

Translation of Qur'anic Verses with Injunctions

By Daoud Nassimi

Introduction

The translations of the Qur'an have made a significant and positive contribution to humanity. For many centuries, a great number of people from across the world have encountered the message of the Qur'an through its translations. English translations of the Qur'an have introduced its message to many people among the English-speaking population of the world in the last few centuries. Although initial English translations were produced in more distorted forms between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, numerous and more accurate translations were offered during the twentieth century.

English is the predominant language of the world today and many people of the world, Muslims and non-Muslims, are learning the message of the Qur'an through its English translations. Consequently, there is a serious need to review and assess the current English translations to identify the features and tradeoffs of these translations as well as to suggest ideas to contribute to future translations of the Qur'an with better accuracy and quality.

Since the Qur'an is the perfect Word of God in its original Arabic language, its translation to any other language is always limited to the understanding by the human translators of the meaning of the Qur'an. The text of the Qur'an has some very unique characteristics that its translation to another language is bound to lose. In addition, the Qur'an as an inexhaustible source of meaning for all times continues to reveal its meaning for the changing needs of humanity as knowledge of life advances. Therefore, there is a continuous challenge to improve the quality of the translations of the Qur'an into other languages.

The Qur'an has been translated into the English language many times in the last four centuries. While very few translations were completed between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries by non-Muslims, during the twentieth century alone Muslims produced about thirty translations. Beyond that, in the last few years of the beginning of the twenty-first century, Muslims have produced about ten additional translations. When this many translations of the same book are available, one would naturally think the number more than adequate. However, an error-free and more communicative translation of the Qur'an is still an unfulfilled dream. The following four English translations of the Qur'an are selected for a comparative review in this paper:

1. 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an Text*, New Edition with Revised Translation, Commentary and Newly Compiled Comprehensive Index, 10th Edition. Amāna Publications, first published in 1934, reprinted in 2003.
2. Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of The Qur'an*, Translated and Explained. Dār al-Andalus, 1980.
3. Muḥammad Taqiyu al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khan. *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, 17th revised edition. Riyadh: Dar-us-salam, 1997.

4. Zafar Ishāq Anṣārī/Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding The Qur'an* (Abridged version of *Tafhīmul Qur'an*). Leicester, United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 2006.

This study reflects a new and unique approach to review and compare these translations. Each translation is assessed and compared with the other three translations with samples from the Qur'anic Injunctions (*Aḥkām*). Two passages are selected from the Qur'an to be studied, compared, and analyzed as samples for this paper. The translation and commentary of the verses of injunctions are analyzed from some or all of the following points of view:

- Consideration of jurisprudence knowledge (*fiqh*)
- Consideration of the context of the verse, subject, section, and Sūrah
- Consideration of the historical background
- Degree of literal versus communicative translation
- Consideration of issues of this age
- Some linguistic features and tradeoffs

The samples of verses selected for review in this paper include the injunction of Friday prayers as an act of worship and the injunction of the dress code of women.

Significance of Injunctions (*Aḥkām*) in the Qur'an

Aḥkām is plural of *ḥukm*, which can mean a ruling, injunction, command, decree, ordinance, or judgment.^{1[1]} The meaning of “injunction” is used in this study. The subject of *Aḥkām* is one of the key themes of the Qur'an. The translation of the verses with *Aḥkām* is challenging. It requires the translators to consider many other factors in addition to the knowledge and command of both languages.

The injunctions (*Aḥkām*) of the Qur'an are of primary importance in the life of Muslims. They form the primary source of the Sharī'a. The verses that have legal connotations in the Qur'an form the code of conduct for every Muslim from birth to death. They provide the touchstone to distinguish the lawful (*ḥalāl*) from unlawful (*ḥarām*) and the right from wrong in every sphere of life. This is why the Qur'an is also called “the criterion” (*al-Furqān*). The commands of the Qur'an, unlike any other man-made laws, are not amendable. Therefore, they have remained the same for the last 1,400 years.

