

Critical Analysis of Orientalists' Stance as to the Historical Trend of Legislation of Hijāb in Islam

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Abstract

Hijāb is one of the religious teachings which has been explored from various perspectives, including the Orientalists who oftentimes have negatively looked at Hijāb as a limitation for women. To them, the Prophet was in agreement with the freedom and mixture of women with men. However, following some certain conditions like the insecurity in the society, the harassment of the hypocrites, and the insistence of some Companions such as the second caliph, the Messenger of God was forced to accept the decree of Hijāb for his wives and the free women as well as the separation of women and men. With a descriptive-analytical approach, the present study shows making divine decrees follows the wisdom of the Saint Legislator, and is not affected by the transient conditions. The revered Prophet (s) and therefore the women of the society willingly showed great concern for covering. To them, Hijāb was not a retreat, but rather – with choosing the black color for their covering – they sought more dignity for a more active, social participation.

Keywords: hijāb, orientalist, history, the Prophet (s), verses of the Qur'ān, Islamic narrations.

Introduction

In the present time and following the appearance of feministic movements, some hold that religious and historical texts should be read again differently as a way for the attainment of women's right. Fāṭima Mirnīsī in the book *Zanān-i pardi nishīn wa nukhbigāni Jowshanpūsh*, Laylā Aḥmad in the book *Zanān wa jinsīyyat dar Islam*, and Barbara Freyer Stowasser in the article "Prophet's wives" in the Leiden Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān are some instances dealing with this issue. They have examined Hijāb as an essential issue from this perspective. With a negative presupposition and partial study, they have probed the historical reasons of Hijāb decree and have attained false results. With a descriptive-analytical approach and with documentary research – in addition to explicating the opinions of these Orientalists – the study at hand criticizes their stances through referring to historical, interpretive, and narrative books.

Review of the Literature

Probing various magazines and websites made it clear that some articles have been written about Hijāb and Orientalists, which are as follows:

- A collection of four consecutive articles written by Ḥisām Fāḍilī with the name of «*Taḥrīfī ḥaqāyiq dar yik kitāb: Barrīsī inḥirāfāti tārikhī wa i'tiqādī dar kitāb Zanāni pardi nishīn wa nukhbigāni jowshanpūsh*», which analyzes the opinions of Mirnīsī, and

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(in order to answer her) deals with the revelation cause of verses and the meaning of the word Ḥijāb;

- The article «*Muqāyisiyi hūqūqi zani Musalmān az dīdgāhi Murtidā Muṭahharī wa Fāṭima Mirnīsī*» by Muḥammad ‘Alī Tawānā;
- The article «*Barrisī wa naqdi istinbāṭi fiminīsthā az hijāb*» by ‘Abdullāh Bahmanpūrī which deals with the criticisms incurred on the opinions of Amīn, Mirnīsī, and Wadūd with a qur’ānic approach as well as the explication of the meaning of words;
- The article «*Naqdi ārā’i Fāṭima Mirnīsī dar khūsūsi hijāb*» by Zahrā Fihristī,» which answers the doubts raised by Mirnīsī.
- The article «*Naqdi dīdgāhi mustashriqān darbāriyi hijāb wa salāmati rawān*» by ‘Īsā Mustarḥamī, which refutes the doubts incurred by the orientalists about the bodily setbacks of Ḥijāb.

To answer the doubts of the Orientalists, the mentioned works have analyzed the verses and narrations as well as have explicated the meaning of the qur’ānic words. In the present study, it has been tried to recount the opinion of those Orientalists who have dealt with the cause explication of Ḥijāb decree from a historical perspective. Moreover, with the aid of verses and narrations, through reviewing the historical occasions, this article analyzes the occasions, and answers the Orientalists’ numerous doubts.

Lexicology

In the present study, what is meant by Orientalists are the people living in non-Islamic regions who have particularly studied Islam even if they are Muslims or are born in Islamic countries; their original identity goes back to those countries but are cultivated by Western pedagogy and have passed their higher education there; or they have published their works in the form of Western research methods in spite of being educated in the Islamic countries. (Nafīsī, 2019: 8)

Harald Motzki believes Western studies or non-Muslims’ studies do not mean that the researchers of these works are all from the West or are non-Muslim. The main issue only is that these researchers follow the Western research methods. (Motzki, 2007: 11)

Legislation of Ḥijāb decree from the view of Mirnīsī

Mirnīsī holds the time of legislation of Ḥijāb decree to be after the wars of Uḥud and Khandaq. She believes that the reason for the legislation of this decree was the rumors, harassments of the hypocrites, and the insistence of some Companions. To her, before that time, the Prophet believed in the mixture of women and men as well as the free and unlimited activities of women. To prove this claim, she refers to the architecture of houses in Medina and the role played by women in the social relations.

The dominant ambiance in the society and the social relations before the legislation of Ḥijāb decree

To prove her opinion as to the mixture of women and men as well as the silence of the Prophet about it, Mirnīsī talks about the architecture of houses: Prophet created an environment wherein the distance between the personal and social life was removed via eliminating the physical barrier between these two. In this type of architecture, houses were easily had access to the mosque. This played an important role in the life of women and their relation with politics.

