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Response to the lies and distortions of christian missionaries about the position of women in islam



Part 3, Written by Kevin el-Karim

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He wrote:

With regard to the evidence that it is obligatory to cover the face and hands,

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "O Prophet ! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over

Surah Al-Ahzaab 33 ayah 59

Ya ayyuha an-Nabi, qul li azwajika wa banatika wa nisa al-muminin yudnina alayhinna min jalabib hinna; dhalika adna an yu'rafna fa laa yu'dhayn. Wa kana Allahu Ghafur ar-Rahim

Yaa = Oh

Ayuha = You

Nabiyu = Prophet

Qul = Say

Li = to

Azwaajika = Your Wives

Wa = And

Banaatika = Your Daughters

Wa = And

Nisaaa = Women

Al Muminin = Believers (feminine plural)

Yudniina Alayhinna Min Jalaabiibihinn = Draw their garments close around them

Yudniina literally means to bring closer or to lower something, in this case the jilbab. Nowhere does the verse says that the face should be covered. In fact, the verse is devoid of the word 'face'. Like Shayk Albani said: "This misinterpretation is contrary to the basic meaning of the word in Arabic which is "to come close", as is mentioned in authoritative dictionaries like al-Mufradaat by the well-known scholar, ar-Raaghib al-Asbahaanee."

The ayah quoted from Surah Al-Ahzaab only directs Muslim women to put some outer garment over their clothes, and to draw it close around them. The jilbab or outer garment should cover everything, except face and the hands. According to the majority of the scholars a combination of garments that cover what the jilbab is to cover may substitute for the jilbab. Specifically, these scholars permit the head to be covered by the headscarf / khimar and the feet to be covered by socks and shoes. As long as a sister covers her head and neck with the khimar, then her jilbab does not need to cover over her head, but may be like a coat, which just covers from the shoulders on down. And as long as her feet are completely covered with socks and shoes, then her jilbab does not need to come down to the ground but may come down only to the ankles. This is the majority position.

There are also renowned scholars like imam Abu hanifa who had the opinion that women could show their feet. Dr. `Abdul-Kareem Zidan, professor of Shari`ah at Al-Azhar University, states the following: "The majority of Muslim jurists state that the woman's feet is `Awhrah. However, the Hanafis maintain that the woman's feet are not `Awhrah. I myself prefer the opinion of the Hanafis."² Women are allowed to choose the opinion of the great Imam Hanifa.

Shayk Faraz Rabbani comments:

What is meant by an outer garment is something that: covers the awrah, is thick and non-transparent, loose, and modest. This can be something that is a separate loose garment worn over one's clothes, or simply loose clothing that fulfills the abovementioned conditions, as the scholars explicitly mention.³

...it would not be disliked to wear denim clothing (such as a jilbab for women, or loose jeans) , if it fulfills the conditions and proprieties of modest Muslim clothing.⁴

Surah al-ahzab doesn't support the opinion that the face veil is fard. There is sufficient evidence in the interpretation of the leading commentator on the Quran, Ibn 'Abbaas, who explained the verse saying, "She should bring the jilbaab close to her face without covering it."

Now we must move on to Surah an-Nur ayah 31, which was revealed after the Battle of the Ditch: this is the surah in which were revealed the definitive rules and regulations clearly prohibiting fornication, the exact punishment for its committal, the rules and regulations related to establishing whether such a serious crime had been committed, etiquettes of social visits, and the command to lower the gaze, preserve chastity and cover the body properly.

Surah an-Nur ayah 31 may be regarded as the surah which deals with decency, etiquette, public life, the appearance of Muslim men and women, social gatherings, and the permissibility of inviting and being invited for meals. This surah is the final universal Islamic statement about the topics mentioned, in particular, the covering of the Muslim women in public, as mentioned in verse 31. All other previously revealed regulations, as in Surah al-Azhab ayah 59, may be considered as either pertaining to the noble household of the Prophet, as is clear from the verse themselves; or intermediary steps necessitated by the lewd behaviour of the local thugs before specific severe punishments for such acts been revealed.

Surah an-Nur ayah 31 is final rule about the covering of the Muslim women in public. The proof of this sequence is given in the sequence of the revelation of these surahs. Al-Suyuti, in volume one of the "al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur'an" quoted Jabir Ibn Zayd as having arranged the Madinan surahs as follows: al-Baqarah, Al 'Imran, al-Anfal, al-Azhab ... He listed Surah an-Nur as the eighth surah to have been revealed at Madinah. More evidence of its later revelation, and the fact that it was revealed after Surah al-Azhab, is to be found in Surah an-Nur itself in verse 11-12, which speaks about the slander incident, in which the hypocrites impugned the most honourable Aischa, wife of the Prophet. All commentators are of the view that this incident took place following the Battle of al-Muraysi', when the Muslim expedition was returning to Madinah. At that time Zaynab, who was referred to in Surah al-Azhab, was already married to the Prophet. On the occasion of her marriage, Surah al-Azhab ayah 53 had been revealed in which the wives of the Prophet were commanded to be secluded from public view, and the Muslims, if they wished to ask anything of them, were ordered to do so from behind a curtain.

