



## Take Your Veil Off: A feminist critique Study between Empowering and Degrading

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### Abstract

The paper is a direct critique of the prevalent Western perspectives towards Muslim women being oppressed by the veil. It aims to clarify how Western feminists' biased perception of the oppressive form of veils, in addition to challenging the theological cultural view of veiling. the Western experience of 'Orientalism' is presented a veil as a barrier of thinking for women's development and emancipation. Likewise, any other intellectual orientation, especially the Eastern Islamic view, is considered backward and confined to their freedom. It supports the call for women to remove their veil and be free, describing it as mere social legacies that have nothing to do with religion. However, Eastern thought may present a more progressive perspective on the appropriateness of veiling. Thus, the study illuminates the liberalist endeavor in stripping the veil from its religious contents and exploiting it in a socio-political and economic direction in so-called "modernized women". The jeopardy lies in deviating women from their essential role of family by Establishing a society where gender roles are determined by chance and competition rather than by mutual integration. Western attempts to shack the authentic principle of Islamic women of modesty, chastity, and purity and replaced them with women's commodification.

**Keywords:** Feminism; Women Empowerment; Islamic Veil; Western liberalism

اخلي حجابك: دراسة نقدية نسوية بين التمكين والإهانة

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### خلاصة

تمثل هذه الورقة نقداً مباشراً لوجهات النظر الغربية السائدة تجاه النساء المسلمات اللاتي يتعرضن للاضطهاد بسبب الحجاب. ويهدف إلى توضيح مدى انحياز تصور النسويات الغربيات للشكل القمعي للحجاب، بالإضافة إلى تحدي النظرة الثقافية اللاهوتية للحجاب. فالتجربة الغربية لـ "الاستشراق" تقدم حجاباً كحاجز للتفكير أمام تطور المرأة وتحررها. وكذلك أي توجه فكري آخر، وخاصة النظرة الإسلامية الشرقية، يعتبر متخلفاً ومقتصرًا على حريته. وتؤيد دعوة المرأة إلى خلع حجابها والحرية، واصفة ذلك بأنه مجرد موروثات اجتماعية لا علاقة لها بالدين. ومع ذلك، قد يقدم الفكر الشرقي وجهة نظر أكثر تقدمية حول مدى ملائمة الحجاب. ومن هنا تسلط



الدراسة الضوء على المسعى الليبرالي في تجريد الحجاب من مضامينه الدينية واستغلاله في الاتجاه الاجتماعي والسياسي والاقتصادي لدى ما يسمى بـ "المرأة العصرية". ويكمن الخطر في انحراف المرأة عن دورها الأساسي في الأسرة من خلال إنشاء مجتمع حيث يتم تحديد أدوار الجنسين عن طريق الصدفة والمنافسة بدلاً من التكامل المتبادل. المحاولات الغربية لزعة المبدأ الأصل للمرأة الإسلامية المتمثل في الحياء والعفة والطهارة واستبدالها بتسليع المرأة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النسوية؛ تمكين المرأة؛ الحجاب الإسلامي؛ الليبرالية الغربية

## 1.1 Introduction

Much nuance and controversial debate is spilled on the issue of veiling and unveiling and its socio-political ramification of Muslim women's life. Although the veil has been historically a device serving and imposing religious hierarchy, race, and gender segregation, veiling has been used as a cultural sign against colonization and secular Westernization. The veil phenomenon, unlike the prevailing understanding, is Islamic descent, many former cultures and religions had used the veil before Islam. "First reference to veiling is in Assyrian legal text that debates from the thirteenth century B.C, which restricted the practice to respectable women and forbade prostitutes from veiling." (Keddie 1991, 3). The veil was a sign of purity and virtue, women used whether voluntary or compulsory. Besides, veiling has a special philosophy that chastity is based.

Islamic communities carried with them those beliefs and appearances, especially those related to the dress of Muslim women, known as the veil. It has Arabic terms like "Hijab" means headscarf, or "khimar" and "jilbab," that cover the whole body (Piela 2022, 2). It is a religious practice that was started with varying interpretations of which part of the body should be covered: the head with the exception of the face (Hijab) or the entire head and neck (Niqab). Some believe it is required, while others do not. Although, the act of wearing the veil is familiar in other religions like Jewish, Christian, and Hindu, the most obvious illustration of how no one could ever have imagined the Virgin Mary in pictures without a veil covering her head, yet it does not induce as much attention as a contentious women's issue as it did with Muslims upholding their faith. Bearing in the mind veil is more than just a piece of cloth covering a women head and body; it is rather a border panning any attempts at women promiscuity, regardless of the radical misinterpretation of veiling that it is covering from any activity in public affairs.