To her, this fusion of setting of house and mosque had important consequences:

- First, this mixture of personal and social life facilitated the political wishes of women, particularly challenging the privileges of men in inheritance. It also brought the right of using swords for women.
- Second, which is the result of the first one, is seclusion, which is suggested to us as the wish of the Prophet himself. This is whereas this was imposed upon women by ‘Umar b. Khaṭṭāb, who was the spokesman of resistance of men against women.

Mirṅīsī writes: before the revelation of Ḥijāb verse, Prophet as the leader accepted representatives from different places and usually met them in his house, even sometimes in the presence of his wives. Nevertheless, the insistence of the Prophet on not having bounds between his private and social life and the direct participation of his wives in political and social affairs gradually worked to his disadvantage. Sometimes some men came with the Prophet to his house and sat around the tablecloth; sometimes it was so crowded that some could not have the morsels of food.

She believes the Prophet never held the belief of Ḥijāb and the separation of women from men. (Ibid: 251)

Historical backgrounds of legislation of Ḥijāb decree

Harassment of hypocrites: Mirṅīsī holds that after the war of Uḥud (3rd LH) and the war of Khandaq (5th LH), hypocrites spread rumors, increased their cunning behaviors, and harassed the Prophet’s wives more. Because the Prophet was helpless against these manners, sometimes he became suspicious of his wives; finally, he accepted Ḥijāb for the protection of his wives. (Mirṅīsī, 2001: 230)

In the view of Mirṅīsī, after the appearance of hypocrites, the Prophet began to think of separating his private life from his social life, which was institutionalized after the revelation of Ḥijāb verse. Before the beginning of these harassments, women freely went out of their houses to run their personal errands. Mirṅīsī deems the tumults of Medina, the escalation of the number of hypocrites, and the obligation to secure the safety of free women as the main factors for the legislation of Ḥijāb. She holds: since securing the safety of all people, including the slaves, was not possible, providing security was inevitably limited to the free people. Ḥijāb was the formal badge of leaving the principles of equity. In fact, a slave woman was a manifestation of backwardness in both social and gender equity.

Deeming Ḥijāb as the enslavement of women and the belief in the lack of obligation of Ḥijāb for bondwomen, Mirṅīsī writes:

Insecurity and rumors caused the Companions of the Prophet to suggest a kind of slavery to him, i.e., protecting the free women via Ḥijāb and leaving the slaves without Ḥijāb. By this, implicitly, it was perceived that slaves can be harassed. (Ibid: 265)

Mirṅīsī believes: after women being harassed by the unworthy individuals in Medina, Prophet sent representatives to these persons to ask them about their behaviors. They answered that they just annoyed the bondwomen. They justified their acts to the effect that the identity of slaves could not be told apart from the others. Due to this, God revealed the verse 33:59 where He says the wives of the Prophet should cast their outer garments over their bodies. (Ibid: 269)

She says: philosophy of Ḥijāb was clear. Hypocrites who harassed the women justified their acts that they could not recognize the free women. Therefore, God commanded the women that they cover themselves with their cloaks in order to be separated from the slaves.

To Mirṅīsī, Ḥijāb showed the victory of hypocrites because the slaves still were harassed in public. (Ibid)

The role played by the Second Caliph

As to the role of ‘Umar for the Ḥijāb of women, Mirnāsī writes: the equity programs of the Prophet were based on subtle points; however, the Companions, particularly ‘Umar, deemed those points peripheral. ‘Umar intensely wanted Ḥijāb to be institutionalized for women and said to the Prophet, «O the Prophet of God! You receive different people in your house. Why don’t you order the Mother of the Faithful to have Ḥijāb?»

Mirnāsī holds: despite all the criticisms, Prophet never thought like ‘Umar. As to the acceptance of Ḥijāb, however, he had to agree with it due to the men guests who did not behave themselves. To her, Ḥijāb manifested the lack of internal control and independent will.

Mirnāsī writes: in the view of ‘Umar, the only way for the establishment of order was via creating hurdles and hiding women. Unfortunately, these arguments were held in a situation that Prophet (s) was at the last years of his life, and the reaction of ‘Umar reflected the common mentality of the Ignorance Era.

Legislation of Ḥijāb decree in the view of Laylā Aḥmad

Like Mirnāsī, Laylā Aḥmad also believes that before the legislation of Ḥijāb, a different atmosphere was dominant over the Islamic society.

The atmosphere overruling the society and the social relations before the legislation of Ḥijāb decree

Aḥmad writes: in the war of Uḥud, women and the wives of the Prophet (s) played an active role.

Without considering this fact that the obligation of Ḥijāb was after the war of Uḥud, Aḥmad (without giving a reference) writes: a man describes that he has seen ‘Āyisha and the other wives of the Prophet as they had folded their garments and their anklets were in sight, taking water for men in the battlefield.

This is whereas remembering such an image by that man is a reason that he was surprised regarding the anklets in sight and the inappropriate cover of Prophet’s wives.

