

**A REFLECTION ON WOMEN ATTIRE IN THE QUR'AN:
A STUDY ON AYAT AL-HIJĀB**

Angraini binti Ramli

International Islamic University Malaysia
anggrainiramli@gmail.com

Radwan Jamal Elatrash

International Islamic University Malaysia
radwan@iium.edu.my

Abstract:

Hijab, jilbab or khimar known as a piece of garment which usually worn by Muslim women in order to obey their God. It becomes a symbol that shows their identity. Besides, Hijab has a particular meaning according to multiple perspectives which resulted variant styles and types of hijab in one community, with or without syari'ah compliance. Fashion trends also plays the role in modifying women attire and the issue about this seems more complicated since the guidelines were avoided. This paper will goes through the commentaries of Qur'an to examine the requirements of proper women attire as mentioned specifically on ayat al-hijab. It results that Qur'an already put some guidelines on proper attire for Muslim women such as: the garments used to cover body parts is must be long, wide and thick enough. Not being overdressed also included as a requirement.

Keyword: *Hijab, Women Attire, Syari'ah compliance, Islamic Dress Code.*

Abstrak:

Hijab, jilbab atau khimar dikenal sebagai selembat pakaian yang biasanya digunakan wanita muslimah untuk memenuhi perintah Tuhannya, Penggunaan jilbab menjadi symbol yang menunjukkan identitas mereka. Selain itu, jilbab memiliki arti tertentu sesuai dengan berbagai perspektif yang menghasilkan varian gaya dan jenis jilbab di satu komunitas, dengan atau tanpa kepatuhan syari'ah. Tren mode juga berperan dalam memodifikasi pakaian wanita dan wacana tentang jilbab sebagai mode busana ini tampaknya lebih rumit karena pedoman tersebut dihindari. Tulisan ini akan membahas komentar Alquran untuk memeriksa persyaratan pakaian wanita yang tepat seperti yang disebutkan secara khusus tentang ayat al-hijab. Hasilnya, Al Qur'an sudah menorehkan beberapa panduan tentang pakaian yang tepat untuk wanita Muslim seperti: pakaian yang digunakan untuk menutupi bagian tubuh harus panjang, lebar dan cukup tebal. Tidak berlebihan dalam berhias juga termasuk sebagai persyaratan normative berpakaian sesuai syariat.

Kata Kunci: *Hijab, pakaian wanita, pemenuhan syariat, ciri pakaian Islami.*

A. Introduction

When addressing women attire, it is accordingly about the pieces of garment worn by them to cover their bodies. Al-Qurtuby mentioned in his *tafsīr* that the majority of scholars or called *jumhūr* most agreed that women are only allowed to reveal their faces and hands.¹ This means that women need more pieces of garment than men to cover the upper and lower parts of their bodies.

All Muslim women are sure and well informed about this obligatory. Despite, some of them are failed to understand the meaning of *hijab* used it only to define it as a head cover only or being worn only when they are outside the house without concerning the strangers (*non mahram*) or not. Hence, multiple understandings and fashion trends have their own impact in the application of this *syari'ah* in their life. Various styles, types and colors show in existence and lately, *hijab syar'i* comes out as a trend. But another problem shows up, since they modify their attire to a 'modern' look, such as a head cover style which looks like a wavy hair, an excessive adornment, or any shocking color which put into attention, made a proper *hijab* is not only define as a wide and long garment which cover the body parts. But it has its special requirements which beautifully explained by God in His book. This is what this paper tried to address. It is all about the reflection of women attire by studying the commentaries of *ayat al-hijab* in Qur'an. And it found that *hijab* is more than only about a head cover.

B. The meaning of Hijab, Jilbab and Khimar

The word *Hijab* found in *lisan al-Arab* dictionary can be mean as *as-sitr* which can translated as curtain, cover or partition.² Further, the word Hijab and its derivative was found 8 times repeatedly in Quran, as it sorted by its meanings such as **Partition**, **Screen** and **Curtain**, as written in the table below:

| Meanings | No | Verses |
|-----------|----|--|
| Partition | 1. | Surah Al-Isra: 45 "And when you recite the <i>Qur'an</i> , We put between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter a concealed partition ." |
| | 2. | Surah Al-Isra: 45 "And when you recite the <i>Qur'an</i> , We put between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter a concealed partition ." |
| | 3. | Surah Al-A'raf: 46 "And between them will be a partition , and on [its] elevations are men who recognize all by their mark." |
| | 4. | Surah Al-Ahzab: 53 "O you who have believed, do not enter the houses of the |

¹ Abu Abdillah ibn Ahmad al-Anshari Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jāmi' Li Ahkāmī Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004), 183.

