# HIJAB AND ITS MEANING IN THE LIGHT OF FATH AL-OADIR OF ASH-SHAWKANI

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#### **Abstract**

Hijab is an integral part of Islamic teachings and to the Muslim society at large. It is an institution in the Qur'an and tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that Muslim woman need not to expose herself to the community, because Hijab is a symbol to indicate the modesty and righteous women in the society. Though, our Muslim youths have turned the symbol of Hijab into another thing in the, a non-Muslims are using Hijab, putting up Muslim's dress code, which is to them. This paper intends to expose the concept of Hijab, the views of some notable scholars and its application among Muslim women in Nigeria the larger world. This work is a synoptic attempt to examine the symbolic meaning of Hijab in the light of Tafsir Fath al-Qadir of Imam Ash-Shawkani. The paper concludes that Hijab should be mandatory in Schools, offices and homes to curb the menace of adultery, rape and fornications as it is common in our community. It was recommended that the Hijab should be made compulsory for Muslim women in tertiary institutions as a means of combating legal and socio-ethical challenges facing the society.

### Introduction

Symbolism plays a very important role in the life of man. In religion symbolic gestures have a very important place. All the revealed religions have certain symbols which their adherents have adopted to their religion; Symbols with which the adherent identify and which they use to project their religion to outside world. Symbolism comes in variety of ways. It could range from language such as Arabic, specific group of words such as the *Kalimatush – Shahadah* gestures such as Nazi salute, dressing and garment such as the *Hijab*, and range to icon such as a flag. In the opinion of Emanuel Choudury, symbolism point out, it evokes, it edifies and it conserves meaning. This definition in the context of Islam, is very much applicable to the *Kalimatush-Shahadah*. To Muslims, the *Kalimatush – Shahadah* evokes the felling of absoluteness of the power of Allah. Sometimes, it is uttered when a Muslim is overwhelmed by this feeling and he pronounces it spontaneously and edifies feeling Allah in the process in his own mind and in the mind of those who might be listening. In other words, the utterance of the *Kalimah* could be a result of being emotionally overwhelmed by the majesty of Allah on one

hand, and it could also be a spontaneous product of such feeling on the other hand. The *Kalimatush- Shahadah* also conserves the meaning of Islam as the religion whose adherent worship only Allah, in the mind of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Islam encourage both Muslim men and Women to engage in good/ manner dressing to be outlook fitting but without any extravagance in our textiles. Islam is a complete religion that shows the way of dressing for men and women, Almighty Allah instruct the Prophet to instruct his wives and daughters and wives of the believers to cover their body with their *jalbab* as it is stated in *Suratul Ahzab*.

#### **Symbolism in Islam**

The religion of Islam in itself, we can argue, is only meant to symbolize a Muslim's women submission to Allah as it is categorically stated in the Qur'an that Prophet should command his households and the believing Muslim women to cover their face, but some considered *Hijab*, *Khimar* and *Niqab* as not part of obligatory step Of religion and not meant to serve Allah. We premise this paper on the fact that although Islam is a two way relationship which is sanctioned by Allah, the relationship is non-beneficial to Allah but only beneficial to man. The Qur'an says thus along this line of thought:

In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the station of Abraham; Whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah.- those who can afford the journey; but if any deny Faith, Allah stands not In need of any of His creatures. (Q3:97)

In the following three verses, the places of symbolism in Islam are further established in the following verses:

(a) 'It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah:

It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah. it is your piety that reaches him: He has Thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to You and proclaim the good news to all who Do right. It is your piety that reaches Him.' (Q22:37)

(b)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصّيَامُ كَمَا كُتبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O ye, who believe! Fasting is prescribed to You as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint, (Q2:182)

O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, As well As to be an adornment to you. but the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best Such are among the Signs of Allah that they may receive admonition! (Q7:26)

In these verses above, we can see the recurrent themes of piety. The actions of fasting, slaughtering an animal and covering up in these three verses are no ends in themselves as it is evident in the conclusion of each of the verses. The actions are rather practical mean aimed at achieving a special common end which is piety. In addition, the fact that a Muslim carries out these action mean there is some subsisting piety in such a Muslim, and it is this subsisting piety that make him carry out divine commandments, while striving to words a greater level of piety. The Obedience of the Muslims who carry out these commandments is a practical symbol of piety in these Muslim. If we examine these verses further, we will discover that carrying out the instruction in there ultimately promote social cohesion within the society. In the final analysis therefore, the instruction of the Qur'an serve the end of humanity.