Aḥmad says: on the side of Muslims, women took away the dead bodies and the wounded soldiers from the battlefield. On the other side, the daughter of ‘Utba and the wife of the big shot of Mecca (Abū Sufyān), Hind led some of Quraysh’s female notabilities in the battlefield. They played their traditional role of the Ignorance Era through singing war songs and playing the tambourine in the war. (Aḥmad, 2012: 125)

She deems the free participation of women a common issue at the beginning of Islam, and holds: this freedom was canceled after that the practice of seclusion became common.

Stating that Ḥijāb was an obvious limitation for the wives of the Prophet, Aḥmad believes: Ḥijāb was exclusive to them, and the verses determining seclusion were only applicable to them. (Ibid)

Historical backgrounds for the legislation of Ḥijāb decree for the wives of the Prophet

Like Mirnāsī, Aḥmad also emphasizes the insistence of ‘Umar as well as the hypocrites’ harassments as the reasons for the legislation of Ḥijāb. Aḥmad sees ‘Umar a person who was steadfast as to the Ḥijāb of women, and writes: ‘Umar reasoned for the Prophet to keep his wives in seclusion, but could not succeed to convince him. One night, ‘Āyisha and Sawda went out. ‘Umar told Sawda that he had recognized her due to her tall height. ‘Umar wanted

the Prophet to keep his wives in seclusion in order to protect them from the insults of the hypocrites. (Ibid: 55)

Aḥmad says: based on another narration, ‘Umar earnestly asked the Prophet to keep his wives in seclusion because the advancement of the Prophet caused more guests to come to the mosque.

Aḥmad holds: that the revelation cause and different reasons have been recounted for the verses of Ḥijāb do not imply their incorrectness. Rather, these paved the way partially for the new decrees.

To her, mosque was a place where the Prophet dealt with all the religious and social affairs, and women and men freely commuted there. In the view of Aḥmad, institutionalization of seclusion of Prophet’s wives fitted the wives of the powerful leader of a new and undoubtedly patriarchal society. To her opinion, Ḥijāb did not come to Arabia by the Prophet, but rather it was already present among some classes, particularly in the cities. Of course, it was probably more common in regions like Syria and Palestine where people were in contact with Arabs. Romans, Jews, and Assyrians all, to some extent, used Ḥijāb like this.

She believes: Ḥijāb was made due to the insistence of some Companions and under the influence of the culture of some nations, and it seems the Prophet was not involved with or did not insist on its creation and stabilization.

In a unique statement, Aḥmad says: Ḥijāb is not recommended in any part of the Qur’ān. Only verses 24:30-31, which are related to the covering of women, recommend that women cover private parts of their body and ask them to draw their scarves over their bosoms.

Reaction of Prophet’s wives to the legislation of Ḥijāb decree

Aḥmad says: there is no evidence available as for the reaction of Prophet’s wives toward this situation. The meaningful silence which is present in these texts draws one’s attention to the suppressing power possessed by the chroniclers.

Without giving a name and a reference, she says: a researcher holds that the reaction of Prophet’s wives to the imposed seclusion was probably threatening the Prophet by a collective divorce. This created a situation which led to the revelation of some verses in which the wives of the Prophet were left free for divorce. The wives of the Prophet were left free for divorce or continue their life with the Prophet and receive, finally, the rewards which would be given to them in the heaven. The verses which give the title of «Mother of the Faithful» to the wives of the Prophet were perhaps to compensate for their obedience. (Aḥmad, 2012: 61)

The reason for the general acceptance of Ḥijāb decree

Aḥmad holds that during the life of the Prophet, Ḥijāb was only observed by his wives. She says that reasons which caused the general acceptance of Ḥijāb were:

- Conquering regions by Muslims wherein Ḥijāb was common among the upper classes;
- Increasing the wealth and improving the Arabs’ condition thereof;
- Setting the wives of the Prophet as a model.

Legislation of Ḥijāb decree in the view of Stowasser

Stowasser writes: in the verse 33:33, the wives of the Prophet are ordered to stay home; eschew «*tabarruj*» (adornment), showing their jewelry in the way of former Ignorance Era; establish prayer; give alms; and obey God and His Prophet. According to this verse, it was decided for them to stay home. Also, when going out of home, they should be recognizable

from the other women. This was because «*tabarruj*» (adornment) was finally interpreted in this way that the woman should not show her body in any status of talking. This included not wearing revealing clothes, wearing makeup, walking uninhibitedly, and the like. «*Tabarruj*» (adornment) which was forbidden for the wives of the Prophet in 33:33, finally, was taken as an implication for *Ḥijāb*. This was imposed on the wives of the Prophet in 33:53 wherein it means both the separation via a screen and also, more generally, the covering garment women wear outside of home. These three commands of the Qur'ān to the wives of Muḥammad, in 33:33 and 33:53, finally as a whole, became a qur'ānic base for the Islamic model as to the social role of women, wherein covering and behavior were considered important factors. (Stowasser, 2020: 482)

She also sees the marriage of the Prophet with Zaynab, the daughter of Jaḥsh, as the revelation cause of *Ḥijāb* verse (33:53). On the role of the second caliph with regard to *Ḥijāb*, she writes: 'Umar insisted that the Prophet, as an act of support, hide his wives and separate them from the others.