Further proof that Zaynab, at that time, was already married to the Prophet may be found in the fact that Aischa praised her dignified and restrained attitude during the slander affair, whilst Zaynab's sister Hammah was deeply implicated in spreading the rumours around Madinah. The statement of Aischa absolving Zaynab of any blame and describing her as the only person, after herself, enjoying such a high position in the affection of the Prophet, confirms the fact that Zaynab was, by that time, a well established member of the household of the Prophet.

Ibn Taymiyyah's view:

In the light of the above, it is most curious to discover that a man of such immense scholarship as Ibn Taymiyyah, in his book "The Great Fatawa (section 2: Fiqh, part 2 : Prayers, Vol. 22, p. 109 ff) " should claim that verse 59 of Surah al-Ahzab abrogates verse 31 of Surah An-Nur, when the historical evidence shows that the reverse is true: that Surah An-Nur was the final statement on the matter, and that Surah al-Azhab was an earlier step towards the final, universal rules.

In conclusion, it is clear from the historical development of Islamic rules that the later parts of the revelation are the final word. This is the main argument used by the Muslim scholars when they are faced with two texts which both deal with the same matter, but which seem to be at odds with one another. The same procedure is used by the commentators of the Qur'an and Hadith.

The famous Muslim scholar al-Suyuti in his section on "The Abrogating and the Abrogated" mentions that the abrogated verses come earlier in time, and the abrogating verses come later on. This is the usual arrangement except in two specific cases, neither of which refer to any part of Surah an-Nur ayah 31.

Another scholar, Ibn Salamah, who also wrote a book entitled "Nasikh wa Mansukh (The Abrogating and the Abrogated) " , surveyed the Qur'an, surah by surah. When he reached Surah 24 (an-Nur) , he said: the thirty-first verse of Surah an-Nur is: "and say to the believing women.." Verse 60 of the same Surah makes an exception to verse 31 in the case of elderly women who have no desire for marrying: they are permitted to discard their outer garments. Thus, verse 31 of Surah an-Nur stands as the final, unabrogated universally applicable requirement regarding the covering of the Muslim woman's 'awrah. More proof for this can be found in the next hadith:

Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 32, Number 4091:

Narrated Aisha: May Allah have mercy on the early emigrant women. When the verse "That they should extend their headcoverings to cover their bosoms" was revealed, they tore their murut and used this as khimar.

The hadith provides us with the interesting information that Surah al-Ahzab ayah 59 was apparently revealed before Surah an-Nur ayah 31 because at the time that Surah an-Nur ayah 31 was revealed the women were already wearing jilbabs. When Surah an-Nur ayah 31 was revealed, the women tore pieces off their jilbabs to make headscarves, khimar is the arabic word for headscarf. Therefore this hadith supports the evidence that Surah an-Nur ayah 31 stands as the final, unabrogated universally applicable requirement regarding the covering of the Muslim woman's 'awrah

This point has been dealt with at length in order to make it clear that it is verse 24:32 which is the final statement on the question of awrah, and not 33:59, which was an earlier measure intended to bring in some form of control until the final ruling was to be given. On the next pages Surah an-Nur ayah 31 will be explained.

Source:

Hibab or Niqab by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, Page 66 t/m 72

Surah an-Nur ayah 31 stands as the final, unabrogated universally applicable requirement regarding the covering of the Muslim woman's 'awrah.

Surah an-Nur ayah 31:

Wa qul li al-mu'minat yaghdudna min absarihinna wa yahfazna furujahunna wa laa yubdina zenatahunna illa maa zahara min haa wal-yadribna bi khumurihinna ala juyubihinna; wa laa yubdina zenatahunna illa li bu'ulatihinna aw aba'ihinna aw aba'i bu'ulatihinna aw abna'ihinna aw abna'i bu'ulatihinna aw ikhwanihinna aw bani ikhwanihinna aw bani akhawatihinna aw nisa'ihinna aw maa malakat aymanu hunna aw at-tabi'ina ghayri ulu'l-irbat min ar-rijal aw at-tifl alladhina lam yazharu ala awrat an-nisa wa laa yadribna bi arjulihinna li yu'lama maa yukhfina min zenatahinna. Wa tubu ilaAllahi jami'an, ayyuha al-mu'minun la'allakum tuflihun

Translation:

And say to the faithful women to lower their gazes, and to guard their private parts, and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it, and to extend their headcoverings (khimars) to cover their bosoms (jaybs), and not to display their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or what their right hands rule (slaves), or the followers from the men who do not feel sexual desire, or the small children to whom the nakedness of women is not apparent, and not to strike their feet (on the ground) so as to make known what they hide of their adornments. And turn in repentance to God together, O you the faithful, in order that you are successful

Pay close attention to the words: "and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it" in Surah an-Nur ayah 31. Secondly the surah tells women to extend their headcoverings over their bosoms, not faces ! Let us now examine the opinions of the famous commentators, and then those of the jurists.