² Ibn Mandzur, *Lisān Al-Arab*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Al-Sadir, n.d.), 298.

| | | |
|---------|----|---|
| | | <i>Prophet except when you are permitted for a meal, without awaiting its readiness. But when you are invited, then enter; and when you have eaten, disperse without seeking to remain for conversation. Indeed, that [behavior] was troubling the Prophet, and he is shy of [dismissing] you. But Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts."</i> |
| | 5. | Surah Fussilat: 5 <i>"And they say, "Our hearts are within coverings from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between us and you is a partition, so work; indeed, we are working."</i> |
| | 6. | Surah Ash-Shuraa: 51 <i>"And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise."</i> |
| | 7. | Surah Al-Mutaffifin: 15 <i>"No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned."</i> |
| Screen | 1. | Surah Maryam: 17 <i>"And she took, in seclusion from them, a screen. Then We sent to her Our Angel, and he represented himself to her as a well-proportioned man."</i> |
| Curtain | 1. | Surah Sad: 32 <i>"And he said, "Indeed, I gave preference to the love of good [things] over the remembrance of my Lord until the sun disappeared into the curtain [of darkness]."</i> |

For the word *khimar*, as written in *lisan al-arab*, it means a cover. Had same roots with word *khamr* as it will covering mind while drunk. Worn as head cover, named *imamah* if it worn by men and *khumur* if it worn by women.³ It was mentioned in Quran as *Khimar* or *Khumur* in Surah An-Nuur: 31, as He said: *"And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their **head covers** over their chests..."*

And for the word *Jilbab* or *Jalabib*; in plural, Ibn Mandzur gave it meaning as a *gamis* or clothes. It also can defined as the clothes which is wider than *khimar*, which covers an upper part of women from head until chest. Or it is a material

³ Ibid., 1:257–58.

worn by women to cover her clothes from upper parts.⁴ It pointed out that *Jilbab* is an outer garments covering the whole body traditionally and it worn by some Muslim women. This word was mentioned in surah al Ahzab 59 as recited: “*O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused.*”

C. The Characteristic of Women Attire

The first thing to be discussed in this part is about the part which is obligatory to be covered and to not showing it to the strangers. Regarding to this issue, Ar-Razi⁵ was discussed it in detail about the *aurah* parts and to whom it was permissible to be revealed, as mentioned in the table below.

| The Limitation of <i>Aurah</i> | Men | Women |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Men | <p>All parts between knee and navel. Both knee and navel are excluded from <i>aurah</i>, except for Imam Abu Hanifah who said that knee is <i>aurah</i>. And Imam Malik said that thigh is also excluded from <i>aurah</i>.</p> <p>Special condition: If looking at his face or his body are lead to <i>syahwat</i> then it is forbidden. And also it was abominable to do hugging, embracing each other at lips and sharing one blanket at same time.</p> | <p>Strangers: All parts of her body is <i>aurah</i> except face and hand palms.</p> <p>There are three conditions in looking at face and hand palms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Without purposes and not inviting any <i>fitnah</i>: it is not allowed to look at women face with no purposes, and if it happen by coincidence then he should lower his gaze. Imam Abu Hanifah added to not repeatedly looking at it in purpose. 2. With a purpose and without <i>fitnah</i>. It divided to conditions: First: If the purpose is <i>nikah</i>, then looking at face and hand palms are allowed. Second: If the purpose is to |

⁴ Ibn Mandzur, *Lisān Al-Arab*.

⁵ Fakruddin Al-Razi, *Mafātih Al-Ghaib*, 3rd ed., vol. 23 (Beirut: Dār Ihya At-turāts Al-Arabi, 1420), 360–62.

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| | | <p>sell the <i>jariyah</i> or slave. Third: in order to do a pledge. Forth: in witnessing and medication process.</p> <p>3. Looking at her with <i>syahwah</i> and it was forbidden.</p> <p>Non-Strangers (Mahram): First: blood related because of lineage, breast feeding and marriage (laws): their <i>aurah</i> are same as mens to mens <i>aurah</i> which is in between knee to the navel. Second: Wife, there are no <i>aurah</i> between them.</p> |
| Women | | <p>As mentioned in men to men's <i>aurah</i>. With addition: it was not permissible to show their <i>aurah</i> to non-muslim women because they are included in group of strangers.</p> |

Apparently, the Qur'an⁶ also mentioned the number of *mahrams* who are permissible to see women adornment, as written on the table below:

| Mahram | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Women | Men |
| All Muslim Women | Husband |
| | Father in Law |
| | Son (s) |
| | Husband's son (s) |
| | Brother (s) |