Stowasser points to the hierarchy of *Ḥijāb* verses and does not see *Ḥijāb* only exclusive to the wives of the Prophet. She says: the command of the Qur'ān to the wives of the Prophet in 33:33 in order to stay home as well as avoid a dazzling display (also 33:53) is posterior. Later on, in the verses 33:59-60, the wives of the Prophet, his daughters, and the believing women were recommended that they should show self-restraint. With this command of God, at the time of going out of home, Muslim women should cover themselves with their outer garment in order to be recognized as free women... Based on the verses 33:33, 50, and 55, the Islamic command about *Ḥijāb* became general, and the seclusion of women in the traditional theology and jurisprudence was formed in the mid-centuries.

Throughout her article, Stowasser repeatedly uses the word «seclusion», and says: the seclusion of Muḥammad's wives was mingled with the dress code to the extent that the same clothing which Muslim women were supposed to wear in public finally was named «*Ḥijāb*». (Stowasser, 2020: 482)

Criticism

Mirṅīsī mentions some parts of history next to each other based on her own opinion so that she would depict the Prophet a person who supports the mixture of women and men with no belief in *Ḥijāb*. In the views of Mirṅīsī and Aḥmad, the force of the society, the existence of hypocrites and the unrest made by them which also affected the personal life of the Prophet (s), and (based on the view of all the mentioned Orientalists) the prejudice of 'Umar as a misogynist in the society were all affective factors. According to Mirṅīsī, the dire need of the Prophet for 'Umar's support, as an important person in the society, caused his Holiness to accept *Ḥijāb* against his will. This is as if the will of God and the Prophet (s) are affected by the conditions of the society, and the revelation of permanent rules of religion is dependent on the wish of some Companions. This is whereas the aforesaid Orientalists, with similar views, see *Ḥijāb* synonymous with seclusion, particularly Aḥmad who deemed the acceptance of imposed *Ḥijāb* the reason for threatening the Prophet (s) by his wives for a forced divorce. She believes the reaction of women against the acceptance of *Ḥijāb* has been eliminated.

In fact, this puzzle has other historical parts, but it seems some Orientalists have ignored them to attain their goals. These parts include:

- Culture building for observing *Ḥijāb* in a free and unrestrained society is an issue (like other cultivating issues) which needs preparation and time, and cannot be fashioned via imposing in one night.

- Examining the verses of Ḥijāb and the Prophet's recommendations and acts as to Ḥijāb are some of the points that none of the Orientalists have pointed them out.
 - Of the issues which have not been dealt with in their studies are overlooking the attire of women before Islam among Bedouin Arabs; not mentioning the hierarchy of revelation of Ḥijāb verses and depicting a certain part of history (before the obligation of Ḥijāb verses); and being silent as to the reception of women at the time of revelation of Ḥijāb verses.
 - Expressions like seclusion, retreat, being housebound, and forced Ḥijāb by the Orientalists can be seen abundantly. In this way, the concept of Ḥijāb gives the impression of passivity in the society. Although the command of staying home was issued for the wives of the Prophet (s), this command never made them deprived and limited.
- Now, to explicate the issue of Ḥijāb, first the Ḥijāb of women before Islam will be pointed out.

Ḥijāb of women before Islam

In the Ignorance Era, women did not observe complete covering, and associated with men. They took part in public gatherings and commuted in public places. Their clothing did not cover all of their body, and some parts of their head, neck, ears, bosom, hands, and legs were undressed. As to this, Zamakhsharī writes: collar of women's attire was loose in a way that their necklines, bosoms, and the parts close to them were undressed. Women tied their scarves at the back of their heads, so the front of their head was without covering. Some women hit their feet on the ground so that men could see that they had anklets. (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 324)

Gharnāṭī writes: at that time, women wore clothes with loose collars in a way that their bosoms could be seen, and tied their scarves at the back of their head. Therefore, their ears, necks, and bosoms were unclothed. This style of clothing was in fashion after the appearance of Islam and even after the Hegira until the revelation of Ḥijāb verses. (Mūsāpūr, 2019: 16)

In sum, Ḥijāb of women at the time of the Prophet (s) was in a way that it did not cover all their bodies; also they wore scarves, but some parts of their bosom and neck as well as parts which were the place for ornaments (which seduce men) were undressed. To prove this claim, the narration by Imām Bāqir (a) can be referred to:

One day in Medina, a young beautiful woman was walking in an alley while she had tied her scarf at the back of her head and her neck and ears could be seen. One of the Companions came from the opposite side of the alley. That beautiful scene attracted his attention and made him not watch ahead. Suddenly, a piece of bone or glass protruding from the wall hit his face and wounded him. With this condition, he went to the Prophet and made his informed of what had happened. It was here that this verse was revealed, «And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veil over their bosoms and not display their beauty». (Qur'ān 24:31, Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1995, vol. 5: 342)

All in all, that Qur'ān forbids following that model and issues reforming commands for the covering of women indicate some flaws in the clothing of women in that era as well as its gap with the covering which was ideal to Islam. (Mūsāpūr, 2019: 16)

Reinhart writes: «at the early days of Islam, when almost all Arabs lived as Bedouins, cities were small and the art of tailoring was unknown. Simple clothes which were made as one-piece were sufficient to protect their bodies against heat and cold».

