

21536 - Correct view on the ruling on covering the face

the question

With regard to the niqaab, what are the ahaadeeth and aayaat that refer specifically to it?.

Detailed answer

The correct view is that a woman is obliged to cover her entire body, even the face and hands. Imam Ahmad said that even the nails of a woman are 'awrah, and this is also the view of Maalik (may Allaah have mercy on them both). Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

"... It seems that the view of Ahmad is that every part of her is 'awrah, even her nails, and this is also the view of Maalik."

(Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 22/110).

In contrast to those who say that this is not obligatory, if we examine the views of those who say that it is not obligatory for women to cover the face, we will see that it is as Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allaah preserve him) said:

"One of the following three scenarios must apply:

1 - There is clear, sound evidence, but it has been abrogated by the verses that enjoin hijab...

2 - There is sound evidence but it is not clear, and it does not constitute strong evidence when taken in conjunction with the definitive evidence from the Qur'aan and Sunnah that the face and hands must be covered...

3 - There is clear evidence, but it is not sound..."

(Hiraasat al-Fadeelah, p. 68-69)

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

1 – 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 their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. And Allaah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[al-Ahzaab 33:59]

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

“Allaah commands women to let the jilbaab come down (over their faces) so that they will be known (as respectable women) and not be annoyed or disturbed. This evidence supports the first opinion. ‘Ubaydah al-Salmaani and others stated that the women used to wear the jilbaab coming down from the top of their heads in such a manner that nothing could be seen except their eyes, so that they could see where they were going. It was proven in al-Saheeh that the woman in ihraam is forbidden to wear the niqaab and gloves. This is what proves that the niqaab and gloves were known among women who were not in ihraam. This implies that they covered their faces and hands.”

(Majmoo’ al-Fataawa, 15/371-372)

2 – Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, headcover, apron), and to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)...”

[al-Noor 24:31]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said:

“With regard to the phrase ‘and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent’, ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Mas’ood said: the adornment which is apparent is the garment, because the word zeenah (adornment) was originally a name for the clothes and jewellery, as we see in the verses in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

‘Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes)’

[al-A’raaf 7:31]

‘Say (O Muhammad): Who has forbidden the adornment with clothes given by Allaah, which He has produced for His slaves’

[al-A’raaf 7:32]

‘And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment’

[al-Noor 24:31]

Stamping the feet makes known the khulkhaal (anklets) and other kinds of jewellery and clothing. Allaah forbade women to show any kind of adornment except that which is apparent, but He allowed showing the hidden adornment to mahrams. It is known that the kind of adornment that usually appears, without any choice on the part of the women, is the clothing, as for the body, it is possible to either show it or to cover it. All of this indicates that what appears of the adornment is the clothing.

Ahmad said: the adornment which is apparent is the clothing. And he said: every part of a woman is ‘awrah, even her nails. It was narrated in the hadeeth, ‘The woman is ‘awrah,’ This includes all of the woman. It is not makrooh to cover the hands during prayer, so they are part of the ‘awrah, just like the feet. Analogy implies that the face would be ‘awrah were it not for the fact that necessity dictates that it should be uncovered during prayer, unlike the hands.”

Sharh al-‘Umdah, 4/267-268.

3 – It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah said: “The riders used to pass by us when we were with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in ihraam. When they came near, each of us would lower her jilbaab from her head over her face, and when they passed by we would uncover (our faces).”

Narrated by Abu Dawood, 1833; Ahmad, 24067

Shaykh al-Albaani said in Jilbaab al-Mar’ah al-Muslimah (107): its isnaad is hasan because of the existence of corroborating reports.

It is well known that a woman should not put anything over her face when she is in ihraam, but ‘Aa’ishah and the Sahaabiyaat (women of the Sahaabah) who were with her used to lower part of their garments over their faces because the obligation to cover the face when non-mahrams pass by is stronger than the obligation to uncover the face when in ihraam.

4 – It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: “May Allaah have mercy on the women of the Muhaajireen. When Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning)

‘and to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)...”

[al-Noor 24:31], they tore their aprons and covered their faces with them.”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4480)

5 – It was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah... that Safwaan ibn al-Mu’attal al-Sulami al-Dhakwaani was lagging behind the army. He came to where I had stopped and saw the black shape of a person sleeping. He recognized me when he saw me, because he had seen me before hijab was enjoined. I woke up when I heard him saying ‘Inna Lillaahi wa inna ilayhi raaji’oon (verily to Allaah we belong and unto Him is our return),’ when he saw me, and I covered my face with my jilbaab.”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3910; Muslim, 2770)

6 – It was narrated from ‘Abd-Allaah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The woman is ‘awrah and when she goes out the Shaytaan gets his hopes up.”

(Narrated by al-Tirmidhi, 1173).

Al-Albaani said in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi (936): It is saheeh.

Please see Question no. [21134](#) for more information about the niqaab.

And Allaah knows best.