The importance of the research stems from the fact that the manifestations of any religion are in themselves a value aspect that has its own importance in the hearts of the followers of those religions. Abdullah Al-Sharqawi states that Islamic communities carried with them those beliefs and appearances, especially those related to the dress of Muslim women, known as the veil. He further states that



religions are the basic component of human culture and civilized heritage. Contemporary civilizations and cultures, their values, concepts, and attitudes cannot be understood unless we understand the religions to which they belong, because religion is one of the main drivers of the human race (qtd in Crecelius and et al, 1975). However, this Western obsession with the veil did not come all sudden, but rather as a result of intellectual accumulations that Europeans had made over centuries about the East and Islam, and the veil that is considered one of the appearances of this religion, before these accretions exploded in the form of an identity conflict against the Islamic women in Islamic and Europe societies.

## **1.2. Western Feminist Generalization and Determinism**

The absence of a general feminist debate to address the unique experiences by many women is one of the elements leading to the emergence of the detrimental impacts of a certain feminist Eastern culture. Overall, the varieties of feminist techniques reflect the diversity of women and their experiences. One of the problems concerning feminism is the different trajectories between East and West feminism which depart on the historical, cultural, and social contexts. The Western urban understanding of feminism stands as an obstacle that prevents Islamic societies from achieving the ability to present their ideal model for the progress and advancement of humanity. Scott (2007) explicitly declares that "secularism as the only weapon that can protect us from the loss of freedom and self-determination that religious activists will impose the minute they get the chance" (175). It may seem surprising to learn that the Western interpretation of women's empowerment, which excludes Eastern philosophy, was the basis for the decision to view the veil as an oppressive aspect of Islam.

Western feminism occurred from a history of gender oppression in Europe and North America, with a focus on issues such as women's right to vote reproductive rights, and work-force equality. Contrary, Eastern feminism evolved in Africa and the Middle East, with a focus on issues such as gender-based violence, the right to education, and social justice that discriminate against women (Tripp, A 2006). Women have different feminist techniques because it is not a one-size-fits-all movement. Different women experience different forms of oppression based on factors such as race, sexuality, class, and ability. Therefore, different feminist techniques are needed to address the unique experiences and challenges faced by different women. Additionally, feminism is an evolving movement and different generations of women may have different priorities and goals. Overall, the diversity of feminist techniques reflects the diversity of women and their experiences.



Western Feminism reflects a specific Western form of certain cultural, historical and socio-political activities attempting to unify women's issues within its logic despite that it is farfetched from other women's views. Within the stereotypes had previously been devoted to Eastern culture and societies, as realistic axioms that do not need criticism. This attitude gives few tools to discuss universal experiences of womanhood. On the other hand, feminism tries to project a moderate reading towards Judaism and Christianity while Islam is viewed as an extremist patriarchal induced false religion. There is a sort of agreement among the feminist women who attempt to embrace Judaism or Christianity as simultaneously calling for freedom and working for women's parity. Lazreg (1988) in *Feminism and Difference* argues that the inauguration of prejudicial judgment, in the Middle East and North Africa, about Islam religion in the same time feminists tried to harmonizing Judaism and Christianity with feminism. While they hold another view towards Islam as female oppression and as obstruction to the improvement of women's minds. There is a selective reflective attitude of religions where some religions, like Judaism and Christianity, are emancipative and others, like Islam, have not yet been rendered such expectation.

### 1.3. Islamic and Eastern Feminism

Feminism nowadays has broadened to contain many types, East and West, fundamentalist and radical, religious and secular, heterosexual and homosexual, pluralist and individualist. Due to that logic, we can assert a branch concerning the life of millions of Muslim women who identified with 'Islamic feminism'. Badran (2002) defines it as "a feminist discourse and practice articulate within an Islamic paradigm" (20). The term Islamic feminism is a universal phenomenon among Muslim women inside Islamic countries, whether Muslims represent the majority or minority in these countries. It is also rising in Muslim Migration and those who embrace Islam as a rightful religion from Westerners. Islamic Feminism becomes lately a centre of attention by scholars, politicians, and socialists. Its main contribution is to find answers to Muslim women's plight from within, instead of importing mythologies from farfetched cultures.