Some say that the words "and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it" refers to the outer garments. This is the view of Ibn Mas'ud. Al-Hassan al-Basri is of the same view. Others say that "and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it" refers to the kohl (type of eyeliner), the ring, the two bracelets and the face. This is the opinion of : Aisha Umm al-Muminin, Anas ibn Malik, Abdullah ibn Abbas and Miswar ibn Makhrama - these are all Sahaba - and also of Ata , Qatada , Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Mujahid, al-Dahhak , and al-Hasan - these are all Tabi'un. Almost every tafsir/ commentary on the Quran will include some if not all of these authorities for this opinion. So here we clearly see that the large majority including most of the sahaba and the prophet's wife Aisha hold the opinion that "and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it" refers to the face, hands and its decorations.

Ata' , one of the scholars of the tabi 'un, said the "face and the two hands" ; Qatadah, another tabi 'i scholars, said: "I was informed that the Messenger of Allah said: "It is forbidden for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to uncover her arms, except to here, and he caught half of his hand." Among the commentators themselves, some of the most respected have followed the face and hands opinion, among these are: Imam Tabari, Imam Zamakhshari, Imam Fakhr ad-Din Razi, Imam Qurtubi. We can read what they and other renowned scholars have written in their own words:

Imam Abu Jafar Tabari

The strongest and most accurate view is that which says that the exemption refers to the face and the hands. Also included are kohl, rings, bracelets, and makeup. We say that this is the strongest and most accurate opinion because all scholars are unanimous that everyone who needs to pray must cover the awra in his or her salat. A woman may reveal the face and the hands in her salat, while she must cover the rest of her body. What is not awra is not haram to be revealed⁵

Imam Abu'l-Qasim Zamakhshari

Why is the woman permitted to display 'what is apparent of it' ? Because to conceal that would cause her inconvenience. A woman is forced to deal in commodities with her hands. She is compelled by genuine need to expose her face especially at the times of giving evidence, litigating in court, and marriage. She is compelled to walk the streets and expose her feet, especially poor women. This is the meaning of 'illa maa zahara min ha', that is, what the situations of ordinary life compel her to expose⁶

Imam Fakhr ad-Din Razi

Since the showing of the face and hands is necessary, the jurists had no choice but to agree that they are not awra.⁷

Imam Abu Abdullah Qurtubi

Since the normal case is that a woman's face and hands are revealed by the force of habit and for worship, as this is required in salat and hajj, then it is appropriate to say that the exemption applies to these⁸

Imam al-Shafi`

All a woman's body is awrah with the exception of her hands and her face. The top of her feet is also awrah⁹

Imam Abu Hanifa

It is well-known that Imam Abu Hanifa held that women may display their faces and their hands. In fact, he even held that women could display their feet, which is not a position held by any of the other madhhabs, and not by all Hanafi scholars. It is mentioned in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* by Imam ibn Rushd, which is a guide to the differences of opinion in fiqh; and it has been cited in the major Hanafi fiqh guide *Hidayat al-Muhtadi Sharh Bidayat al-Muhtadi* (commonly referred to as "al-Hidayah") by Burhan al-Din Abul-Hasan `Ali ibn `Abdul-Jalil Abu Bakr al-Marghinani al-Rushdani al-Hanafi. The face-and-hands-alone opinion has been mentioned by the Hanafi scholar Abu Bakr al-Jassas in *Ahkam al-Qur'an* and attributed to Imam Abu Hanifa by Ahmad ibn Naqib in his *Umdat as-Salik*.¹⁰

Imam ibn Rushd

Imam ibn Rushd has attributed the face-and-hands position to the Malikis in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* and this is generally agreed to be the position of the Maliki madhhab.¹¹

Imam ibn Qudama

I prefer this opinion because necessity demands that the face should be uncovered for buying and selling, and the hands should be uncovered for giving and taking"¹²

Now let us turn to those scholars who were concerned with the rules and regulations of the Qur'an. Al-Jasas, writing in the fourth century of the Hijrah era, was the first to write systematically about the rules of the Qur'an in a definitive way. In volume 3, page 315 of his work "The Rules of the Qur'an", he wrote:

Al-Jasas wrote:

...except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof – Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and 'Ata' were reported as saying: "What (must ordinarily) appear thereof" means what is in the face and hands, the colouring of the hands and the kohl in the eyes. The same applies to Ibn 'Umar and Anas. Ibn 'Abbas, in another report, added the hands, the face and the ring.

