

## **The Jilbaab And What Garments Can Substitute It**

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The following excerpt was taken from the book "Masaa'il Nisaa'iyyah Mukhtaarah min Fiqh al-'Alaamah Al-Albaanee" [Selected Women's Issues from the Fiqh of Imaam Al-Albaanee] compiled by Umm Ayoob Ghaawee. This book contains a collection of Al-Albaanee's opinions on various issues related to women transcribed from his books, recorded lessons and lectures.

Shaikh Al-Albaanee was asked the following question in a recorded talk: "We would like more details on the definition of a jilbaab, since you have stated that your view on the jilbaab is that it is a garment that covers the body from the head to the feet. However, we have come across a rather large difference of opinion in the language books concerning this. Amongst the linguists are those who say it is a large gown, while others say it is a khimaar. And others hold the same view you mentioned, Shaikh. So we would like a further elaboration, may Allaah reward you, as well as which one is the strongest opinion."

The Shaikh responded to the questioner: "I'm sorry but I'm having difficulty understanding the part where you said that some people hold the jilbaab to be the khimaar. What is the khimaar that you are referring to when you say that they consider it to be the jilbaab? This is because it is well-known that the khimaar is a head-covering and not an ample garment that covers a woman's entire body from her head to her feet. So who is it that claims that the jilbaab is a khimaar from what you know, according to what I mentioned? This is truly a very strange thing. Who said this?!"

The questioner said: "This is mentioned in the book Lisaan-ul-'Arab, where it states that such a definition for it is held by some people."

The Shaikh said: "It states that the jilbaab is a khimaar?"

The questioner said: "Yes."

So the Shaikh replied: "It is not possible to say this because as you know there are two ayahs in the Qur'aan – one ayah that orders women to wear the jilbaab while the other orders them to put on the khimaar. It is not possible to say that both ayahs contain a repetition of the same meaning, thus the jilbaab would be the khimaar, while the khimaar would be the jilbaab. Rather, both of these terms – the jilbaab and the khimaar – have their own respective meanings that are distinct from one another.

You know, for example, that when a woman is at home and she gets up to pray her obligatory prayers, for the most part, she is normally at home with her hair uncovered. So she just places her khimaar over her head. The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: 'Allaah does not accept the prayer of a mature woman unless she has a khimaar.'

What is meant here is not the jilbaab at all, but rather what is meant is the head-covering. From the evidences that indicate this, is that the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) ordered us to wipe over the turban or the khimaar or the socks.

My objective behind this hadeeth is to show that it indicates that the khimaar is a garment that both men and women – males and females – share in wearing.

It cannot be understood from this, for those who understand the Arabic language, that a man can place a jilbaab over himself! Rather, it means that he can place a khimaar (head-covering) over himself.

So it is permissible for a person that places a khimaar over his head to wipe over it (when performing ablution), regardless of whether it is a man or a woman. My objective behind this discussion is to firstly confirm the quote according to the Arabic language, and secondly if it is finally confirmed that the quote is indeed found in Lisan-ul-'Arab and that it states that the meaning of a jilbaab is held to be a khimaar, then it is sufficient proof, from what you quoted, that such a statement is weak because of the fact that the author said: 'It is held to mean such and such.' (i.e. uncertainty)

Furthermore, if we study the texts from the Book and the Sunnah, of which we already mentioned some of them, we would derive with certainty that the khimaar is not a jilbaab and nor is the jilbaab a khimaar.

In brief, a khimaar covers less than a jilbaab while a jilbaab has a more ample range in terms of the parts that it covers. Also, a jilbaab is specific for only women. They were the ones who were ordered to wear it and not men. But as for the khimaar, then that is a garment that both men and women share in wearing. Even though a man is not obligated to wear it, regardless, it is a garment that both men and women partake in wearing, just like a shirt. In the same manner that a man wears a shirt to cover his 'awrah – which is different from the 'awrah of a woman – so does a woman. But her 'awrah is ampler than the 'awrah of a man.

This is why we said in the book 'The Muslim Woman's Hijaab' that when a Muslim woman leaves from her home, she is obligated to do two things:

(1) To place a khimaar over her head, and (2) then to apply a jilbaab over that, thus going out dressed with the khimaar and the jilbaab. So when a woman goes out of her home, one garment does not suffice without the other – a woman must combine between both the khimaar and the jilbaab. You are aware of the Qur'anic verse related to the khimaar in which Allaah says: '**And (tell them) to draw their khumur (veils) over their bosoms.**' [Surah An-Noor: 31]

Drawing a garment close to the bosom cannot be achieved with a jilbaab. This can only be achieved with a khimaar, since it is possible to wrap it. But as for the jilbaab, you know that it cannot be wrapped around the chest or on the neck. You can see here how the men wrap their khimaars and how they affix them to their necks. So due to this, what has been particularized here is the khimaar and not the jilbaab. When a woman goes out from her house, she is obligated to place a khimaar over her head and to wrap it over her neck and her chest. This is since a jilbaab does not correspond in her attempt to achieve this comprehensive covering since it is ample and long whereas the khimaar is ample and short. So each of these garments has its own specific effect in fulfilling what a woman is obligated to cover. This is my response to what you have asked. If there is anything left that I have not covered in my discussion, then remind me of it."