⁶ Surah An Nuur: 31.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Slave (s) | Brother's son (s) |
| | Sister's son (s) |
| | Slave (s) |
| | Those who have no desire |
| | Children who not aware yet about private aspect of women. |

After knowing the limitation of *aurah* which is allowed to be seen by strangers or non-strangers, women are asked to not expose their body parts and its adornments. There are some requirements pointed by Islam such an ideal characteristic of garments or fabrics can be worn by Muslim women. This obligation of Hijab are applied to all Muslim women. Covering their bodies from heads to toes, hiding it behind the wide and loose garments until their body shapes become unseen. As other scholars mentioned a wide and loose type of garments as a respected attires to be worn, it found that *Syeikh Abdul Rauf Al Fansuri* mentioned the type of garments in particular. As he said: “*Dan hendaklah ditutup oleh mereka itu atas segala kepala dan lehernya dan segala dada mereka itu dengan segala telekung mereka itu dan jangan dinyatakan mereka itu hias mereka itu yang tersembunyi yaitu lain daripada muka dan dua tapak tangannya*”⁷

Telekung is a special garment worn by Muslim women in Asia particularly when performing *Salah*. Normally, *telekung* made by very long and wide garment covers all parts of head, neck, extended until the knee. It can be understood here, that *telekung* is a cultural attire of an Asian ladies which fulfilled the requirements of sharia, as it's loose, wide and long. By mentioning *telekung* as a particular example to women head covers, turned out the multiple perceptions. One: *telekung* is wear as regular clothes as daily basis. Two: *telekung* is one of head cover style for Muslim women on that days. It worn regularly during performing *Salah*, and *Sheikh Abdurrauf* suggested *telekung* as an exact apparel to be worn for daily uses as it meets the sharia criteria. By noting *telekung*, indirectly, it can be noticed that a particular characteristic of hijab is long and wide which may cover all *aurah* parts.

He also mentioned another type of head cover, it is *selendang* which is a common attire around Malay people. It's much like shawl, a square, triangular or oblong piece of wool or other material worn by women to cover their head, neck and shoulders. From its definition, it was known that *selendang* is little bit smaller than *telekung*, in size. What brought to attention is, *Sheikh Abdul Rauf* mentioned both *selendang* and *telekung* when he interpreted the attire guidelines for post-menstrual women which usually reached their old ages, not to all women.⁸ It left

⁷ Abd al-Rauf ibn Ali al-Fansuri al-Jawi, *Turjuman Al-Mustafid* (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 2014).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

the assumption that, *selendang* is commonly wear by late age women, or, *selendang* is only allowed and 'legal' to be worn by those late age women. But, it was really clear explained that Quran mentioned the conditions of women who are not being effected to the previous obligation. Those are the women of post-menstrual age, or in menopause state because of their late age, and those who has no desire of marriage anymore, those are allowed to put aside their outer garments which cover their faces and heads. Ibn Ashur said for those post-menstrual women, they are allowed to lessen this garment to their chest, but they are allowed to open free their head cover as well.⁹ From here, it pointed out that wide and lose are the requirements of hijab garments, and telekung or selendang, both meets the criteria.

The next requirement of proper attire for Muslim women as mentioned in the Qur'an¹⁰ is to not overdress. By pointed His command to not overdress when leaving home and adhere *jahiliyah* women at the next part of *ayah*, means, keep residing at home is not an obligation, it's just a way to be covered. And it's allowed to leave the house with a proper clothes covering their *aurah* and not be overdress like the women in *jahiliyyah* did. Zamakhsyari said *jahiliyyah* here was divided into two categories. *Jahiliyah al-Ula* is the first era of *Jahiliyyah* or also known as *Jahiliyah al Juhala*'. There were various sayings about exact time of *Jahiliyah al Juhala*. First, it is at the time of Prophet Ibrahim was born. Another opinion estimated that it was in between Prophet Adam and Prophet Noah, or between Idris and Noah, or Daud and Sulaiman times. It was narrated that, at that time, the women was wearing clothes with embroidered by pearl and walking around the road in purposed to show themselves to their men.¹¹ Then, Abu Hayyan¹² defined that *Tabarruj* is showing the beauty or attractiveness from their faces or bodies which may invite the desire of their opposite genders.

