

What a Hijab Really Means

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We all know what the hijab (headscarf) is. You and I know what it looks like and who exactly wears it, but something that we don't understand is why we wear it and what it represents. Growing up, I have seen my mother and my siblings wear the hijab, I was always confused by it and never really understood why they had to wear it everywhere they go. Most of the time they'd get harassed because of the hijab by other people. It was to a point where I almost recommended them to stop wearing it. As I got older, I started to see its significance. In the article "The oxymoron that is hijab-wearing feminists" from the *Toronto Sun*, Farzana Hassan states that women wearing the hijab shows the overpowering symbol of "control, oppression, and male dominance" that continues from the pre-Islamic era, while stating that it's not feminist for a woman to wear the hijab; in fact, to her, it's an oxymoron. Hassan (2021) considers that the hijab is a sign of oppression and patriarchy, and the world would be a better place if people understood her idea of the "symbol" of the hijab. I didn't understand the issue of the hijab as well while growing up, but after the courage I have seen my family took, I soon realized what extraordinary honor and power it brings to those who wear it.

I completely disagree with what Hassan (2021) has said about her claim throughout her article. One thing I have noticed was how she introduced her idea of what the hijab is. Hassan (2021) disagrees that words of Dalia Mogahed, who believes that by wearing the hijab, she can limit how much a person can objectify her. Hassan (2021) attacks that statement, she then quotes, "These are attempts to delude people of the real oppression that most Muslim women face." Something that Hassan was lacking on was her open-mindedness. What evidence supports her statement? Hassan claims that is due to the religion of Islam requiring it upon them, forcing them to always wear it. This statement is very weak, and although Islam does require women to

wear the hijab, she refers to her claim of the “oppression” upon Muslim women. One thing that we should know is that the hijab is required upon all Muslims, including men. What a hijab really means, isn’t just headscarf that Muslim women wear, it defined as a covering that is meant to cover certain areas of our body that we must wear in order to acquire modesty, privacy and a gain of morality. In order to gain modesty, privacy, and morality, both men and women must acknowledge each other’s rights, such as lowering the gaze of the opposite gender. It pains me to see Hassan (2021) write this article without her support of evidence. She doesn’t explain what the hijab is and doesn’t acknowledge our reasoning to it.

In addition, Hassan (2021) claims about the rise of “Hijabi-femenists” are quite contradicting. Hassan (2021) believes that they “seek to elevate the grab to something it clearly isn’t. They do it for political reasons, such as protesting the West’s interference in Muslim lands. They wear it to assert ethnic or socio-cultural identity.” She says that women who wear the hijab and say they are feminists who are expressing their commitment to modesty are not actually feminists and are overlooking the oppression it symbolizes. Hassan (2021) claims that the spread of hijab influence also comes from the fashion industry. Something that really catches my eye is that Hassan (2021) numerously states her first claim, “The veil was a symbol of control, oppression, and male dominance.” Her two previous claims contradict each other, if the hijab really was a symbol of oppression and suppression of Muslim women’s freedom, then not only would they abandon the hijab, but also the religion of Islam. The increase of many hijabs being worn is due to the right influence that Islam perceives, and especially women who convert to Islam. *On the Deen Show by Eddie*, Khan (2013) is introduced to a question by Mrs. Jeanette who converted to Islam. She introduces herself by saying the way Islam has guided her when she had almost given up on life. She then took herself in the path of Islam to protect herself from the

things that some Muslims portray the religion, such as committing evil deeds that Islam rejects. Jeanette then says that she has “grown to love the hijab, I’m really starting to see the wisdom behind it as I feel it has uplifted me and has forced men and many others to respect me.” This means that she is protected from being objectified by people Khan (2013), a practicing Islamic scholar, has explained to her that wisdom, and was able to show many people on what positive influence the hijab is able to bring to all men and women.

Hassan (2021) notices that young Muslim women are acting against Islamophobia, by expanding careers with diversity and by seeking other professions in many fields. Her main concern is how the world is approving of the veil, and how people are becoming blind to know the darkness of the veil. Hassan (2021) seeks to show people and claim that “there is social pressure to a religious persona steeped in symbolism and patriarchy.” It intrigues to know that there are activists who fight for the hijab. Reuters (2022) for the *Aljazeera Network* states that nations such as France, India, and Belgium are moving towards banning the hijab, unfortunately France and India are being successful upon that duty. Seeing these actions like these being taken across the globe, this shows that Hassan (2021) believes that Islamophobia is a way to prevent the hijab from growing in the modern world. She numerously claims that the hijab is a source of oppression to Muslim women.

Hassan (2021) leaves an interesting statement in her opinion article, “These attempts to legitimize the hijab as an enabler rather than a deterrent for Muslim women to take their rightful place in modern societies. It is being portrayed as a symbol of a woman’s inclusivity and complete control over her body.” She uses this statement to discourage Muslim women from protecting themselves, and this statement seems as if they should uncover themselves in order gain freedom and respect from everyone. As I begin to see the religion, I follow growing up, my

mother taught something very special. I always see my mother and sister wearing the hijab outside, like in the grocery store, and the doctor's office. One day, I asked her why she always wears it and what it means to her, then it soon made me realize its importance. Like all Muslim men and women, the hijab is a protection given to her from God (Allah), it shields from all looks protecting her from being sexualized by anyone. She then told me to imagine a pearl in a clam under the ocean. Is being restricted of its freedom, and it the clam not letting the pearl loose? I then thought that it was the exact opposite, since a pearl is so valuable and precious, it needs to be protected by something that will guarantee protection and keep it safe from any outsiders. It's like keeping money in a safe, you wouldn't anyone stealing it.

Hassan (2021) overall opinion article claim that hijab brings oppression and patriarchy towards Muslim women with providing the proper evidence, and that the “negative” influence of Hijabi feminists is threatening society by making Muslim women “marginalized”. Her lack of evidence and knowledge shows that we need to be more open-minded about the people around us, such as their cultures, traditions, and religion.

References

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