Another scholar, Abu Bakr, the author of the tafsir, quoted by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh in his book “Hibab or Niqab” said:

Abu bakr said:

The saying of Allah the Most High “..... that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof” referred to the strangers, not the husband, nor the close relatives, because He has explained, later in the same ayah, the rules relating to them. Our colleagues, the Hanafi scholars, say that this refers to the face and hands. For kohl is the ornament of the face and henna is the ornament of the hands. Once he has allowed one to look at these ornaments, this necessitates the permissibility of looking at the face and the hands. Moreover, what indicates the fact that the face and the hands are not ‘awrah is the fact that the woman prays with them uncovered. If they were ‘awrah, she should have covered them as she covers the rest which is ‘awrah.

The saying of Ibn Mas’ud, that it is the clothes, is meaningless. For it is known that He mentioned the adornment, meaning the part of the body on which it appears. You see, as regards everything that is considered to be an adornment in the form of jewelry, she is allowed to show these things to people if they were not put on, so we know that what is meant is the parts of the body on which these ornaments are worn.¹³

Now let’s take a look what another renowned Muslim scholar, Ibn al-Arabi, writing in the sixth century of the hijrah, said concerning this issue.

Ibn al-Arabi writes:

There are three views concerning the apparent adornment, 1: The clothes, that is, she is allowed to show only her clothes. This is the saying of Ibn Mas’ud, 2: The kohl and the ring. This is the saying of Ibn ‘Abbas and al-miswar ibn Makhramah. 3: The face and the hands. This view and the second one have the same meaning.

The correct point of view concerning the “apparent adornments” is that which is on the face and the hands. For it is these which appear in prayers and on hajj; as an act of ‘ibadah, and as a way of life, they are customarily uncovered.¹⁴

Moreover the word khimar used in Surah an-Nur ayah 31, must in fact be a headscarf and not a niqab / face veil. In common usage, the words ‘head’ and ‘face’ are distinct. Unless specified otherwise, the word ‘head’ is not taken to refer to the ‘face’, but instead refers to the rest of the head, while the word ‘face’ is specially used to designate the face. An example of this is the process of wudu; the Quran and hadiths mention washing the ‘face’ separately from wiping the ‘head’, and we do not again run our hands over the face when we get to the stage of wiping the head. In order to say that the khimar is a garment which covers the face, therefore, it must be specified that it covers the ‘face’. If the khimar just covers the ‘head’ then the general meaning is that it covers the hair. Keeping this in mind, here are some definitions of the khimar and what it means in classical Arabic:

The dictionary of classical Arabic, Aqrab al-Mawarid:

The word khimar refers to all such pieces of cloth which are used to cover the head. It is a piece of cloth which is used by a woman to cover her head.

Shaykh Muhammad Nasiruddin Albani:

The word khimaar linguistically means only a head covering. Whenever it is mentioned in general terms, this is what is intended

Imam Abu Abdullah Qurtubi:

Women in those days used to cover their heads with the khimar, throwing its ends upon their backs. This left the neck and the upper part of the chest bare, along with the ears, in the manner of the Christians. Then God commanded them to cover those parts with the khimar

This moreover proves that the word khimar means headscarf. Its linguistic meaning is a headcovering, not a face veil, and the information provided by both Imam Qurtubi and Shaykh Muhammad Nasiruddin Albani clearly shows that the khimar is to be worn as a headscarf not as a face veil, moreover we have seen that the words “and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it” refers to the face, hands and it’s decorations. Some scholars like Abu hanifa and al-Muzani also include the two feet as being excepted from ‘awrah.

He wrote:

It was narrated from ‘Abd-Allaah that the Prophet said: "The woman is ‘awrah and when she goes out the Shaytaan gets his hopes up." Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1173

Response:

Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad comments: “The above mistranslates ‘istashrafaha’ to mean ‘gets his hopes up’ when in fact it means ‘stares up at her,’ and the devil is here an euphemism for depraved men. Secondly this applies to the uncovered woman who might allure such men. Those are the same values as in early Christian society whereas the modern Western world can no longer understand that women are private human beings and not public sexual objects. Similarly the awra here is not literal but figurative, signifying all that should remain private. The medieval philosopher Pierre Abelard said: “If you cannot understand figurative language, avoid intellectual pursuits.” (We have also seen in my previous responses that the face and hands are being excepted from ‘awrah).¹⁵

He wrote:

And: All of the woman's body is 'awrah and must be covered during prayer, except for her face, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "No prayer will be accepted from an adult woman unless she wears a khimaar (head-cover)." (Reported by the five Muhadditheen) There is some dispute as to whether her heels and feet should be covered. The author of al-Mughni (2/328) said: "As for the rest of the free woman's body, it must be covered during prayer. If any part becomes uncovered, it renders her prayer invalid, except if only a little bit is uncovered. Maalik, al-Oozaa'i and al-Shaafi'i said the same.