There are approximately six hundred verses regarding injunctions in the Qur'an. About four hundred of these pertain to the acts of worship (*'ibādāt*) and the remaining two hundred, according to one count, are divided as follows: about 70 verses pertain to family law, 80 verses to trade and finance, 13 to oaths, 30 to crimes and sentencing, 10 to constitutional and administrative matters, and 25 to international law.^{2[2]}

These counts show the number of verses that deal directly with the laws. There are many other verses in other subjects of the Qur'an; e.g., the stories from which rules have also been derived. The verses related to the acts of worship include purification, ablution (*wudū'*), body washing (*ghusl*), symbolic ablution (*tayamum*), prayers (*ṣalāh*), almsgiving (*zakāh*), fasting, pilgrimage (major and minor), oaths and vows, remembrance of Allāh (*Dhikr*), and invocations

(*Du'ā'*). The verses related to trade and finance include various types of contracts, donations, loans, authorizations, restrictions, documentation, and guarantees. Family laws include laws related to marriage, divorce, children, and inheritance. Laws related to crimes include murder, adultery, slander, theft, armed robbery, penalties, apostasy, rising against Islamic leadership, et cetera.

The language of injunctions in the Qur'an often has a unique style. Many of the injunctions of the Qur'an start with a direct address to the believers, such as, "O' believers." This implies that the commands of the Qur'an can be fully understood and appreciated only by the believers of the Qur'an. Sometimes, even if not fully comprehended in a convincing way, a true believer is expected to be willing to apply the commands as soon as they hear or learn about them. This attitude is mentioned in the Qur'an many times. For example:

The answer (reaction) of the Believers, when summoned to Allāh and His Messenger, in order that He may judge between (or order) them, is no other than they say, "We hear and we obey": it is such as these that will attain felicity. It is such as obey Allāh and His Messenger, and fear Allāh and do right, that will win (in the end).³[3]

It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allāh and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allāh and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.⁴[4]

The reason for such an attitude is Muslims follow commands based on submission to the author of the Qur'an, i.e., God. In other words, the main wisdom and rationale behind following the commands is submission to God. The verses related to many of the commands are very brief and they do not provide much of the rationale for them. God has dedicated a major portion of the Qur'an for the areas of beliefs and He has offered all kinds of reasoning, evidence, and rationale to convince the human beings of the truth of the Islamic beliefs. God wants human beings to develop their beliefs based on a rational, voluntary, and independent approach. Once this is achieved, they are asked to submit to Him, and then follow His injunctions based on this submission.

Some Unique Features of Verses of Injunctions

The verses related to the injunctions (*Aḥkām*) have some unique features that make their translation challenging. The translators require some additional knowledge to translate these verses and comment on them more appropriately. The main areas of this additional knowledge follow.

Knowledge of the Traditions (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muḥammed (pbuh)

The traditions (Sunnah) of the Prophet (pbuh) play an important role in understanding the injunctions of the Qur'an. While the Qur'an is the primary source of law in Islam, the Sunnah is considered as the second source of Islamic law and the explanation of the Qur'an. The Sunnah usually provides necessary and additional information, details, and explanations about the meaning or applications of the teachings of the Qur'an. Sunnah could affect the application of certain injunctions of the Qur'an in different ways, for example, it could make a rule of the Qur'an that is general, it will make it specific, or vice versa. Similarly, ḥadīth could provide many other instructions to help in the implementation of the Qur'an in the daily life. These are all based on the facts stated by the Qur'an in many places that the job of the Prophet was, for example, in 3:164 and 62:2, to teach the Qur'an, and in 16:44 to explain the Qur'an to people.

Knowledge of Jurisprudence (Fiqh)

The *Aḥkām* of the Qur'an have been addressed by Muslim scholars under the science of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in a very extensive and comprehensive manner throughout Islamic history. This effort along with the interpretation of the related ḥadīth, have led to the development and establishment of different schools of *fiqh*. The knowledge of the various interpretations for the legal injunctions of the same verse is often needed by the translator. Further, while the language of some verses is in the command form, it is not meant to be an obligatory act, but rather implies a permissive act. Therefore, such details cannot be understood and reflected on unless the translator has some knowledge of *fiqh*.

Knowledge of Issues of Today's World Related to the Qur'an

There are certain subjects in Islamic law that have become the concern of many people, especially in the English-speaking world, such as jihad (striving/struggling), rights of women, and so forth. There are some verses in the Qur'an on these subjects that have often been quoted to claim some issues with the Qur'anic teachings. The translators of the Qur'an need to have a proper knowledge of such issues so they can carefully render the related verses in the light of those issues without making any compromise in the accuracy of the meaning of the verses. Such care can be attained, for example, by providing the necessary context of those verses in the commentary.

