the optional/voluntary good deeds. Then, as one continues to draw closer to Allah in this manner, he may reach the status of wilayah mentioned earlier. The first priority, however, is to take care of performing the obligations and avoiding the prohibitions. One who is doing only this, is in fact superior to someone who is performing abundant supererogatory/optional good deeds, but at the same time persisting in some forbidden deeds.

The obligations and prohibitions in Islam are of various types and levels. The most important obligation, of course, is the correct faith (iman). Then, among the rites of worship, the most important is salah. Some obligations are intrinsically acts of worship (such as prayer and fasting). Others are not acts of worship in themselves, but rather lay down the guidelines for our behavior in certain situations we may encounter in our daily activities (such as eating, drinking, walking, etc.) What we want to do today is to remind ourselves of some orders and prohibitions of the latter category. However, before we start listing them, there are some general guidelines on the subject, which we should bear in mind.

### 1) The Right to Legislate is Allah's

The right to legislate - to declare things lawful or prohibited - belongs to Allah. It is not the prerogative of human beings to make their own choices binding. Hence, if one does not have knowledge about a matter, he should not hastily declare it to be one way or the other.

"And do not say, concerning that which your tongues put forth falsely, 'This is lawful and this is prohibited,' so as to invent lies against Allah. Verily, those who invent lies against Allah will not succeed." [Qur'an, 16:116]

To knowingly infringe upon that right is major shirk.

"They took their rabbis/priests and monks, as lords besides Allah." [Qur'an, 9:31]

In a hadith, it is clarified that the corrupt priests/rabbis and monks of earlier nations "prohibited the permissible [the people], and legitimized the prohibited for them, and [the people] followed them, and so that was [the people's] worship of them." [Ahmad, Tirmidhi]

So, once it has become clear that Allah or the Prophet have forbidden something, no-one has the right to declare

that thing lawful. Similarly, no-one has the right to declare prohibited that which Allah and the Prophet have declared permissible.

## 2) Everything is Permissible Except that which Has Been Explicitly Prohibited

We should realize that the permissible things are much more than the prohibited. In fact, the preferred view among the scholars of usul is that the general rule (with a couple of exceptions : sexual intercourse and meat, as we mention later on) is that things are permissible, and that the prohibited things are those which are excepted from this general rule through explicit mention of prohibition in the Qur'an or hadith.

"[Allah] is Who has created for you all of that which is upon the earth." [Qur'an, 2:29]

"Say : Who has prohibited the adornment [created by] Allah which He has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance? Say : They are for those who believe in this world, [and] exclusively [for them] on the Day of Resurrection." [Qur'an, 7:32]

"....He has detailed to you what He has prohibited for you...." [Qur'an, 6:119]

It should be noted, however, that in matters of `ibadat (ritual worship), the reverse is the case; i.e. one may not claim something to be a form of `ibadah unless it has been specified as such in the Qur'an or Sunnah.

## 3) It is in our interest to obey Allah

Allah does not seek to make our lives miserable. Nor is there any benefit or harm to Him in our observing His laws. Rather, we should realize that if Allah or the Prophet have ordered or prohibited something, then there is some underlying wisdom to that injunction, such that it is to our own benefit to obey it. In some cases (e.g. prohibition of wine and adultery) at least some of the wisdom may be clear; in other cases, it may not be as apparent. But, once we know that something is ordered by Allah or the Prophet, then we will have no hesitation in following it, for Allah's knowledge is greater than ours, and all-encompassing.

"[Allah] has not placed upon you any hardship in religion." [Qur'an]

"Allah desires to make light [your load]. And mankind was created weak." [Qur'an, 4:28]

## 4) In the Halal (Permissible) there is Sufficiency from the Haram (Prohibited)

For virtually every need which we have, there is a legitimate, as well as an illegitimate form of fulfilling it. For example, Allah has prohibited adultery, but permitted marriage. He has prohibited interest and usury, but has allowed all types of legitimate and fair trade. As we said, the laws are not to make our lives miserable. Rather, we have the choice between fulfilling our needs in conformance with the laws, or in violation of them.