Islamic feminism, on the other hand, is often criticized for being too closely tied to traditional gender roles and insufficiently addressing issues of class and sexuality. However, these criticisms are not necessarily accurate or representative of all feminist movements in the West or East. In reality, there is a great deal of diversity within both Western and Eastern feminism, with different movements and perspectives addressing a wide range of issues and concerns. All indications reveal that Islamic paradigm of gender justice is possible through open-minded reading of the connotation of the holy text which is flexible to succession generations and this is one



of its miracles. Yet, relying on the radical monolithic interpretation of the holy text keeps women subjugated and marginalized. "Islam approach became even inevitable when it no longer was part of the oppositional discourse, put in power" (Ahmadi, F. 2006, P. 36). Islamic feminism inspires Muslim women to a profound existential sense of showing themselves towards all contradictions and emboldening them to free interpretation of the holly books. Thus, understanding the authentic philosophy of veil can prevent women from objectifying their bodies and increase their confidence in serving society as a well-respected human rather than sexy toy.

Westerners implicitly dedicate media, intelligence and politic in demonization of Islam in the general conscience of the world. Thus, this norm against Islam has clouded the issue for Muslim activists to defend the case of Muslim women, leading to consider Islam's repression of women and the pejorative role of the veil is part of this norm. Media and government resources play a major role in influencing Western public opinion, which rarely praises Islam and constantly criticizing the veil. Bullock (2002) clearly states the consequence of rejecting the veil is that "US policy in the Middle East is to defend its access to Middle Eastern oil fields. Because Islam is perceived as anti-West, the contemporary Islamist movements to indicate Shari'ah law are feared" (xxxiv). the serious problem of veil justification is more closely related to Western mentality, rather than being perceived from the genuine logic of Islam, So, what may look oppressive about the tradition of wearing the veil, it could be seen as authentic and reform.

Although The Western view towards Islam religion varies depending on the individual or group holding the view, Islam is generally handled with skepticism and even distrust in the West. The negative stereotype about the veil in Western countries is dated back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. "When women wear the hijab, they obtain respect and freedom. In this sense, the hijab, which is often perceived by Westerners as a tool of male oppression and domination" (Bullock, 2002, P. xxxix). So antagonizing of the veil becomes one of the most important issues that the West has given it great attention to stage a public unveiling. Western circles have begun to restrict down the Islamic communities in their countries, confiscating them and marginalizing them in their communities. Until it evolved into a problem that is categorized under the problems with the clash of ideals between the secular West and the Islamic East.

The issue of veiling went beyond a piece of cloth covered the head, Orientalism works hard to present itself as an ideal of superiority and advancement and in the same time prevent Islamic recommendations from achieving the ability to present their virtuous model. Such ideology signals nationalist pillars, in favor of empowering principles, they shut the door in front of all contradict discussion and reject any opposing opinions. The Orientalist ideas penetrate through Westerners



*from which* the peoples of the West draw from, thus increasing their sense of superiority and stratification. On the other hand, the peoples of the East draw from them feelings of inferiority and backwardness. What is worse is that these ideas imposed the Western path as the ideal model for the movement. There is no way for people eager for progress except to follow it with all precision and voluntariness.

This perspective may stem from misunderstandings about religion, political conflicts, or incidents involving extremist groups claiming to represent Islam. So they fight every aspect of it on any land. Westerners become full aware of this aspect moved to their country and saw it in the morning and evening. The other importance comes from the Western pretexts for attending the hijab that came from the family of women is not in line with the teachings of Islam. To the extent that the opponents of the veil moves from allegations of defending women's freedom to the position of compelling women to remove their veil without others who live with them there in the world of the West, and by different methods, all of this necessitated research, which we can focus on these considerations with a question that says, why the veil.

François Gautier, is a journalist and an expert in East Islamic issues, poses a question while the norm in the twentieth century was probably towards "unveiling", taking off the scarf, there is now rejuvenation in the wearing of the veil in some countries. Should this trend be read as a return to religious extremism? He further states from the perspective of veil wearing, be it in its fashionable or integral varieties. It is linked to this shift towards a Market of Islam since it becomes important for Muslim women to express their religious identities publicly and that expression operates through clothing and through consumption, but also extremely important for Muslims in diasporas and Muslim majority countries alike as a means of behaving as a 'good Muslim' and publicly expressing their religiosity (2018).