In another part of his book, to explain the word «*nuqaba*», he writes: it is a kind of women underpants which has gathers, worn by the women Bedouins. (Reinhart, 2018: 213-20)

Therefore, the idea that women did not have coverings before Islam can be rejected.

Poems of Ignorance Era and Ḥijāb

Poems of Ignorance Era, which is a reflecting mirror of that time's culture, are teemed with confirmatory evidence to the effect that there was the culture of covering and that exposing was detested even as for the hair of women's heads. Results for the exposing of women in certain and exceptional situations (like the fear of being arrested, fear of calamities, and also the similes and idioms used in the literature) show the value of covering and its ensuing result, i.e. chastity. (Shāh Sanā'ī, 2017: 26)

Hence, before the appearance of Islam and the revelation of Ḥijāb verses as well as after the immigration of the Prophet to Medina, women did not have qur'ānic covering, which is confirmed by all the interpretative and historical books. This issue can be verified by the verse, «...And make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance ...» (Qur'ān 33:33). According to the interpreters, the common Ḥijāb in the Time of Ignorance was not a complete Ḥijāb covering the neck, bosom, and the parts close to them (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 3: 231). However, Arabs of that time were not unfamiliar with Ḥijāb. Considering the obligation of Ḥijāb in prayer for women as well as the other verses – which point out the chastity at the time of talking, of walking, having ornaments, etc. – the verses of Ḥijāb were revealed for every woman as warning and as the expression of its obligation so that the dignity given by Ḥijāb becomes public for all women. After the revelation of Ḥijāb verses, Muslim women took another course and figured out why covering must be obligatory (hence, Ḥijāb was not exclusive to the wives of the Prophet (s), but rather it was a public issue).

Effort of the Prophet (s) as for Ḥijāb

Looking at the history of Islam's beginning shows the interaction between the grandees of the religion and the women. Women related narrations for the Companions, or heard and memorized the talks of the Prophets via his helpers. They got the answer to their questions of knowledge and religion from the Prophet and his helpers and related them to others. Therefore, what is forbidden about the activities of women is not the interaction with man itself, but rather it is the seduction. Nevertheless, separating women from men in mosques and at war camps shows the effort of the Prophet (s) to mitigate the context for the mixture of women and men in the society. The Prophet never shook hands with women when they swore allegiance, and observed the legal limits.

Umma Salama says: I was with the Prophet. Ibn Umma Maktūm entered. The Messenger of God said, «Go and sit behind the curtain». We said, «Isn't this man blind?» He said, «But you are not blind». (Ḥurr 'Āmilī, 1991, vol. 14: 129).

Addressing Asmā' who had a thin covering, the Prophet said, «O Asmā'! When a woman reaches an age in which monthly period happens to her, it is not acceptable for her to show any parts except the face and hands». (Ṭabrisī, 1981, vol. 9: 231)

It is narrated in history:

A young and beautiful woman went to the Prophet to ask a question, while Faḍl b. 'Abbās was behind the Prophet. Some glances were exchanged between Faḍl and her. The Prophet turned the face of Faḍl with his hand. (Bukhārī, 2002, vol. 8: 51)

The Prophet commanded men that they do not let their wives wear revealing clothes. He said, «Whoever wears revealing clothes is sent to the Fire by God». (Ṣadūq, 1993, vol. 1: 115)

It can be understood from some narrations that at the beginning of Islam, some women supervised some affairs of women (the issue of Ḥijāb and the like). For example, a woman named Suḥrā' bint Nahīk patrolled and supervised the markets. (Makārim Shīrāzī, 2007, vol. 10: 235)

Great attention of the Prophet (s) to the issue of Ḥijāb of his wives and other women is obvious in narrations, a point which is overlooked by the Orientalists.

Reaction of women regarding the acceptance of Ḥijāb verses

To answer Aḥmad who holds that the disagreement of women with Ḥijāb is censored in history, some historical instances are mentioned here.