The free woman who has attained the age of majority is obliged to cover her entire body during prayer, apart from her face and hands, because all of her is 'awrah. If she prays and any part of her 'awrah becomes uncovered, such as a shin or foot or all or part of her head, then her prayer is invalid, because the Prophet said: "Allaah will not accept the prayer of a woman who has started to menstruate, except with a khimaar (covering)" (Reported by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Ibn Maajah and al-Tirmidhi, with a saheeh isnaad)

Abu Dawud reported from Umm Salamah that she asked the Prophet about a woman who prayed wearing a dir' (upper garment) and a khimaar (head cover), but no izaar (lower garment). He said: "The woman is 'awrah."

As for the face, the Sunnah is to uncover it during prayer, so long as no non-mahram men are present. According to the majority of scholars, the feet must be covered; some scholars allow uncovering the feet but the majority say the opposite. Abu Dawud reported from Umm Salamah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that she was asked about a woman who prayed in a khimaar and qamees (dress or gown). She said, "There is nothing wrong with it if the dir' (chemise) covers her feet." In any case, it is better to cover the feet, to be on the safe side. As far as the hands are concerned, there is more leeway: there is nothing wrong with either covering them or uncovering them, although some scholars think that it is better to cover them. And Allaah is the Source of strength.

Response:

Here we see that the website quoted by the christian missionary Sham Shamoun admits that a women's face and hands are not awrah, yet they state that this only the case when a women prays in private. One wonders why then must a woman wear a khimar (headscarf) in private ? We now see that the website quoted by the christian missionary Sham Shamoun in their fatwa have no strong evidence at all for their opinion. On the contrary the renowned hadith scholar al-Shawkani in the 13th refutes the claim that 'uncovering of the face and hands is only allowed in prayer'

Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh in his book "Hibab or Niqab" writes:

The important point in this discussion, which will answer the objections of those who differentiate between prayer and daily life, is the fact that al-Shawkani refers the whole discussion and the differences of opinions to the discussion about the interpretation of the verse which tells women not to "display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear therefore" (Surah al-Nur, 24:31) , which is basically the statement of general application in daily life and social interaction, not the specific time of prayer.

Source:

Hibab or Niqab by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, Page 85 & 86

It is clear to anyone and the large majority of scholars agree on this that Surah an-Nur ayah 31 which tells us that the face and hands of women are not awrah (according to abu hanifa the feet are also not awrah) and therefore may be uncovered, refers to public life and social interaction.

Surah an-Nur ayah 31:

And say to the faithful women to lower their gazes, and to guard their private parts, and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it, and to extend their headcoverings (khimars) to cover their bosoms (jays), and not to display their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or what their right hands rule (slaves), or the followers from the men who do not feel sexual desire, or the small children to whom the nakedness of women is not apparent, and not to strike their feet (on the ground) so as to make known what they hide of their adornments. And turn in repentance to God together, O you the faithful, in order that you are successful

Surah an-Nur ayah 31 clearly refers to daily life and social interaction. The surah for example tells women to lower their gazes and not to stamp with their feet (to attract attention of men) etc. And like we already showed before according to the large majority of scholars and the sahaba, women are allowed uncover their faces and hands in public life.

Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh in his book "Hibab or Niqab" writes:

Al-Banna, in "al-Fath al-Rabbani", a commentary on Ibn Hanbal's collection of hadith, discusses the issue under the same title, "Covering the 'awrah". In the section "What is reported concerning the woman's body being 'awrah except for the face and the hands", Ibn Hanbal quoted Aischa's saying at the house of Safiyyah. There she saw some young girls who were offering their prayers without covering their heads. Aischa said: "They should not pray without a cover on their heads. One day the Messenger of Allah entered the house. There was a young girl in my custody. He handed me a piece of cloth saying, "Cut into two pieces, one for your maid and other for Um Salamah's maid for it appears that they both have reached the age of womanhood".

Al-Banna went through the discussion as Ibn hajar and al-Shawkani, quoting almost the same arguments. Then he added: "Imam al-Nawawi, in his notes on Muslim's collection of ahadith, mentioned a good number of rules which it is good to mention here. These are the general rules dealing with 'awrah." This however, is not the place for such a discussion. But it is in another area which is related to the question of 'awrah that we find al-Nawawi making it clear that the face and the hands are not part of the 'awrah, whether in prayer or outside of it.

It is in the book of marriage (al-nikah), in the section on the recommendation for the person wishing to marry a woman, that he should look at the face and the hands before proposing her.