## 5) This World is a Place of Testing

Although there is a halal alternative to virtually every haram, that is not to say that it will always be just as easy to obey the divine commandments. But, we know that this world is a place of testing for us, and if there were no inclination or impetus to commit evil, the true sense of testing would not be realized. So, observing the laws might sometimes seem to cause loss of some benefit or enjoyment. But, in such cases, we should realize that

that benefit is temporal and worldly, and the pleasures of Heaven far surpass it. Furthermore, we know that even worldly success and prosperity cannot be achieved without some degree of effort and sacrifice, and hence it is unreasonable to expect to achieve Paradise without any struggle against one's lower desires. The difference between the conduct of the believer and that of the unbeliever is that the former will live his life in conformance with the guidelines of Islam, whereas the latter will try to maximize his enjoyment without regard to true faith, religious scruples, ethics and morality.

"Those who reject faith enjoy themselves, and eat as the cattle eat, and the Fire shall be an abode for them." [Qur'an, 47:12]

"The world is the prison of the believer, and the heaven of the unbeliever." [Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ahmad]

"Hell is veiled by desires/lusts, and Heaven is veiled by difficulties." [Riyad al-Salihin]

". . . . Indeed, the merchandise of Allah is expensive! Indeed, the merchandise of Allah is Heaven!" [Tirmidhi, who graded it hasan gharib]

## 6) There are Degrees of Order and Prohibitions

As we have already mentioned, there are various levels of orders and prohibitions, and it is important to keep in mind and to respect these priorities. Yes, a Muslim should not adopt a complacent and nonchalant attitude, whereby he pays attention, for example, only to the major orders and avoidance of the major sins, while at the same time being heedless of minor sins. The individual should always be trying to increase his obedience to Allah, and to give up any sins he may be committing, and not to heedlessly think that the sins he is committing are only relatively minor. Ibn al-Jawzi says,

"The human keeps telling his soul to swerve away from evil and to approach good. However, this is merely a [vain] promise, and there is no doubt that it is merely hope. This kind of person walks without effort during the day. One who hopes to awaken the next morning will hardly work at night. Whoever pictures death as imminent works hard.

The parable of the person who acts upon his determined intent and the person who is comfortable with the promise of hope is like the parable of a group of people on a journey. They enter a city, and the determined one buys what he needs to complete his journey. Afterwards, he sits ready for the departure. As for the neglectful, he says to himself: We might stay here a month, so I'll get ready for that. In that state of affairs, the horn announcing departure is blown. The one who stored things away for his time of need is happy; the procrastinating, neglectful one is dark with anger and frustration." [from *Talbis Iblis (The Devil's Delusion)*, by Ibn al-Jawzi]

Nevertheless, the issue of priorities may in some scenarios come into play. For example, when advising others, who may not be as religiously observant as oneself, the priorities should be observed. For example, a man may be listening to haram music, wearing gold jewelry, and not performing the obligatory prayers. These are all sins, but to confront him with all of them at once, and expect him to give them all up immediately, may not be feasible. Hence, one may start, for example, by encouraging him to perform the obligatory salah, and then gradually progress, depending on the precise circumstances and the nature of the person.

## 7) Good Deeds Remove Evil Deeds

After having mentioned all of this, it may also be noted that if one has not yet managed to detach oneself from a sin, then he should endeavor to do more good deeds, in the hope that this may help wipe out the sin. Similarly, for sins committed in the past, one should try to do good deeds to obliterate the effects of the sins. A man told the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that he had kissed a woman. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and his Household and grant them peace) recited to him, (the words of the Qur'an meaning), "And establish salah at the two ends of the day, and in some hours of the night. Indeed, good deeds remove evil

deeds." [Qur'an, 11:114] The man asked, "Is it for me?" The Prophet (may Allah bless him and his Household and grant them peace) said, "It is for all my followers." [Bukhari] However, as we have pointed out, this should not be taken as a substitute for repenting from ongoing sins. It is merely a temporary measure - a 'patch', or an expiation for the past after having repented from a sin. One should not fall complacently into committing sins, thinking that they will be erased by subsequent good deeds. Certainly, one would not deliberately damage his car, thinking that he can always repair it later; to adopt such an approach would soon weaken the car and perhaps eventually destroy it.

We proceed now to mention some specific prohibitions which apply to situations we may encounter in our daily activities.

## CLOTHING

### Covering the `awrah *[For further details, see: Regulations of Clothing]*

We know that the `awrah (nakedness) of the man is from the navel to the knees, and for the women all of the body, except that most scholars excluded the hands and the face, and some excluded the feet. Hence, these parts must be covered during prayer and when in the presence of non-mahrams. [A mahram is a permanently unmarriageable relative, e.g. for a man, his sister, mother, daughter, etc.] If leaving any of the rest of the body (such as the back or chest of a man, or the face of a woman) is going to cause fitnah in the presence of the opposite sex, then that also should be covered. Furthermore, the clothing should not be so tight or transparent as to reveal that which it is supposed to be covering. It should not be worn for the sake of vanity, nor to resemble the unbelievers or sinners, nor to resemble the opposite sex.