Later, there are Two *maqasid Syari'ah* of creating *libas* for the children of Adam spoken out from the Qur'an,¹³ first: to conceal their private part and then second: as an adornments to them. And the clothing of righteousness is the best o clothing. It explained that *Syari'ah* allowed to dress up and beautify ourselves by the garments which was one from the *maqasid*, but then, the next rule to be specified is, *libaasut taqwa dzaalika khayr*. The clothing of righteousness- that is better. Zamakhsyari was saying that *Libaas al taqwa* is the garments or clothes which covered their private parts (*aurah*), and it is a way better than *libaas al zinah* or the adorning clothes.¹⁴ Although, there was an opinion said that this verse is only about Allah's bounty, but al Qurtuby mentioned that this is an ayah about

⁹ Muhammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Al-Tahrir Wa Al-Tanwir*, vol. 18 (Tunisia: al-Dār al-Tunisia li al-Nashr, 1984H), 296.

¹⁰ Surah Al-Ahzab: 33.

¹¹ Mahmūd ibn 'Amrū ibn Ahmad Al-Zamakhsyarī, *Al-Kassyāf 'an Haqāiai Ghawāmidi Al-Tanzīl*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1407), 537.

¹² Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi, *Al-Bahr Al-Muhīt Fi Al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1420H), 449.

¹³ Surah Al-A'raf: 26.

¹⁴ Al-Zamakhsyarī, *Al-Kassyāf 'an Haqāiai Ghawāmidi Al-Tanzīl*, 3:97.

the obligation of covering *aurah* as God said “*yuwaarii sau-aatikum*”¹⁵ meanwhile, Al Maraghi also shared the same view when he put the first function of clothes is to cover *aurah* and more over it can be used as an adornments in second.¹⁶ Or as embellishment and beautification.¹⁷ Later, by mentioning *libaas altaqwa* in the end of this verse after exhibiting the luxurious of His favors in terms of this garments, is more like asserting one general rule. He bestowed a favor upon human by His power; as a garments is one of His bounty, then He also want human to remember that those *ni'mah* came from Him. And being modest, not being overdressed, no dazzling display, is the ways to show gratitude upon Him.

Moreover, turns out that Hijab is not only about a piece of garment worn to hide a body parts. As Qur'an¹⁸ mentioned that *hijab* is also about lowering gaze and guarding the visions. Lowering gaze is categorized under discussion of Hijab matters, yet, it is kind of partition or screen which is related to sight and vision¹⁹ not to the outer garments or another kind of veil and scarfs only. Zamakhsyari said the obligation of lowering visions is for both men and women. They are advised to guard their sight from other private part which known as *aurah*. It is permissible to see the parts of *aurah* only if it covered by clothes. But there is an exception, if the material of clothes is very thin, then putting a sight onto it is forbidden.²⁰ From this explanation it was clear, that women were asked to conceal and not to expose their body parts, adornments, being overly dressed and tapping their feet in order to invite the attention of opposite gender, in balance, men also asked to lower their gaze and guard their private part.

D. Conclusion

Women attire is one of big issues to be discussed nowadays. As the fashion industry also took a part on developing and modifying the styles and types of women attires. Some regulations mentioned in *syari'ah* were denied. Fashion trend tends to show the beauty overly and avoid the *maqasid* or purposes of clothing. And some Muslim women also failed to understand and choose to avoid the requirements of proper clothing on order to be ‘up to date’.

The very clear characteristic of a proper women attire mentioned in Qur'an is being long, wide and thick enough until it can hide the body parts. And the skin color of that body parts also remain hidden. Evidently, concealing the body parts and adornments is not only from strangers, as if it leads to *syahwah*, than covering *aurah* and hiding the adornments from non-strangers is necessary as well.

After being covered properly, the next regulations about proper attire is to not overdress. Being modest in clothing is highly recommended than wearing any

¹⁵ Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jāmi' Li Ahkāmī Al-Qur'an*, 6:182.

¹⁶ Ahmad ibn Mustofa Al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr Al-Marāghī* (Egypt: Syirkah Maktabah wa Mathba'ah Mustofa al-Bāby al-Halaby wa Awlāduh, 1946), 125.

¹⁷ Wahbah Zuhaily, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Munīr Fi Al-Aqīdah Wa Al-Syarīa Wa Al-Manhaj* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'ashir, n.d.), 169.

¹⁸ Surah An-Nuur: 30.

¹⁹ Al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jāmi' Li Ahkāmī Al-Qur'an*, 6:222.

²⁰ Al-Zamakhsyarī, *Al-Kassyāf 'an Haqāiqi Ghawāmidī Al-Tanzīl*, 3:229–30.

dazzling adornments, choosing any shocking colors, or tapping their feet which can invite the attention of the opposite gender.

Then, the last thing to mention is *hijab* is not only about covering body parts but also about lowering and guarding the visions and gazes towards the opposite gender. It shows that Islam is well balanced and organized when it comes to *syari'ah*. Here, women were asked to dress properly according to *syari'ah*, besides, men also asked to lower and guard their sight, vision and private parts.

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