Gautier states that the religious renaissance was not a return but rather a new vision of what is religion. From the late nineteenth century until the year 1980, women in Islamic countries did not wear the veil, since it was not linked to religion, but rather to customs and traditions. It was necessary to be liberated in order to become developed countries. During the 1980s, globalization made the religious aspect more visible. We do not consume commodities, but symbols of identity to show our belonging to communities that are no longer national but global. Therefore, these symbols must be displayed in public places for us to be identified. This is why the veil became important, Muslim should live as a Muslim, be visible, Islam should no longer be kept in private life, but must be made public.

Such thinking is not far from the European official hardening positions in response to the increasingly growing political impact of the anti-immigrant right. From an



early official inclination to tolerate expressions of individual religious conviction, there emerged a consensus that headscarves were dangerously political in their challenge to the principles of the secular republic and in their necessary association with Islamism and terrorism” (2009 P. 21). Fanon(1965) elaborates, on the French colonization on Algeria, that the colonizers advocated unveiling women was not only stripping women’s chastity for male consumption, but was also about “exposing her secret, interrupting her resistance, making her available for exploitation” (29). Likewise, colonizers rises their thinking that women will not be liberated unless they follow Western ideas. According to the Orientalist system, the veil means the degeneration of the woman who chooses to wear it. Although these ideas are deeply rooted in Western patriarchy, which was formulated by a clear sexual desire, many feminist artists and writers promoted this idea of Eastern women as sexual creatures subject to the authority of the Arab man.

Fanon further notes that the imperial drive to unveil Algerian women was not only about rendering the beauty of women bare for male consumption, but was also about “baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure” (1965, P. 29). Hiding the face was experienced by the white colonizer as creating a mystery and concealing a secret. Only by unveiling the woman could she be rendered a “possible object of possession” (1965, P. 29). Once women unveil the scarf, they can be revealed as a ‘potential object of ownership’. Here, it is worth acknowledging that the West has excelled in its dealings with the issue of women, as they become the main focus for the implementation of its policies. With every step affected the beliefs of women and their value system, we saw its consequences on family, and the general community, especially in our societies that consider the family its first pillar.

What the chronological sequence does reflect a hardening of the government’s position in reaction to the steadily growing political influence of the anti-immigrant far right. From an early official inclination to tolerate expressions of individual religious conviction, there emerged a consensus that headscarves were dangerously political in their challenge to the principles of the secular republic and in their necessary association with Islamism and terrorism.

One tactic used by Western secularism is to attack the veil from within and bring attention to measures taken against it in an effort to liberate women. Though many Islamic liberal scholars reject the classical reading of imposing the veil without awareness and satisfaction , the general feminist movements condemn Islam for "imposition of the veil by force" in some Islamic countries in order to improve that Islam countries is barbarous, vicious, primitive and atavistic:



This makes challenging the popular Western stereotype that the veil is a symbol of Muslim women's oppression an uphill battle, all the more so in light of certain late 20th century events in the Muslim world: Iran's imposition of the chador after Khomeini's revolution in 1979; the Taliban's imposition of the 'Niqap' after their accession to power in 1997; and the violence perpetrated by radical groups in the name of Islam in Egypt, Israel, Algeria and the like. Does not all this merely confirm that Islam is a violent, intolerant and anti-women attempt to discuss all the socio-political problems in the Muslim world.( Bullock, 2002, P. xxxiv)

In Egypt, during the British colonial period, the hijab was controversial; Lord Cromer, the British consul in the second half of the 19th century, advocated Muslim women's unveiling which he saw as improvement of their lives (while fiercely opposing suffrage at home). Leila Ahmed explains in her *Women and Gender in Islam* that Egyptian women had much more varied and subtle views on the hijab: while some, like Huda Sha'rawi, the founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union, rejected the hijab altogether and staged public unveilings, others, such as Malak Hifni Nasif, took a much more moderate position that women should be able to decide themselves whether to cover their heads. There were also those like Zainab al-Ghazali, their contemporary and one of the leaders of the Islamist movement in Egypt, who believed that the hijab should be mandatory (qtd in Piela, 2022). Here, we see it important to understand veiling is Islamic legislation, not a social custom, and any worship cannot be compulsory. Therefore, it must be taken with knowledge, awareness, and conviction so that this legislation sustains women's cover-up, chastity, and the prevention of sedition.