As the weather gets warmer, we should pay attention to these rules, such that we do not uncover those parts which may not be revealed. It is not allowed, for example, for men to wear shorts which expose the thighs. One prophetic recommendation which may be particularly useful in hot weather is the recommendation to wear white clothing; this can help to repel the heat.

"Wear white among your clothes, for they are of the best of your clothes, and shroud your dead in them." [Tirmidhi (hasan sahih), Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad]

### Looking and Touching

"Tell the believing men that they should lower their gazes and protect their chastities. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah knows what they do.

And tell the believing women that they should lower their gazes and protect their chastities, and that they should not reveal their beauty except that of it which is apparent, and that they should draw their scarves over their bosoms." [Qur'an, 24:30-31]

It is not permissible for a man to look at a stranger-woman with lust. If one is free from lust and arousal, he may look at her face and hands according to a minority of scholars. But, in any case, there is no license for indiscriminate looking, for one will generally not know before looking whether or not one is going to be aroused.

Jabir asked the Prophet (may Allah bless him and his Household and grant them peace) about an unintentional look, and he was told to turn his gaze away. [Muslim]

The Prophet told another Companion, not to follow the first (unintentional) look with a second (deliberate) look, for the first one is excused, but the second is not. If one's eyes unintentionally fall on a member of the opposite sex, one should stop looking as soon as one realizes it, and should neither continue looking nor look again deliberately, for the gaze is one of the poisoned arrows of Satan. Looking is described in a hadith of al-Bukhari as fornication of the eyes. Similarly, touching is fornication of the hands. Al-Bukhari has narrated that the hand of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his Household) never touched the hand of a woman not lawful

to him.

Under exceptional cases, it is permissible to look intentionally at the face and hands of a woman, even if one fears lust, except that he must try to restrain the lust as much as possible. These special cases are:

- For a doctor who needs to look at the *awrah* of a patient for medical reasons. Ideally, one should consult a Muslim doctor of the same sex. However, if one is forced to go to a non-Muslim doctor, or to one of the opposite sex, then as little as possible of the *awrah* should be revealed.
- For a judge who needs to pass a verdict on a woman, or a witness who wishes to testify regarding her.
- For a suitor who is seriously considering marrying a woman; he may look at her face and hands to help make up his mind. But, once he has made up his mind, he may not look.

A man may look at his mahram female relatives' face, head, chest, shins and arms, but according to the Hanafis he may not look at their back or belly. A man may look at all of the body of another man except for that which is between his navel and his knees. A Muslim woman may look at all of the body of another Muslim woman, except for the area between the navel and the knees.

"A man shall not look at the nakedness of [another] man, nor shall a woman look at the nakedness of [another] woman." [Muslim]

According to the majority of jurists, a Muslim woman should not reveal, in the presence of a non-Muslim woman - and similarly before a morally corrupt Muslim woman - anything more than what she would reveal to a stranger man, for there is a danger of their describing what they have seen to men. The Hanbalis differed in considering the regulations to be identical for Muslim and non-Muslim women. Some Malikis took an intermediate stance, allowing some concessions in front of close females from whom mischief is not expected.

## Prohibited Types of Garments

There are also certain restrictions on the types of materials that may be worn.

Men may not generally wear silk. The prohibition applies whether the silk is touching the body or not. The notion that it is only prohibited if it touches the skin is not credible, and is unaccepted. [As mentioned by Ibn 'Abidin in "Radd al-Muhtar"]

"Wearing silk and gold have been prohibited for the males of my ummah, but are permissible for the females among them." [Tirmidhi (hasan sahih), Nasa'i; Similar narrations have been recorded by Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad. Bukhari and Muslim have also narrated the prohibition of silk.]

'Umar ibn al-Khattab saw a silken garment and said to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), "I wish you would buy this, so that you wear it before people on the day of Jumu'ah, and for delegations when they come to you!" But the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "Only he wears this who has no share in the Hereafter." [Muslim]

Concessions to wear silk exist for

small silken badges of a couple of fingers' width

'Umar ibn al-Khattab said, "The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) forbade the wearing of silk, except for the area of two fingers, or three, or four." [Muslim]

brocade in which the warp is of silk and the weft of cotton or some other fabric.