It is the subject of social benefit that is underscored as the central objective of *Hijab* where the Qur'an prescribes the use of *Hijab* to Muslim women.

O Prophet! Tell Thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (When abroad): that is Most convenient, that They should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is oft forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q33:59)

From the conclusion of the penultimate quotation which emphasizes the important of the spirit behind clothing, we are acquainted with the view of the Qur'an that clothing is meant to present human beings in general, to fellow human beings, as ration in the first instance. This rationality manifests in the sense is shame a human being has which makes him cover his nakedness with materials clothing. In the second instance, a human being clothes himself as a symbol of righteousness in him. This image of righteousness as impllied helps man shield himself from generating an invitation to indecency in community.

The quotation from *Suratul-ahzab*, which prescribes the *Hijab*, continues on the theme of image established in the quotation from *Surah-al Aa'raf* and it dwells further on the symbolic meaning of dressing. From the verse, we understand that dressing sends out message to the public and the message sent out could elicit a variety of responses; it could attract respect or attract disrespect from the public. Molestation and harassment are part of other responses dressing could elicit.

Given these quotations on garments, which appear to agree that being properly dressed presents a person as being righteous and prevents harassment, it might be safe to infer that the better wrapped up a person is, the more he or she is supposed to be far away from indecency, ordinarily. This submission is the thinking of the Yorubas which manifests in their belief that the use of *Khimar* by a Muslim woman is a metaphor for a good character. Hence, the local parlance she covers the head but not the behavior.

#### Contingency of Hijab symbolism

From the perspective of Islam, the Hijab either in form of the *Khimar* or the Nigab is meant to be the universal dress code among Muslim women. And a universal dress code it is, in some Muslim communities such as in the northern region of Nigeria and in countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In some other Muslim society however, the Hijab assumes different connotations as soon as cultural/geographic frontiers are crossed. The symbolic connotations of the Hijab in the pre-colonial Muslim societies include piety, wealth and nobility. Among the Yorubas too, as stated earlier, the traditional symbolic meaning of the *Khimar* is a high level of piety. When the *Khimar* is used by a native of Ilorin, the public is hinted on the material status of the lady, as the Hijab is mostly used by married women in the context of the local community. However with the growth of elite oriented Asalatu group in south west Nigeria beginning at the end of the twentieth century, coupled with modern ways of Islamic propagation, the Hijab particularly the Khimar, no longer necessarily symbolizes a high level of piety when used by middleclass Muslim youths. Neither does it necessarily indicate the marital status of a lady, A survey carried out among Muslim students who use the Khimar in the University of Ilorin, and who have a similar level of education as their mothers, reveals that 80% of the mothers do not use the *Hijab* themselves. This result attests to the growing consciousness about Islam, among educated young Muslims. To some in the western world, the Hijab symbolizes Islamic fundamentalism and some view it as the symbol of an oppressed woman in need of liberation. The Taliban interpretation of Islam, albeit perverted many Muslims will argue it is, generally agree with this thinking. In turkey with some 99% Muslim population, the Hijab, especially in the urban areas, is a political statement which symbolizes resentment towards the Turkish secular constitution which has been in place since the revolution led by Mustafa Kamal At-Turkey in the 1920s.