French secularism is clear in hostile stance towards religion in all its aspects. The French desire to achieve full equality resulted in veiled women falling into the inequality and marginalization trap since religions contradicts with freedom spirit. "Sexual equality has become a primordial value. Those who don't share this value, Muslims in case, are not only different but inferior, less evolved, if capable at all of evolution" (Scott, 2007, P.176). So the women's veil is a clear threat to their freedom. France's policies deprived Muslim women who actually wear the veil of their rights to education, work, exercise, and accompanying their children on school trips, thus increasing their isolation from the society in which they live.

Muslim women, who wear the veil, after will and conviction, reinforce their faith and their connection with culture. The motive of veiling comes along to re-united with the authenticity of the past 'the origin' detachment of Westernization. Thus, They grow more confident and aware of their best interests. Historically, many absolute rulers attempted to reflect their view as a given truth. Like Reza Shah Pahlavi, the



Imperial State of Iran and father of the last shah of Iran, who forbade partially the veil indicating his modern thinking and secular tendency. Jelodar, Yusof & Mahmoodi (2013) state when Iranian women realized the deterioration, and politically oppressive of Reza Shah Pahlavi as well as his luxurious lifestyle, they embraced the veil as a token of civil protest, thereby the veil, as in many moments in the history, was functioned as an icon of protest.

A way of moderate view of wearing a veil as a voluntary conduct has stemmed from full thoughtfulness and satisfaction, veiling become a tool linked to authorities' decisions to reflect their orientations and interest. Thus, in a certain time and place unveiling was imposed to show a sign of modernity, and that is what happened when Iran was under Pahlavi's authority. Later in 1983 and after the Islamic upheaval, the leader of the Islamic revolution Said Khumini, imposed the veiling to reveal that Iran has a preservative culture to that of the West and pursued Islamic instructions. Among liberation, oppression, worship, custom, and protecting women or obliterating their identity, the journey of a piece of cloth took a major role in the history of the Arab region and the Middle East, until it became the subject of exploitation and controversy, and moved far from its symbolism and purpose (Price, 2010). Between veiling and unveiling, protecting women or liberating them, the veil moved from its symbolism and purposes.

Historically the mechanism of women's governing services has not only facilitated fundamentalists and liberalists to orient them in the way serving their best interest, but it also paved the road of Western colonization during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Since Europeans are convinced that they are ascended above the top of civilization, gives them the right to colonize the authentic Eastern savagery about their culture. This excuse empowered the colonial elites with justifying tools to launch their colonial conquests under the banner of bringing civilization to those societies as backward nations. "The emancipation of women was one of the main justifications to invade and colonize the countries of the Middle East" (Piela, 2022, P 12). Colonizers put themselves in mission to rescue the Muslim women from their servitude and backward culture, by emancipating their minds.

The veil, from Westerners' perspectives, is keeping Muslim women subjugated and oppressed, so they should unveil to be free and unleashed their creative ideas which are held behind their veil. The mission students and scholars, the elite of the society, were sent to European countries entitled learning of and be familiarized with Western culture and modernization. The new orientation fundamentally positioned Western philosophy and view as an ideal of Muslims' progress and sophistication.



In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western realized that military extending hegemony is less applicable than soft liberalism invasion. Such conduct empowered the colonial intrigue with justification tools to launch their colonial conquests under the banner of bringing civilization to those societies as backward nations. In front of these issues is how to shake the essential fabric of Muslim society. The emancipation of women was one of the main justifications for the invasion and colonization of Middle Eastern countries. Western colonization has brightly dealt with the issue of women. It made Muslim women a main focus for the implementation of its policies by undermining their beliefs and value system. Consequently, this behavior could reflect back on their Children and parents and pervade society. Especially in societies where family is its first pillar.