‘Āyisha says: after the revelation of Light chapter, the immigrant women cut parts of their thickest wool garments and covered their heads and shoulders. (Suyūṭī, 1996, vol. 5: 221)

Umma Salama also narrates: after the revelation of covering verse in the chapter of The Clans, the wives of Helpers went out of their houses in black, and seemed that a crow sat on their heads. (Ibid)

It is narrated from Umma Salama: when the verse, «...They should cast their outer garments over their persons...» (Qur’ān 33:59), was revealed, the wives of the Helpers went out of houses as if they were black crows because they had wrapped themselves with a black sack covering them entirely. (Abū Dāwūd Sajistānī, 2000, vol. 2: 382; Suyūṭī, 1996, vol. 5: 221)

‘Āyisha, the daughter of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, went to ‘Āyisha with a thin scarf on her head. ‘Āyisha tore it apart and gave her a thick scarf. (Mālik b. Anas, 1986, vol. 2: 913)

Two points can be derived from these narrations:

- Contrary to the opinion of some Orientalists, Ḥijāb was not only exclusive to the wives of the Prophet (s);
- Without coercion, Muslim women accepted Ḥijāb as their right.

‘Umar and Ḥijāb of bondwomen

One of the points some believe is that the obligation of Ḥijāb for free women was to protect them from the harassment of hypocrites and exonerate bondwomen from this inhibition. In order to explicate this fact, here comes the examination of narrations.

By no means, ‘Umar allowed bondwomen to wear headdress, and said, «Headdress is exclusive to the free women so that they are recognized and are not harassed». (Albānī, 1985, vol. 6: 151; Sarakhsī, 1994, vol. 10: 151; Suyūṭī, 1996, vol. 5: 221).

Of course, ‘Umar was not the only person thinking in this way, and some others also had this perception of Ḥijāb decree. Ibn Shahāb was asked, «Can a bondwoman get married and cover her head?» He recited the verse, «O Prophet! Say to your wives ...» (Qur’ān 33:28), and said, «God has forbidden the bondwomen to make themselves similar to the free women». (Suyūṭī, 1996, vol. 5: 221)

‘Umar and his fellow thinkers thought as a bondwoman is deprived of freedom, she is also deprived of Ḥijāb (‘Ābidīnī, 2018: 54). To him, Ḥijāb was more of a right and honor than an obligation to the extent that he thought chador was a right, and not an obligation. As a result, he did not allow bondwomen to wear chador. (Ibid)

Shī‘a Imāms never approved the emphasis put by ‘Umar; there are evidences by which it seems this differentiation between bondwomen and free women, which is narrated to be done by ‘Umar, was due to the view he had toward the Arab and non-Arab women. Since most of the bondwomen were non-Arab and he saw their social class low, ‘Umar emphasized that there should be outward differences. In the verse 31 of Light chapter, Qur’ān does not deem

differences between bondwomen and free women, and an exception cannot be derived from it. Of course, as to the verse 59 of The Clans chapter, some interpreters hold a view which is not approved by the great interpreters of Shī'a. In this verse, God commands the wives and daughters of the Prophet and the believing women that they cover themselves in cloaks. Then, God says, «That is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested». (Qur'ān 33:59)

Lamentably, in some of the interpretations, it is mentioned under the aforesaid verse that, «That they should be known that they are free and not bondwomen». This is whereas Shī'a interpreters do not approve this interpretation. 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī says: «the meaning of the verse is that women with cloaks should be known as those with chastity. And when people who have disease in their hearts face them, they understand that they cannot flirt with these women and, thus, these women won't be harassed».

The interpretation which is stated in Sunni interpretation books is consequently the same view held by the second caliph. This is whereas such an interpretation cannot be inferred from the Qur'ān. However, that whether Shī'a Imāms hindered the bondwomen to have Ḥijāb or not is expressed by contradictory narrations. Some of the Shī'a jurists interpreted the agreed narrations as the belief concealment. Conversely, there are narrations indicating that both the bondwomen of Imāms and of the others had Ḥijāb. There are even narrations about 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar, son of the second caliph, in which he emphasizes Ḥijāb for his bondwomen, saying he provided them with expensive veils. Moreover, there are some narrations in Sunni texts that mention 'Āyisha had a bondwoman whose hair could be seen. The Prophet (s) asked, "Is she mature?" 'Āyisha said, "Yes." Then the Prophet cut a part of his turban and gave it to that bondwoman. (Jabbārī, 2020: 12)

Therefore, it can be said that the policy of caliphs (Abūbakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān) constructed this decree in the Islamic society, and their lifestyle was never an instance for the commands of Islam. Rather it was their personal taste. Also in some cases, some hadiths are narrated from Shī'a in agreement with this view which are interpreted as the belief concealment. This is because the same vice which can be found when free women do not observe Ḥijāb can also certainly be found when bondwomen do not have Ḥijāb. Hence, that the bondwomen were obligated to wear Ḥijāb is the preferred possibility, and the meaning of Qur'ān 33:59 does not necessitate bondwomen not to have Ḥijāb. (Mūsāpūr, 2019: 23)

The role of 'Umar in the revelation of Ḥijāb verses

As to the role of 'Umar in the revelation of Ḥijāb verses, two groups of narrations can be referred to:

A. A group which explicitly considers 'Umar the cause of revelation of Ḥijāb verses.

Musaddad relates from Anas and from 'Umar, who said, «O Messenger of God! Good and bad people come to you. I wish you ordered Mothers of the Believers to wear Ḥijāb. Therefore, the verses of Ḥijāb were revealed». (Bukhārī, 2002, vol. 3: 807-808; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 2014, vol. 12: 177)

B. The other group of narrations point to the virtues of the second caliph, and has no relation with the cause of revelation of Ḥijāb verses. Nonetheless, this group has a semantic relation with the "agreed" narrations, and can come of use to solve this kind of narrative diversity.