## The Symbolic *Hijab* and the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Europe

The western world prides itself and propagates its appeal on the culture of freedom, including the freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of affiliation. Attitudes towards the use of *Hijab* by Muslim women in Europe however, are not in favor of a definite position on this contention given recent mix grill experiences of the *Hijab* in Europe in the following instances:

- (i) In the year 2004, Turkey, with 99% Muslim population and the host of the last Muslim empire banned women from wearing the Hijab in universities and public institutions. This was done in furtherance of Turkey's ambition to be admitted into the European union (an organization with overwhelming Christian heritage), and in furtherance of the secular constitution.
- (ii) In November 2005, the European court of human right ruling approved the Turkish ban of the Hijab.
- (iii) France also banned the use Hijab in public schools in the year 2004 but the French ban was not extended to Muslim schools and it is not applicable at university level. It might be relevant to add that Frances has a history of forcing me citizens of her colonies to adopt the French culture in the colonial days under the principle of assimilation.
- (iv) In the united kingdom, there is no official ban on Islamic dressing in but schools are at liberty to determine their dress code.
- (v) In September 2003, the federal constitutional court of Germany ruled in favor of a teacher who wanted to wear Hijab in school. The Hijab is however banned in at least four German states.
- (vi) In September 2004, local politicians in the north of Italy, resurrected Old laws against the wearing of masks. This included banning women from wearing the overall *burqa*. Also, in July 2005, the Italian parliament approved anti-terrorist laws which make hiding one's features from the public- including through wearing the *burqa* an offence.

It is important to note that these ban on *Hijab* across Europe, began after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. More significant the fact that the ban of Hijab in Europe started in the year 2004, the same year Europe first experienced a terrorist attack that would be attributed to Muslims, in Madrid, the capital city of Spain. The *Hijab* in Europe could therefore be said to be a symbol of *Hijab* and terrorism culture among some in the ruling class of Europe.

Apart from terrorism we could offer one other explanation that could be responsible for the hostilities towards what the Hijab symbolizes to Europe. From the last century C.E., Europe has continued to experience declining population to an extent which Suggests that it cannot survive without immigration. The average annual population growth rate in Europe between 1985 to 1995 was 0.28 percent. In the same period, the population of Aisa grew by 1.69 percent, and that

of North American increased by 1.33 percent annually. The population increase in Asia in 2007, is estimated to stand at 1.1 percent.

The highest growth rates which stand in excess of 2.5 percent per Year, the highest population growth rate in the world, are found in Asia, particularly in the Arab countries of Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Laos is the only non Arab country with similar population growth.

Europe has recognized that its survival is almost entirely tied to immigration in the year 2005, Joaquin Almunia, The EU economic and monetary affairs commissioner declared that the European Union needs substantial but controlled emigration. These dynamics of population and migration between Europe and the Arab world may have the most profound implications regarding what the Hijab symbolizes to the European mind today, especially if we consider the circumstances under which the Muslim gave up the control of Spain in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Though, our speculation that the prospect of having a substantial Arab population as the future of Europe makes the Hijab symbolize a threat to cotemporary European culture may sound farfetched, the theory is not altogether bogus. Weasel zippers.net reported a demonstration in Netherlands by some youths warning Christian Europe of the dangers of the growth of Muslim population 'in Europe .the website also hosted a debate on the issues.

## The Wisdom in the Islamic Dress code according to Shawkani contributions

Islam is all that encompasses everything and it is a perfect religion that talks our lives and daily activities. The prophet of Islam equally practices what Islam preaches by putting what Allah said in Qur'an in full practices. Imam Ash-shawkani was among the modern scholar who immensely contributes on the use as read thus:

{ياأيها النبي قل لأزواجك وبناتك ونساء المؤمنين يدنين عليهن من جلابيبهن} من للتبعيض والجلابيب جمع جلباب وهو ثوب اكبر من الخمار قال الجوهري الجلباب الملحفة وقيل القناع وقيل ثوب يسير جميع بدن المرأة كما ثبت في الصحيح من حديث أم عطية [أنها قالت: يا رسول الله إحدانا لا يكون لها جلباب فقال: لتلبسها أختها من جلبابها] قال الواحدى: قال المفسرون يغطين وجوههن ورؤوسهن إلا عينا واحدة فيعلم أهن حرائر فلا يعرض لهن بأذى قال الحسن: تغطى نصف وجهها