The questioner asked: "So then I understand from this that the jilbaab is not the wide gown that women wear today, here (in this country) for example, from the neck to the feet?"

The Shaikh responded: "No, not at all. This is not a jilbaab. However, this leads us to elaborate further on discussing what is related to the jilbaab. As we stated

before, according to the language, a jilbaab is not a garment like that which is known as the balto. So what needs to be clarified now is:

The command directed towards women, particularly with regard to wearing the jilbaab, is not an obligatory act of worship which has a meaning that we can't comprehend. Rather, on the contrary, it does have a meaning we can understand. And the meaning that is derived from it, which we indicated previously, is to achieve the covering that a woman must abide by.

So if, for example, a woman wears two garments or she makes the jilbaab into two pieces – one upper piece and one lower piece – and both of these pieces fulfill the objective of the jilbaab, which has been mentioned in the Qur'aan, at this point, even though we don't refer to these two pieces as a jilbaab from a linguistic standpoint, we hold that it still fulfills the desired objective of the command to wear the jilbaab from a religious perspective.

There used to be found in Syria up to recently, and there still continues to be found in some practicing women that stick to the Religion, a garment called Malaa'at-uz-Zamm. Have you heard anything about this during your lifetime?"

The questioner replied: "We have something called a Malaa'ah (cloak)."

The Shaikh said: "No, I said Malaa'at-uz-Zamm."

The questioner replied: "No, not with this term. We say Malaa'ah."

The Shaikh said: "This is an Arabic term. The point is that this garment which we have with us in Syria consists of two pieces. The first piece is a skirt known as a tannoorah – are you familiar with this word?"

The questioner said: Yes."

The Shaikh said: "A tannoorah is a skirt that is affixed to the waist with an elastic strap. So naturally it is wide and ample.

A woman wears this from here, thus covering the entire lower part of her body. Then over this tannoorah, which is called a kharraatah (skirt) in Syria, is placed the upper part of the garment, which is placed over the head and which a woman uses to cover her head, shoulders, sides, hips and even the belt strap that is tightened around the waist by this tannoorah or this kharraatah. No part of this skirt's waist-strap is visible since it goes under it. Is the image clear?"

The questioner replied: "Yes."

The Shaikh continued: "Amongst us here, they call this garment Malaayat-uz-Zamm (or Malaa'at-uz-Zamm), since the skirt is strapped at the waist with a plastic waistband. So if you have grasped a perception of this dress with us, then the point that I am trying to make is that even though this cloak-like garment is not a jilbaab (linguistically), it still fulfills the obligation of a jilbaab, which consists of covering the body completely. Is this clear to you?"

The questioner said: "Yes."

The Shaikh said: "If the matter is clear, then we see that we are not obligated to adhere to the literal wording of the jilbaab, but rather to its end-result, objective and goal. Now I will go back to this 'balto' which I talked about previously, which the Muslim women wear today and which is of various types. It may be produced

in long sizes for some of the practicing women reaching up to their feet. However, this is not a jilbaab. In spite of this, it is still not like the Malaa'at-uz-Zamm since it does not cover the head and what it consist of, for example. But what does the woman do today? She wraps a garment known as the esharp around her head – is this term known to you?"

The questioner answered: "Yes."

The Shaikh said: "A small khimaar (i.e. the esharp) that is fastened to the head but which exposes parts of the forehead and temple and which also exposes parts of the neck since it is small in size, naturally does not fulfill the objective of a jilbaab according to its proper definition. The objective of a jilbaab is as we have discussed concerning the Malaayat-uz-Zamm. Is this clear? So let's take the example of this woman who is wearing this balto – what would you call this?"

The questioner[1] said: "We call it a Hijaab."

The Shaikh said: "No, this is wrong. The point is that if a woman wears this type of 'Hijaab' then places a khimaar over her head, then there must be a Hijaab, i.e. jilbaab placed over this khimaar. We have stated that there are two verses in the Qur'aan. This jilbaab may be divided into parts as we stated before when we discussed the Malaayat-uz-Zamm.

So therefore, if a woman wears that garment which you call a Hijaab and then places a valid khimaar over her head and not that which is known as the 'esharp', then places over this khimaar a partial garment that covers half of her body, such as one that covers her shoulders and hands, at this point, this becomes valid and acceptable according to the Religion." [2]

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Footnotes:

[1] The questioner was from Algeria.

[2] Silsilat-ul-Hudaa wan-Noor (tape no. 232)

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