The secular modernization strategy called for the penetration of liberal values in Muslim societies, through planting them unconsciously in the minds and hearts of Muslim women. Harshit, F. 2005 states that:

Soft liberalism in coordination with satellite channels, which found and run by Europeans, pump programs, films and series that lead to change social in the general structure culture of Muslim societies By infusing Western values by whatever powers they have soft. (113)

They promoted social concepts which have been prepared perfectly under the banner of 'women's empowerment' such as hollowing the veil out of it content to keep women body covered and their look to the viewers is tempted. Such technique conceals the highest levels of cunning. When it removed religion from the circle of attention, it started aiming at the value systems of societies and peoples, to replace them with so-called values of liberalism in order to be free and disavow their values. Most veiled women start wearing more attractive clothes with lots of makeup, jewelry, and perfume so that they grew more attractive and distinguished than unveiling ones. Achieving this would contribute to curtailing the status of the veil in the awareness of Muslim women. It works to remove it from its position as one of the guards of her identity and the values that threaten her ideas and principles. Besides, the veil was decorated in a way that contradicts the controls approved by Islamic law. The notion of liberalism is widespread to the limit that veiled women embraced a liberal fashion that differs only in a veil. American soft power has deviated from the goal of fighting the veil as an obligation, and therefore. Soft liberalism succeeded in deviating the veil from its goal and eradicating it as an obligation to annihilate it altogether since it loses its meaning.



The modern liberalism hegemony leaves its mark on various aspects of Islamic women's social behavior, attitudes and outfits. This model leaves its mark on various aspects of social behavior, including a method of dress and its specifications. Creating a new Western culture mode all the oriental societies seek to imitate the presumable modernity and development which is the ultimate goal that they plan for carefully. A new type of veil is created called 'Turban' is inspired by fashion designers from Indian culture where it covers the hair of the head and shows the neck and ears in a way that is outside the controls of the traditional veil or what is classified as Sharia. (Crawford, 1991). Another reason gives the path to make women wear a deviant form of veil is that they do not choose veiling out of conviction and awareness, but rather it was imposed on them. So, putting a turban is a kind of revolution that distinguishes the old generation from the new one.

These attitudes have become fields for making women imbues liberalist philosophy and value as well as neglecting and belittling the authentic Islamic law. This allows them to transfer their ideas and values smoothly, benefiting from the influential position. Consequently, the traditional dress of the veil limits the chances of work for women who wear it, and many employers are no longer satisfied with the standard of elegance and order in the dress of their employees, but rather add to it what is known as "classy temptation" as a polite necessity to attract customers. Such criteria is not only increased the opportunity of women who embrace the Western style in work only, but also in the marriage potential, education chances and economic levels.

#### **4. The Veil Between Islamic and Liberal Understanding**

Western feminism is often criticized for its lack of intersectionality and totalitarianism for focusing primarily on the experiences of white, middle-class women. Some feminine movements attempt to take away other women's rights and impose a specific ideology on them. Kandiyoti (1987) criticizes the general feminist stream:

Western feminist theory has often been castigated for its ethnocentrism but has rarely been subjected to an explicit examination from the point of view of its relevance and applicability to non-Western contexts. Concepts generated by Western feminists have rarely been applied to informed analyses of women in Islamic societies; conversely, the experiences of women under Islam have not been systematically used to critically evaluate feminist concepts.... [She finally concludes that] I have found Western feminist theories either inadequate or incomplete (318-335).

Women empowering is a product of a long historical mistreatment era during which women lived through a very painful reality over a long period of time. Meanwhile,



they suffered humiliation, marginalization, and power, due to the prevailing view of inferiority. The radical thinking which based on male religious and economic superiority governed the male–female relation was sketched the principle of domination and conflict instead of mutual respect, integration and tranquility.

The dominant view in the Jewish and Christian heritage was women's inferiority and subjugation, according to the account of creation in the Old Testament. Where it says that God gave Adam power over all creatures, and created Eve from his rib Genesis. (2) This narrated constitutes a basis for the supremacy of the man whom St. Paul will "baptize" in the New Testament in his famous letters: "The head of every man is Christ, but the head of a woman is a man.