Source:

Hibab or Niqab by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, page 86 t/m 88

Imam al-Nawawi wrote:

As for the free woman, her 'awrah is her whole body except the face and the two hands, for Allah Most High said: "...they should not display their beauty and ornaments excepts what (must ordinarily) appear thereof..." (Surah al-Nur, 24:31) . Ibn 'Abbas said: "That which must appear is the face and the two hands. And the Prophet forbade the woman in ihtam to put on the face veil or gloves. If the face and two hands were part of 'awrah, he would not have forbidden them to cover them. At the same time, she may need to uncover them for such day to day matters as buying, selling, giving, talking, etc. So these two areas were made exceptions from 'awrah."

The 'awrah of the free woman is her whole body except the face and the two hands up to the wrist. Some of or Khurasan scholars are of the view that the soles of the feet are not 'awrah. Al-Muzani, one of the great students of al-Shafi, said: "The two feet are not 'awrah either."

I mentioned what is well established of the Shafi'i school, that the 'awrah of the woman is verything except the face and the two hands up to the wrists. Malik is of the same view and so are other group scholars. This is one of the views of ibn Hanbal, Abu Hanifah, al-Thawri and al-Muzani also include the two feet as being excepted from 'awrah.

Source:

Sharh al-Muhaththab, vol.3 p.173. See also "Hibab or Niqab' by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, page 96 & 97.

Here we see that the large majority and renowned famous scholars of different schools of thought agreed that women are allowed to uncover their face and hands in public life. In other words the large majority of scholars agree that the face and hands are not 'awrah. In addition to this, we may infer from Allah's words, "Tell the believing men that they should lower their gazes", that the faces of the women of the Prophet's time were not veiled. Had the entire body including the face been covered, it would have made no sense to command them to lower their gaze, since there would have been nothing to be seen. Moreover the next hadith proofs that the face and hands of women are not 'awrah. The hadith has three authentic narrations and was correct by all major hadith scholars such as Albani.

Narrated by Abu Dawood Nr. 4092

Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: Asma, daughter of AbuBakr, entered upon the Apostle of Allah wearing thin clothes. The Apostle of Allah turned his attention from her. He said: O Asma', when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to her face and hands.

Notice also how the prophet here didn't talk about salat, but spoke in general terms. Therefor the large majority and renowned famous scholars of different schools of thought agreed that women are allowed to uncover their face and hands in public life. On the next pages we shall proof our stance with some more hadith.

Sahih Bukhari Book 74 Nr. 247.

Narrated Abdullah bin Abbas: Al-Fadl bin Abbas rode behind the Prophet as his companion rider on the back portion of his she-camel on the Day of Nahr (on the Farewell Hajj) , and Al-Fadl was a handsome man. The Prophet stopped to give people verdicts. In the meantime, a beautiful woman from the tribe of Khath'am came, asking the verdict of Allah's Apostle. Al-Fadl started looking at her as her beauty attracted him. The Prophet looked back while Al-Fadl was looking at her; so the Prophet held out his hand backwards and caught the chin of Al-Fadl and turned his face to the other side in order that he should not gaze at her. She said, "O Allah's Apostle! The obligation of performing hajj enjoined by Allah on His worshipers has become due (compulsory) on my father, who is an old man and who cannot sit firmly on the riding animal. Will it be sufficient that I perform hajj on his behalf?". He said, "Yes".

The incident described in this hadith took place in Dhu'l-Hijja of 10 A.H. during the Farewell Hajj of the Prophet. In other words this incident took place long after both Surah al-Ahzab ayah 59 and Surah an-Nur ayah 31 had been revealed. The hadith gives a final verdict.

It is agreed that women are not permitted to wear niqab when they are in ihram, as the Prophet stated this. One wonders why he would have done this if niqab were fard. According to those who say that niqab is fard, a woman must still draw fabric over her face whenever non-mahrem men are nearby so that she remains veiled.

The Hadith of Al-Bukhari tells us how a beautiful woman during the farewell Hajj asked the Prophet a question. Al-Fadl the cousin of the Prophet started looking at the woman as her beauty attracted him. How could Al-Fadl know that the woman was beautiful? In other words her face was clearly uncovered in front of the Prophet and his cousin, neither of whom is mahram for her. So if niqab was really fard, then clearly the woman would have worn a faceveil in front of the prophet and his cousin, but she didn't! Moreover the Prophet did not tell that woman to wear a niqab. All he did was turn Fadl's head away to stop him from staring. Had it been obligatory, he would have told her. This is a clear daleel that it is halal for a woman to uncover her face!

Perhaps the clearest report which tells us how women used to go out in public at the time of the Prophet is one related by Sahih Muslim of an event that took place after the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage.