In order to review and evaluate the translation of the verses of injunctions from the different points of views discussed in here, certain examples are selected and studied as samples in this paper. These examples further clarify these points. To shorten the wording of the frequent references to each translator's name, their names are abbreviated by their initials. The following abbreviation terminology will be used to refer to the four translators:

Yūsuf 'Alī:	YA
Muḥammed Asad:	MA
Taqiyu al-dīn Hilālī and Muḥsin Khan:	H&K
Zafar Iṣḥāq Anṣārī:	A/M

Injunction of Friday Prayers

In this section, the translations of the verses of the Qur'an related to the injunction of the Friday prayers will be reviewed. This subject is covered in verses 9-11 of Sūrah *al-Jumu'ah* (Sūrah no. 62) which means "Friday" and is named after this day.

The Friday prayer is one of the most important acts of worship in Islam. It is also one of the most important gatherings for Muslims. Especially in the countries where Muslims live as a minority, the Friday prayer is one of the few opportunities to be together and be reminded of their religion.^{5[5]} Every week, in tens of thousands of mosques throughout the world, millions of Muslims from all walks of life sit patiently, listen to the Friday sermons (*Khutbah*), and observe the obligatory prayers in obedience to Allāh’s direct command in verse 62:9 of the Qur’an. The weekly Friday prayer and *Khutbah* are powerful institutions established to build communities. They provide an opportunity for spiritual nourishment, learning, and group bonding.^{6[6]}

The Friday prayers and *Khutbah* have detailed descriptions in the books of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).^{7[7]} The various aspects of this subject have been explained according to the teachings of the Prophet and his practice as well as the understandings of the various schools of *fiqh*.^{8[8]}

1.1 The Qur’anic Text

Verses 62:9-11:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

1.2 Text of Translations and Commentary

YA:

62:9. O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (*5461) (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allāh, and leave off business (and traffic): (*5462) That is best for you if ye but knew! (*5463)

10. And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allāh. And celebrate the Praises of Allāh often (and without stint): that ye may prosper. (*5464)

11. But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave thee standing. Say: “The (blessing) from the presence of Allāh is better than any amusement or bargain! And Allāh is the best to provide (for all needs).” (*5465)

***5461:** Friday is primarily the Day of Assembly, the weekly meeting of the Congregation, when we show our unity by sharing in common public worship, preceded by a *Khuṭbah*, in which the Imām (leader) reviews the week's spiritual life of the community and offers advice and exhortation on holy living.

Notice the gradations of social contact for Muslims if they followed the wise ordinances of their Faith. 1. Each individual remembers Allāh for himself or herself five or more times everyday in the home or place of business, or local mosque, or open air, as the case may be. 2. On Friday in every week there is a local meeting in the central mosque of each local centre -- it may be a village, or town, or ward of a big city. 3. At the two *īds* every year, there is a large local area meeting in one center. 4. Once at least in a lifetime, where possible, a Muslim shares in the vast international assemblage of the world, in the center of Islam, at the Makkan Pilgrimage, a happy combination of decentralization and centralization, of individual liberty and collective meeting, and contact at various stages or grades. The mechanical part of this ordinance is easy to carry out. Are we carrying out the more difficult part - the spirit of unity, brotherhood, mutual consultation, and collective understanding and action? (R).

***5462:** The idea behind the Muslim weekly "Day of Assembly" is different from that behind the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) or the Christian Sunday. The Jewish Sabbath is primarily a commemoration of Allāh's ending His work and resting on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2; Exod. 20:11): we are taught that Allāh needs no rest, nor does He feel fatigue (2:255). The Jewish command forbids work on that day but says nothing about worship or prayer (Exod. 20:10); our ordinance lays chief stress on the remembrance of Allāh. Jewish formalism went so far as to kill the spirit of the Sabbath, and call forth the protest of Jesus: "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark, 2:27). But the Christian Church, although it changed the day from Saturday to Sunday, has inherited the Jewish spirit: witness the Scottish Sabbath; except insofar as it has been secularized. Our teaching says: 'When the time for *Jumu'ah* Prayer comes, close your business and answer the summons loyally and earnestly, meet earnestly, pray, consult and learn by social contact: when the meeting is over, scatter and go about your business.'

***5463:** The immediate and temporal worldly gain may be the ultimate and spiritual loss, and *vice versa*.

***5464.** Prosperity is not to be measured by wealth or worldly gains. There is a higher prosperity - the health of the mind and the spirit.

***5465:** Do not be distracted by the craze for amusement or gain. If you lead a righteous and sober life, Allāh will provide for you in all senses, better than any provision you can possibly think of.