Women's inferiority had been prevailed in the Jewish and Christian heritage. In the Genesis Version in the Old Testament that where it says that "God gave Adam power over all creatures, he was created in the image and likeness of God and created Eve from his rib (Gen. 1:26, 27)." (qtd in Verdianto 2022 P. 3737 ). This narrative constituted a basis for the supremacy of the man whose head is Christ's (God) head while the head of the woman is the man, so the man should not cover his head because he is the image and glory of God" (Corinthians 11). Even in the typical Christian wedding, the monk recites that wives should submit to the will of their husbands since husbands represent Christ and wives represent church and church succumbs to the Christ. A woman's nature is different from men's because the mind dominates in the latter, just as the superiority of the man comes from his being. He was created first, and woman was created as an aid to man in reproduction. Aquinas argues that "The implication of this in terms of wisdom is that man has a direct link to God, whereas woman needs a man as the intermediary, since the head of a woman is a man. (Civardi, 2014, P.). Nietzsche, the famous German Philosopher, held an aggressive view toward women prompted him to despise his mother and sister. In his book *Human, all too human* (1996) continues in his talk about the woman, that the woman is but a trap ordained by nature for man. Women are also intellectually underestimated as their physiological mentality is less sophisticated than men's. Likewise, Gould (1980) further says "on the average, a little less intelligent than men, a difference which we should not exaggerate but which is, nonetheless, real. We are therefore permitted to suppose that the relatively small size of the female brain depends in part upon her physical inferiority and in part upon her intellectual inferiority" (14). In the economic field, women are not far from such a pejorative vision that they were excluded from economic life and did not raise above the level of property.

In fact, the women empowerment movement, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the rapid social transformations and the entry of the world into the path of globalization, the economic, cultural and social transformations necessitates a new definition of the



profound role of women in the society. Beniwal, A. (2013) further states that empowering women simply means more power and power means “The positive ability to contribute and participate in social activities” (Katerji, 2001, 280).

Consequently, responding to historically women mistreated, women formed resistant movements to claim equal chances, rights, and representation. Haslanger, in (2012), in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*, argues that there is prejudice against women. It is difficult in the academic and philosophical field and they must find a foothold in a philosophical hostile milieu towards women. Feminism is essentially pursued to challenge existing power structures that have historically marginalized and oppressed women and seeks to permit females to exercise their rights freely in a social circle. Western feminism pursues gender equality and denies anything that could distinguish between two genders like the veil. Thus, gender parity is a set of characteristics that have nothing to do with organic differences, but with social. Therefore, anything related to social gender is subject to change. It changes over time and varies in different cultures. The identity may change and expand with the influence of social factors during the growth of the individual.

Feminist thinking brought fundamental changes in the social structure of Western societies. Proceeding from its antagonism with radical religious provisions, feminism shed light on the secular orientation of the church. The erroneous context and the broad generalization of feminism is started targeting the Islamic religion and its social system. One of these issues is prohibition of the Islamic veiling and place of control and seized in the general field. Although most of Muslim women's erroneous attitudes are just social legacies and norms, more than legitimate regulations, Western female empowerment attacks the foundational ideology as responsible for women's subjugation and marginalization. It did not deal explicitly with veiling in the first place, but with many issues related to strip its content. The veiling, as an exclusively feminine identity, works as a hurdle in front of eliminating the social interacting differences between male and female. So, wearing a veil becomes expression of discrimination against women, as it is based on the basis of sex segregation. Liberalism attempts to push towards making women looks like a man.

Contrary to the pejorative vision of women in the West, Islam looks at women from the angle of dignity. All human characteristics are common between women and men. Prior of gender discrimination, both male and female are equally honored for their humanity. It had been proven in Islamic history that women used to participate in the councils of science and education, and work in medicine and nursing during the conquests, of the Messenger of God ‘Muhammed’ PBUH, and they were with him during the period of siege and migration.



Nonetheless, rendering to the *Qura'an*, we understand that Eve is an independent human created from the same nature of Adam and not from his rib. In this part of Holly Book God said "O human being! We created you from a single (pair) of a man and women, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you," Ch. XLIX (Al Hujurat) V. 13. This Verse clearly declares that god created man and woman equally from the same source, circumstances, time, and place by the same God. So, on the humanity level, they are equal in responsibilities and privileges, yet due to their physiological and psychological differences, they should be treated in equity pursuing equivalent living. Unfortunately, what happened later, led to women's marginalization and alienation, happened as a result of the cultural confusion with the religion, and promoted women to withdraw into their home and confine all their interests to it. The misunderstanding of guardianship makes it stands behind most of the Muslim women's oppression and marginalization. It further imposes more limitations on women's freedom.