Another tradition in Sahih Muslim states:

Subay'ah al-Aslamiyyah was married to Sa'd b. Khawlah and he was one of those who were present at the battle of Badr. He died during the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage, leaving her pregnant. Sometime after the death of her husband, she delivered a child. When she became clean, she adorned herself to seek remarriage. Aba Sanabil Ba'kak of the family of Abd al-Dar passed by her and said to her: "Perhaps you intend to remarry as I see you fully adorned. By God, you cannot marry unless four months elapse on the death of your husband." Subay'ah narrated: "On hearing this, I gathered upon me my clothes in the evening and came to the Prophet to ask him about this matter, and he told me that my `iddah had ended when I gave birth to my child, and said that I could get married if I wished."

Source:

See Fath al-Bari, 7/310, Kitab al-maghazi, bab istifta' Subay'ah bint al-Harith al-Aslamiyyah; Sahih Muslim, 10/110, Kitab al-talaq, bab inqida' `iddah al-mutawafa 'anha zawjuha wa ghayruha.

Like I said before this incident took place after the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage. In other words this incident took place long after both Surah al-Ahzab ayah 59 and Surah an-Nur ayah 31 had been revealed. Therefore the hadith gives a final verdict. It is clear here that Subay'ah was not putting on a veil and her face was uncovered as otherwise she could not have been recognised. We see here how Aba Sanabil Ba'kak noticed that Subay'ah was fully adorned, or in other words was wearing make-up on her face and hands. It is also clear that this uncovering of the face was not occasioned by her desire to remarry but it must have been her normal practise, as otherwise Aba Sanabil Ba'kak could not have identified her. It is also clear that Subay'ah did not go to the Prophet in the evening without putting on her full dress as she says, "I gathered upon me my clothes," which points out to the use of jilbabs (see also page 2 and 3). All this shows that women during the period of early Islam were not as closely confined to their homes as those of the Muslim middle classes nowadays (in some places) and that they enjoyed a fair amount of freedom of movement.

Silsilat al-Ahadith as-Sahih Nr. 3472.

Ibn Abbas said: A beautiful woman, from among the most beautiful of women, used to pray behind the Prophet. Some of the people used to go to pray in the first row to ensure they would not be able to see her. Others would pray in the last row of the men, and they would look from underneath their armpits to see her. Because of this act, in regard to her, Allah revealed, "Verily We know the eager among you to be first, and verily We know the eager among you to be behind" (Surah al-Hijr ayah 24)

This hadith is found in Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud, Tayalisi, Baihaqi, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Nasai and it is judged sahih by Albani. In this hadith we clearly see that the woman's face was uncovered. Why did Allah swt not reveal a command for niqab, if niqab is fard to prevent such situations ? Instead, the Prophet merely admonished the men, who are commanded to lower their gazes in Surah an-Nur ayah 30 and were not doing so. Moreover this authentic hadith clearly shows us that a woman's face and hands are not awrah.

One of the great Hanafi text books is "Bad' al-Sana 'i fi Tartib al-Shar 'i ("The best structural origin in the arrangement of the Shari 'ah") by al-Kasani, who was nicknamed the "King of the Scholars". In volume 5 of this work (Kitab al-Istihsan, also known as "The forbidden and the Permitted", which precedes the book of sales) , he discussed the question of 'awrah in detail.

al-Kasani writes:

It is forbidden to look at the entire body of a strange woman, with the exception of the face and the hands. Allah Most High said: "say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze... (Surah Al-Nur , 24:30). But the places of the apparent adornments which are the face and the two hands were exempted by the phrase "except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof". What is meant by the "adornment" is the site of the adornment. The site of the apparent adornments are the face and the hands. When buying and selling, or taking and giving, the woman usually needs to uncover her face and palm, so she is allowed to keep them uncovered. Abu Hanifa is reported to have allowed the uncovering of the feet too, as is reported by Imam al-Hasan.

Source:

Bad' al-Sana 'i fi Tartib al-Shar 'i , volume 5. See also: "Hibab or Niqab" by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, Page 94

He wrote:

Because of this very degrading classification of women as 'awrah which makes them dangerous to men, Muhammad condemned any female for putting on perfume:

Narrated AbuMusa: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: Every eye is lustful and when a woman applies perfume and then goes about in an assembly, she is like such and such, i.e. an adulteress. - Transmitted by Tirmidhi and AbuDawud and Nasa'i transmitted something similar. (Al-Tirmidhi Hadith, Number 330)

Response:

Here we clearly see that the christian missionary doesn't know what he's talking about. Here again he proves that he has a great lack of islamic knowledge. Awrah is an Islamic term which refers to everything that should remain private of one's body, and therefor must be covered at all times. Like shayk gibril fouad haddad explained: "The correct definition of 'awra, a word applied to both men and women, is "private parts".