Sa'ad says that 'Umar asked for a permission from the Prophet to enter, while the women of Quraysh were with the Prophet, talking to him loudly. When 'Umar did so, women stood up and wore Ḥijāb. While laughing, the Messenger of God said, «I was surprised by women because they wore Ḥijāb immediately when they heard your voice». 'Umar said, «Messenger

of God! You deserve to the effect that they become scared of you». Then he said to the women, «O the enemies of yourself! Aren't you afraid of the Messenger of God?» Women said, «You are stricter than the Prophet». The Messenger of God said to 'Umar, «I swear to the Essence that my life is at His hand, Satan never passes the way wherein you pass». (Bukhārī, 2002, vol. 3: 602)

Examining the proofs of narrations in this part relies on one of the foundations accepted by Sunnis, i.e. the minimal inerrancy of the Prophet, and ignoring the decree of Ḥijāb cannot be accepted theologically and intellectually. Given that these narrations are true, the behavior of the second caliph is a kind of disrespect toward the wife of the Prophet. On the other hand, there is incoherence in the texts of this group of narrations. For example, that Sawda went out is said to be, in some of these narrations, after the revelation of Ḥijāb verses and in some of the other narrations, before the revelation of Ḥijāb verses; this going out is deemed as one of the causes of the revelation of these verses. Therefore, narrations in this group are in blatant contradiction to each other. Also, it is not clear if a woman goes to desert to relieve herself, why should she be addressed by the second caliph? If Ḥijāb was not revealed by then, so how can one justify the wife of the Prophet to be addressed by 'Umar? Moreover, the Prophet had priority to admonish his wives as for Ḥijāb. This is whereas the narrations assert 'Umar warned the Prophet of this issue many times, but the Prophet did not care about these warnings until this verse of the Qur'ān was revealed. Despite the zeal of the second caliph about the Ḥijāb of the Prophet's wives, if – based on some narrations – this incident has happened after the revelation of Ḥijāb verses, that the wives of the Prophet do not have the obligatory Ḥijāb is something unbelievable. This is because if it were something obligatory, the agreement of the Qur'ān with the second caliph would be something refuted. Based on historical evidence, the daughters and wives of the Prophet had Ḥijāb before the revelation of Ḥijāb verses. For example, lady Zahrā (a) had Ḥijāb when a blind man came to her house. (Ḥusaynī, 2018: 125)

In fact, 'Umar sought to hold back women from pursuing their rights, whereas Ḥijāb was a tool – from the view of God and his Messenger – for the social participation of women in order to keep the dignity of them without harming both men and women. Although there was one slogan, it followed two goals. With a misunderstanding of the verses, 'Umar deprived bondwomen of Ḥijāb right. Now, how is it possible that God and his Messenger sent Ḥijāb following his opinion and violence? To relate the issue of Ḥijāb and the separation of woman and man to the wish of 'Umar (which is mentioned in the texts of Orientalists) shows these Orientalists did not ponder over the religion of God deeply.

Narrations of the second group mention that Muslims generally went to the house of his Holiness easily. Meanwhile, the issue of Ḥijāb was neglected by the Prophet, which was warned by the second caliph before anyone else. Moreover, the Prophet showed procrastination about this important issue, and despite many caveats of the Companions he was heedless toward it. This group of narrations is similar to the texts of Torah (in which the Prophets are shown to be like lay people, full of sins plus leniency toward the religion, like the story of Abraham (a) who offered Sarah to Nimrod to save his own life). This is whereas, with a belief in the minimal inerrancy of the Prophet and that Ḥijāb was a religious issue, he had to observe it about his wives.

These texts ask Muslims to believe some hadiths wherein the women of Quraysh talk to the Prophet with no Ḥijāb and with loud voices. To lay Muslims, imagining such a situation is something strange —especially when Ḥijāb was obligatory for Muslim women — let alone the greatest person of the world who is the most practical in carrying out the divine rulings. In the meantime, the second caliph enters. Seeing these scenes, he criticizes the women, causing the Prophet to become delighted and compliment him. These narrations make one ask this

question that why the description of a Companion's virtues should be along with insults to the Prophet.

Overall, the verses of Ḥijāb had many revelation causes; this multiplicity was not without a reason. With various causes, the importance of this issue has been explicated in the society. This issue was explicated in order to carry it out in the society. To complement the restoration of women's rights and to dignify women, Islamic knowledge has taught them Ḥijāb so that the existential gem of them can be inaccessible to the strangers, and this purity as well as segregation from men can hold up the foundation of the family and strengthen the force of their belief. (Ibid)

Taking the order of the revelation of verses into account shows that the decree of Ḥijāb was not announced suddenly, but rather it was revealed to the heart of the Prophet with the passage of time and some preparation. Gradual revelation of Ḥijāb verses and the preparation for the acceptance of ultimate decree are of the issues that should be considered by the Orientalists.