Women Empowerment could be done by stripping the issue of male guardianship, which is a religious term means male takes in charge of female and female should be submitted to his will within the family circle. It had religious and social roots. The misunderstanding of the guardianship produces the value of a prevailing authority, hierarchy, dependency and oppression in the family and in social relations in general. That leads to subordination of women to men in the family structure and in society as a whole, and the role of women was confined to domestic affairs (Barakat 2008. p. 223). This results in the subordination of women to men in the familial structure and in society as a whole

Contrary to righteous and fundamental definition of male guardianship, from Islamic interpretation, as God said in Quran that " so beware of them But if you pardon ([women]them) and overlook, and forgive (their faults), then verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Surah At-Taghabun Verse 14 ). Thus, guardianship is meant that male should care, look after; be kind to women even if they are capable of looking after themselves. This gives extra privilege for women's life prosperity. So, it is a privilege if men financially support women and it becomes meaningless if women partially or totally sustain themselves.

The jeopardy is to make a woman refuses the veil, as something chains women ability to reclaim her position in society. Unveiling women also assists women to deviate from the social and cultural framework within the family. Guardianship has nothing to do with veil philosophy as a symbol of lawful constructions of Islam. Veiling women can have equal opportunity with men in all familial and social position. They can work in all fields with same authority of decision- making and the process of



power sharing. The dualism between the ideas that women wear the veil and the inclination of the West culture which opposes the veil generates this distorted and strange understanding of veil. It prevents her from exercising her role as an active partner in society.

Women empowerment is interested in women strengthening of their cultural level, it also calls for liberation from the restrictions that prevent them from showing all their charm, if they have them, why don't they show it? Considering these restrictions are obstacles to the preferable exploitation of the elements of their strength. Since charm gets the attention of society and the surroundings, compared to what the culture of women has. On the other hand, educated women are portrayed as not at all similar to beautiful women, since - in their view - they do not pay the required attention to their outer appearance, dress, and other manifestations of femininity. Thus, it became necessary to ask about the most powerful elements of a woman, is it her culture and the strength of her personality, or the attractiveness of her charms? Therefore men are better at exploiting the disclosure of women's charms. In other words, the masculine view set the criteria for women's charm 'men look and women appear', and this not only determines most of the relationships of men with women, but also the relationship of women with themselves. Thus, a woman turns herself into an object and precisely as a target for looking and she judges herself with eyes of the desires. Alternatively, many studies made on veiling women state that women who wear veiling or modest clothing have more a positive image, inner peace, and self-reconciliation towards their body. Ruby (2016) concluded through a study that hijab is associated with a better self-image for some women. Because wearing the veil can be liberating for them, as it allows them to focus on their minds, not their bodies. Swami, V., Furnham, A., Horne, G., & Stieger, S. (2020), have further agreed that women who wear hijab and conservative or modest clothes have a healthy, more positive mental image towards their bodies, and that media messages about beauty standards had less influence on them. Thus, Swami and his colleagues came out with the belief that the veil provides a kind of protection against the objectification of women and their confinement to a sexual mold. The veil does not prevent women, from earning her position as the half of society, and the first and essential partner in making the other half, and participating in any economic work or the type of political and social activities. It is very good that we can benefit from this half of society in various fields. This work should not cast a shadow over the basic work, which is the work of the family, marital and motherhood

#### **1.4.conclusion**

It seems clear that Western liberalism explicitly hostile of veiling as it is a contradiction with freedom. Although it is a religious attitude and decorum, its practice should be harmonized with the code of Western liberalism which definitely



calls stripping its content. Besides, the wrong models that are presented in the name of religion and the radical misinterpretation of legislation have made women in lower positions and they should be veiled to conceal their being. All these ramifications aim to make the female body as a commodity to be exploited by patriarchy and liberalism despite the false pretension of women's empowerment. Veiling, which wears out of will and conviction, is empowering device of women's self-recognition and self-expression in which women enhances their connection with their faith and culture. Once this fact is grasped, veiling women rebel against the priority that Western culture gives to the physical beauty of women as a commodity and concentrating on her mentality, experience and skill as a tools elevating and sustaining her feminism identity. The veil is closer to bringing women to equality than Western culture allowing them to exploit their bodies for commercial purposes. By leaving her veil, women expose the thing that God and logic wanted them to cover. By doing so, they are going to belittle themselves, degrade their worth, and humiliate themselves. Veiling is dignified, solemn, and valuable for a woman. It is the preponderance of her reputation and respect. Veiling could be the safe guardian of women's life elevation and protection.

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