"O ye the Prophet! Tell (instruct) your wives and daughters and wives of the believers to cover (their body) with their *jalbab*" Jalabib is the plural of jalbab, and it means a garment which is bigger that veil. Al Jawhary asserted that jalbab is some scholars opined that it is...while some others posited that it is a cloth which covers the whole body of woman as confirmed in the authentic Hadith in which Ummu Utiyyah said: "O the Prophet, one of us has no jalbab. The Prophet said: Let her sister give her from her own jalbabs" Al-Wéhidi said: The exegetes asserted: The women used to cover their faces and heads with the exception of an eye so that they would be identified whether

they are fee Persons who should not be harassed. al-Hassan asserted she should cover the half of her face.

There is great wisdom in the Islamic dress code. In order to see and understand it clearly one must remember a few basic concepts. First and foremost, that Islam was revealed for all people in all places, at all times. Thus, concerned with humankind's physical, spiritual and emotional health, and not just for each individual but for the community or society as a whole. This involves respect; for Allah, for each other and for oneself.

Dress code is required for both men and women, Islam does not put the responsibility entirely o one gender, and in fact the verses referring to men were revealed first. However both men and women are commanded to lower their gaze and protect their modesty; and both men and women are expected to create a wealthy social environment with constructive morals, manners and values. Imam Ash-Shawkani asserted his view in his fath al Qadir, which read thus:

هذا خطاب لجميع بني آدم وإن كان واردا على سبب خاص فالاعتبار بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص السبب والزينة ما يتزين به الناس من الملبوس أمروا بالتزين عند الحضور إلى المساجد للصلاة والطواف وقد استدل بالآية على وجوب ستر العورة في الصلاة وإليه ذهب جمهور أهل العلم بل سترها واجب في كل الحال من الأحوال وإن كان الرجل خاليا كما دلت عليه الأحاديث الصحيحة والكلام على العورة وما يجب ستره منها مفصل في كتب الفروع

This is for the entire Adam's progeny (human beings), even if it comes on a specific condition, the word used is general not specific. The adornment is what people use (to beautify themselves) among the clothes. Making adornment is ordered to be used when intending to go to the mosque for observing *salat*, and *tawaf* (circumambulation). The verse has been already proclaimed the necessity of keeping (veil of genital in the prayer, Majority of people Among the scholars based their argument on this Hence veiling of nakedness is important in every Circumstance, even where there is no man.

The term *hijab*, is more than a scarf and more than a dress code. It is a term that denotes modest dressing and modest behavior. For instance, if a Muslim woman is correctly covered but at the same time, using foul language, she would not be fulfilling the requirements of Hijab. If a Muslim man was covered from the navel to the knee but walking around in public calling attention to himself or behaving rudely he would also not be behaving in an appropriate manner.

Base on the assertion K.H Bullock, the gives his submission on the use of *Hijab* which thus:

Women who wear Hijab point out many benefits to be gained from adhering to the Islamic dress code. Some describe wearing Hijab as being "set free" from society's unrealistic expectations. They are no longer thought of as sexual objects, but are desired for their intellect. They are no longer valued for their looks or body shape but for their personality and character. Women wearing Hijab report that it minimizes sexual harassment in the workplace.

Many women report that people (both Muslims and non-Muslims) are more inclined to Show good manners towards a woman in a scarf. Men Open doors give up seats on public transport, apologize for bad language, and Offer to carry groceries and many other small kindnesses that were once a normal part of life in most western communities. To promote modesty and seeks to minimize vice and immorality in society. One of the ways it does so is by requiring modest dress. Islam sets the standards of decency for both men and women. In most western countries there are laws defining what is decent. This usually amounts to the male having to cover his genitals and the female having to cover her genitals her breasts. If this minimum requirement is not met, the person would be charged with his or her indecent exposure. The reason cited for the difference in required clothing between men and women in this matter is the difference in their anatomies.