Order of the revelation of Ḥijāb verses

First stage: in this stage, until the fifth year of Hegira, Ḥijāb was not obligatory on the Muslim women. They went out with the common clothes of that era, talked with men, and sat with them to eat. After the marriage of the Prophet and Zaynab, God set Ḥijāb for women in the fifth year of Hegira. He commanded the believers that whenever they wanted something from the wives of the Prophet, they ask it from before a screen. Then He mentioned the reason for this command as follows, "That makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. (Qur'ān 33:53; 'Ābidīnī, 2018: 12)

Second stage: in the second stage, close relatives were removed from the circle of this decree and were allowed to talk to the wives of the Prophet without a screen. Qur'ān reads, «There is no blame (on these ladies if they appear) before their fathers or their sons, their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the (slaves) whom their right hands possess. And, (ladies), fear God; for God is Witness to all things». (Qur'ān 33:55)

Therefore, the narrations in which the Messenger of God says to his wives «to cover themselves from Ibn Maktūm (who was blind) and keep themselves before the screen of Ḥijāb» are of this type. That all women are generally commanded to wear Ḥijāb, whether obligatory or recommended, cannot be derived from those hadiths. ('Ābidīnī, 2018: 12)

Third stage: in the third stage, cloaks were set as a right for the wives and daughters of the Prophet and the believing women. Qur'ān reads, «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 God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful». (Qur'ān 33:59).

So far, it has become clear that the wives of the Prophet had to stay before a screen, and this duty was a special honor which was exclusive to the wives of the Prophet. Of the duties determined for the wives of the Prophet are: be not too complacent of speech ... but speak ye a speech (that is) just (Qur'ān 33:32); and stay quietly in your houses (Qur'ān 33:33); and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance (Qur'ān 33:33). Anyway, bestowing honor was not without setting a special duty. Then, this duty was gifted to the other believing women so that they also enjoy honor, and those who have disease in their hearts do not harass them.

It should be noted that Ḥijāb as a right was a more important aspect. The women of Medina cast black chador over their heads to exhibit their impressiveness, though the Prophet

did not tell them to wear black. Particularly, due to thermal absorption, black covering was not suitable for Arabia land. Hence, the only justification for this color is the very impressiveness and also the complete use of this right.

According to the history, the way women reacted to the acceptance of Ḥijāb differs from the opinion of the Orientalists, who ignore these narrations and deem a historical censorship to the effect that women resisted Ḥijāb. Observing Ḥijāb kept them safe in an unsafe society and caused them a social attendance without harms. On the other hand, Ḥijāb was not exclusive to the wives of the Prophet (s) and was made obligatory on all women in later stages.

Fourth stage: in the fourth stage, the verse 31 of Light chapter made the rulings of Ḥijāb clear. Qur'ān reads, «And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms ...». (Qur'ān 24:31)

In this stage, God commanded the believing women: they should lower their gaze, cover their private parts, not show their ornaments to strangers except those which can naturally be seen, cover their bosoms with scarf, not display their beauty, and not hit the ground in order to attract attention to their anklets and ornaments. The decree of women's Ḥijāb was in need of much explanation. This can be seen in the outward volume of the verse of women's covering which is, more or less, five times more than that of the verse of men's covering. (‘Ābidīnī, 2018: 12)

Fifth stage: in the fifth stage, getting permission to enter the rest area of close relative women was put forward. Hence, with equipping women with Ḥijāb, God gave the management of women's relation with men to women themselves so that, via their active participation, they could avoid being harmed and harming the men. Therefore, the issue of Ḥijāb should be divided into two parts: before and after the revelation of Ḥijāb verses. What the Orientalists depicted is only part of the history which is before the obligation of Ḥijāb. They generalized the type of women's covering of that time to all times, and said nothing about the other acts of them.

Conclusion

Orientalists have mentioned some parts of history in a way which is compatible with their own tendencies and have overlooked some other parts of history, including points like:

- Not paying attention to the covering style of women among Bedouin Arabs;
- Depicting a certain part of history (before the obligation expressed by Ḥijāb verses) and generalizing it to the entire history;
- Being silent as for the reception of women at the time when Ḥijāb became obligatory;
- Not examining the history and Islamic narrations completely and not paying attention to the effort of the Prophet (s) as to the issue of Ḥijāb;
- Not having enough recognition of the religion plus of legislation of divine rulings.

All these factors led to improper studies, causing them to see the legislative rulings the result of some Companions' insistence or the necessity of that time. This is whereas the rulings are issued from the Wise Legislator who regards the public interests of people during consecutive eras. Contrary to the opinions of the mentioned Orientalists, Ḥijāb as an obligatory matter was not exclusive to the wives of the Prophet and/or free women. In the view of women at the beginning days of Islam, Ḥijāb was never a matter of seclusion, but rather it was a right to secure their safety and social participation. Also, the Prophet (s) showed great efforts so that women and man would not mingle.

References

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