
'Awrah of a woman in front of others

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Source: *silsilat ul-hudaa wa noor* – the series of guidance and light - tape no. 522

Question no.8: "What are the places of adornment that are forbidden for a woman to show in front of strangers (non-*mahrams*) or *mahrams*?"¹

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)² answers:

"Perhaps you all know that the ruling with respect to the women who have reached puberty is taken from (Allaah's) saying, (تعالى)³: **[and [tell the believing women] not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers-]** until He said: **[-or their (Muslim) women]**.⁴ And another aayah⁵ comes before this aayah, which is His saying (تعالى): **[and [tell the believing women] not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent]**.⁶ And the scholars of *tafseer*⁷ in particular, basing (their *tafseer*) on these two verses, made women's adornment into two parts: apparent adornment and hidden adornment.

The scholars of *tafseer* and *fiqh* have differed with regard to the apparent adornment, but most of the scholars in old times and recent times (said) that **the apparent adornment** – mentioned in the aayah that is before the first ayaah which we mentioned in the course of our talk: {and [tell the believing women] not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent} – **means the face and the two hands**. This is the apparent adornment. So it is allowed for a woman – allowed and not obligatory – to uncover her face and her two hands if she goes off to the market to fulfil her needs, or if she sits with some people who are not her *mahram*. The name of this, according to them, is the apparent adornment. The other aayah – **[and [tell the believing women] not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers-]** until He said at the end of the aayah: **[-or their (Muslim) women]** – they named it the hidden adornment. Why? Because it is not allowed for a woman to show this adornment to other than the *mahrams* – who were mentioned in the course of the aayah – and the women who were mentioned at the end of the aayah; and **what is meant here by 'women,' according to the saying of the scholars of tafseer, is believing, Muslim women, and not disbelieving women.**

Now here, it is necessary to call attention to a problem that the Muslims are going through today in the lands of Islaam, let alone other than the lands of Islaam. For indeed we find many of the women not applying this text of the Qur'aan, i.e., (the one about) the hidden adornment. So you will find the

¹ The actual Arabic word for the plural of *mahram* is *mahaarim*

² (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

³ (تعالى) Ta'aala (He, The Most High)

⁴ Soorah an-Noor [24:31]

⁵ Aayah: verse of the Noble Qur'aan

⁶ Soorah an-Noor [24:31]

⁷ Explanation of the Qur'aan

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sister, for example, sitting in front of her brother, who is no doubt one of her *mahrms*, and even in front of her father, who is her (own) father – but the Islamic legislation in this aayah does not allow the Muslim woman to show from her body which is '*awrah*⁸ except the hidden adornment. The aayah, whether it is the first one or the other one – **[and [tell the believing women] not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent]**: what is meant is the places of adornment; likewise, **[and [tell the believing women] not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands-]**, (meaning) the places of adornment.

So if the researcher returns to the time of the revelation of this aayah, what are the places of adornment which our Lord (عزوجل)⁹ indicates in the second aayah, the aayah about the hidden adornment? They are for example: the head and what it comprises, the earrings – these are part of the hidden adornment because it is not allowed for a woman to show them to strangers (non-*mahrms*) as this is behind the face which is the apparent adornment. So the earrings, likewise the necklace,¹⁰ likewise the *dumluj* (arm bracelet) which is (worn) on the upper arm (i.e., a small portion above the elbows),¹¹ likewise the anklets which they used to put on their feet; and our Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, indicated them by His saying: **[and let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment]**,¹² i.e., the anklets. **These places which are for this adornment – only this adornment – are what is allowed for a Muslim woman to show in front of her *mahrms* and then in front of the (Muslim) women.** Hence, it is not allowed for a Muslim woman to wear in front of her sister a tank top, a shirt that does not cover the two shoulders except what is minimum, and her two upper arms and armpits can be seen. This is forbidden, that a daughter be seen (this way) in front of her mother, and a mother in front of her daughter, let alone her sons. Therefore, it is not allowed for a Muslim woman to show any of her body except the places of adornment.”

⁸ Something private that should be covered

⁹ (عزوجل) (Azza wa Jaal) Mighty and Majestic is He

¹⁰ Likewise the bracelets worn on the forearms; refer to *silsilat ul-hudaa wa nnoor* tape no. 247/5

¹¹ Not all of the upper arms, as the Shaykh (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ) clarifies that they are from the '*awrah* of a woman that cannot be shown in front of her *mahrms* or sisters in Islaam

¹² Soorah an-Noor [24:31]