Islam prescribes a more conservative minimum dress code for both men and women. In Islam, both men and women are expected to dress simply, modesty, and with dignity. A man must always be covered in loose and unrevealing clothing from his navel to his knee. This is the absolute minimum covering required. He must never, for example go out in public wearing a short bathing suit. When leaving the home, a Muslim woman must at least cover her hair and body in loose and unrevealing clothing, obscuring the details of her body from the public; some also choose to cover their face and hands.

Imam Shawkani's comment on the above statement on the lowering the gaze and to avoid what Allah forbids by looking, wearing and dressing. He read thus:

ومعنى: يغضضن من أبصارهن كمعنى يغضوا من أبصارهم فيستدل به على تحريم نظر النساء إلى ما يحرم عليهن وكذالك يجب عليهن حفظ فروجهن على وجه الذى تقدم فى حفظ الرجال لفروجهم [ولا يبدين زينتهن] اى ما يتزين به من الحلية وغيرها وفى النهي عن إبداء مواضعها من أبدانهن بالأولى ثم استثنى سبحانه من هذا النهى فقال: [إلا ما ظهر منها]

The meaning is that: (women) should control their sight (lower their eyes) out of modesty, means to lower their eyes, which indicates that Women should not look at what Allah, forbids them. At the same time it is obligatory on them to keep their privacy as it was previously discussed that men too should keep their privacy (from fornication). (They (women) should not unveil their adornment). That what (women) use as adornments (to beautify themselves) like jewelry (decoration), among others. As regards prohibition for (women) from exposing where they use the adornment in their body, then Allah made an exemption from this Verdict by saying (Except the one that is manifest (exposed) in their body).

The wisdom behind this dress code is to minimize sexual enticement and degradation in society as much as possible for both men and women. Obeying this dress code is a form of obedience to Allah. Islam forbids any sex appeal and physical allurement outside marriage. In contrast, Islam encourages sex appeal and physical attraction for both men and women within the privacy between married couples. Some Western observers have assumed that the head covering of a woman is meant to show her inferiority to men. This could not be further from the truth. In Islam, a woman who dresses this way commands respect and through her modesty rejects sexual servitude. The message that the woman gives when she wears Islamic dress in society is this: "Respect me for who I am. I am not a sex object.

Islam teaches that the consequences of immodesty fall not only on the individual but also upon the society that permits women and men to mingle freely, display themselves and compete or allure one another through sexual attraction. These consequences are significant and cannot be ignored. To make women into sex objects for the pleasure of men is not liberation. In fact, it is a dehumanizing form of oppression rejected by Islam. The liberation of the Muslim woman is that she is recognized by the content of her character rather than by the display of her physical attributes From the Islamic point of view, "liberated" Western women who must often worry about their looks, figure, and youth for the pleasure of others are trapped in a form of slavery.

#### **Conclusion**

The *Hijab* has various symbolic meaning which are contingent upon the age, geography, cultural milieu and the sentiments and idiosyncrasies in which the *Hijab* is situated. What the *Hijab* symbolizes has even been subjected to politics. As Bullock wrote, the history of the *Hijab* as a symbolic meaning of the oppression is closely tied to colonial politics. The symbol meaning of the *Hijab* in Europe today is cultural confrontation, rooted in deep seated animosity sown in the past and nurtured by contemporary interest. This present symbolic meaning of the Hijab in Europe might even be a product of speculation on the future.

Before anything else however, the Hijab symbolizes Islam. And Islam as an ideology, like all other ideologies, tends to supplant other culture. Among western educated south Nigerian youths, it is the primary symbolization of Hijab that is currently gaining ground in the face other completion interest.

#### **Notes and References**

- 1. From Marriage to Parenthood the Heavenly Path Rays of the Sun and Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia this is a *sub-article of Islamic economical jurisprudence and inheritance*.
- 2. (a) During the 2008 edition of the African cup of nations, The Egyptian team took the posture of sujud many of the times they score goals. One query which deserves academic attention is: Do such gestures have any place in Islam?
  - (b) It is a bit problematic sometimes, to gestures. While the Egyptian might be making sujud to express gratitude to Allah, the opponent and the onlookers might interpret the action to mean very many different things.
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