Why must women cover their awrah ? The answer is because it protects women from depraved men and harm. It protects her from harassment, which are concerns only outdoors and in public. The chrsitian missionary moreover proves that he cannot read and understand the quran, since the quran clearly says that the covering of the 'awrah is to protect women from harassment and depraved men, not because women are dangerous ! This has been made clear in one of the ayahs about hijab:

Surah Al-Ahzaab 33 ayah 59

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognised and not annoyed. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

So the christian missionary calls the term 'awrah which refers to everything that should remain private of one's body (for women to protect them from harassment, and to hide their private parts, and therefor keeping their honor) a degrading classification. In other words the christian missionary Sham Shamoun calls it a degrading classification for people when god tells them not to show their private parts, and to cover themselves and be modest. Moreover the fact that islam protects a woman's beauty and honor, and doesn't allow strangers to look at her private parts, is according to him something degrading especially since it protects them for harrasment. It's obvious that the christian missionary doesn't know what he says. He wants to play the big guy by playing with islamic terms like 'awrah, while he hardly doesn't know it's correct meaning. Moreover he doesn't know the purpose of covering one's 'awrah. It should be clear now to anyone that the christian missionary Sham Shamoun can't be taken serious in debate or discussion.

Related by Muslim, Abu Dawud, and Al-Tirmidhi:

The Prophet said: "A man should not look at the awrah of another man, nor a woman of a woman, nor should a man go under one cloth with another man, nor a woman with another woman"

It looks like the christian missionary isn't even aware of the fact that men in islam too have 'awrah, which the above hadith shows us. In others words men too have private parts that need to be covered when going into public etc. For the man, the 'awrah is defined as the area between the navel and the knees. Difference exists, however, among jurists whether the knees and the thighs should be included in the definition of the man's 'awrah. For a good discussion on the evidence related to both views, see Sayyid Sabiq's Fiqh-us- Sunnah, vol. 1, pp. 125-127.

As for the hadith quoted by the christian missionary about women wearing perfum in public, it applies to those women who perfume themselves with a strong scent to attract the attention of strange men in public. This behaviour could lead to fornication and adultery, especially since it doesn't take much for a woman to attract the attention of men (wearing a strong scent would definately attract the attention of a lot of men, and would also contradict the purpose of the hijab, to protect women from strange men and harassment). Therefor the prophet said that a woman who perfumed herself to attract the attention of men in public is like an adulteress, since this behaviour could lead or open the doors to adultery. However women can wear a nice strong scent for their own husband at home and/ or when she visits her family etc. As long as there are no non-mahrem men around her, she can wear perfume with a strong scent. When she goes out she should not wear perfume with a strong scent, but things like deodorant and creams that have a light scent. It's sunnah and important for both muslim men and women not to smell bad. We have to be clean and fresh.

Sheikh faraz rabbani comments:

It is permitted to apply kohl and oil (and other cosmetics a), without dislike, when fasting. [al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya; Ibn Abidin, Radd al-Muhtar] Perfume has the same rulings when fasting.

However, it is not permitted for women to go out wearing perfume, because the Messenger of Allah firmly forbade it in rigorously authenticated hadiths. Deodorant and creams that have a light scent -- such that it isn't obviously discernable to others unless they get really close -- are permitted; however, women should avoid heavily scented personal care products.¹⁶

Another Muslim scholar comments on the issue if it is allowed for women to wear perfume in public.

ZainabAl-Alwani comments:

The perfume whose smell is hidden and only the person can feel, not others, is permissible. The prohibition is for wearing perfume that attracts others.¹⁷

So women can clearly use personal care products, deodorants, cremes and perfumes that have a light scent – such that it isn't obviously discernable to others unless they get really close. These products are allowed for women to use when they go into public, like Shayk Faraz Rabbani explained in his fatwa. I also recommend the reader to read the next article, which moreover again proofs how christianity degrades women and not islam:

http://www.answering-christianity.com/bassam_zawadi/womens_veil.htm

Sources:

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http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503545454

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http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=1&ID=1915&CATE=143

4:

http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=1&ID=1985&CATE=137

5:

From his tafsir of Surah an-Nur ayah 31, this is in Volume 18, pages 118-119 of Jami Bayan Ta'wil al-Qur'an

6:

From his tafsir of Surah an-Nur ayah 31

7:

From his tafsir of Surah an-Nur ayah 31

8:

From his tafsir of Surah an-Nur ayah 31

9:

He wrote this in his book 'Al-Umm'

10:

Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid

11:

Bidayat al-Mujtahid

12:

He wrote this in his fiqh guide al-Mughni

13:

Hibab or Niqab by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, page 79 & 80

14:

Hibab or Niqab by Syed Mutawalli ad-Darsh with an introduction by Mazheruddin Siddiqi, page 80 & 81

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