MA:

(62:9) O YOU who have attained to faith! When the call to prayer is sounded on the day of congregation (*10) hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave all worldly commerce: this is for your own good, if you but knew it. (10) And when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth (*11) and seek to obtain [something] of God's bounty; but remember God often, so that you might attain to a happy state!

(11) Yet [it does happen that] when people (*12) become aware of [an occasion for] worldly gain (*13) or a passing delight, they rush headlong towards it, and leave thee standing [and preaching]. (*14) Say: "That which is with God is far better than all passing delight and all gain! And God is the best of providers!"

*10: i.e., on Friday, when the congregational prayer at noon is obligatory. Nevertheless, as the sequence shows, Friday is not a day of compulsory rest in Islamic law.

*11: I.e., "you may devote yourselves to worldly pursuits."

*12: Lit., "they."

*13: Lit., "trade" or "a bargain."

*14: Sc., "O Prophet" – thus alluding to a historical incident, when most of the congregation, on hearing that a long-expected trade caravan had come from Syria, rushed out of the mosque in the midst of the Prophet's Friday sermon. In a wider timeless sense, the above verse contains an allusion to an all-too-human weakness against which even true believers are not always immune: namely, the tendency to overlook religious obligations for the sake of a transitory, worldly advantage.

H&K:

9. O you who believe (Muslims)! When the call is proclaimed for the salah (prayer) on the day of Friday (*Jumu'ah* prayer), come to the remembrance of Allāh [*Jumu'ah* religious talk (*Khuṭbah*) and salah (prayer)] and leave off business (and every other thing), that is better for you if you did but know!

10. Then when the (*Jumu'ah*) ṣalāh (prayer) is finished, you may disperse through the land, and seek the Bounty of Allāh (by working, et cetera.), and remember Allāh much, that you may be successful.

11. And when they see some merchandise or some amusement [beating of Tambur (drum), et cetera.] they disperse headlong to it, and leave you (Muhammad SAW) standing [while delivering *Jumu'ah's* religious talk (*Khuṭbah*)]. Say "That which Allāh has is better than any amusement or merchandise! And Allāh is the Best of providers."

A/M:

9. Believers, when the call for Prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allāh and give up all trading. (*7) That is better for you, if you only knew. 10. But when the Prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek Allāh's Bounty, (*8) and remember Allāh much so that you may prosper. (*9)

*7: The word "remembrance" here signifies the Friday sermon. This is because the first thing to

which the Prophet paid attention after the *adhān* (call to prayer) was not prayer itself but the Friday sermon that always preceded the Friday prayer. Furthermore, the words "hasten to the remembrance of Allāh" mean that one should proceed to the Friday sermon with a sense of urgency and importance, and not that one should literally run to it. The directive "to give up all trading" means that after the call to Friday prayer has been made, one should not only give up trading but also concern oneself solely with the Friday service and shun every other occupation. It is also pertinent to mention that Muslim jurists are agreed that every kind of business transaction after the call to Friday prayer is forbidden. It is also pertinent to note that according to a ḥadīth, children, women, slaves, sick people, and travelers are exempt from the obligation to perform Friday prayer.

***8:** This does not mean that everybody is obligated to disperse in the land and engage in seeking their livelihood following the Friday prayer. Instead, people may disperse in the land and proceed with their economic activities. One should bear in mind the context in which these words occur. The words "disperse in the land and seek Allāh's Bounty" follow the directive to stop all business activities after the call to the Friday prayer is made. Therefore, when the prayer is over, it is natural that believers be told that they may proceed with whatever economic activities they wish.

This is similar to what was said in the Qur'an on another occasion. People were ordered not to engage in hunting when they were in the state of *iḥrām*. But once they had completed the obligatory requirements of pilgrimage, "...then hunt" (5:2). This does not mean it was obligatory for such people to hunt; rather, what is meant is that the restrictions on hunting were now terminated and so they might hunt if they so wanted.

Those who argue on the basis of this verse that there is no holiday on Friday in Islam, however, put forward a flawed argument. For if the Muslims have to have a weekly holiday it should obviously be on Friday in the same manner that the Jews have it on Saturday and the Christians on Sunday.

***9:** We have translated this verse as follows: "...so that you may prosper." If we take the Arabic word *la'alla* used in the verse literally, we would have translated it as "...perhaps you will prosper." Our present translation, however, is appropriate because here the word *la'alla* is not used to indicate any doubt. To comprehend the true purport of *la'alla* (literally, "perhaps") it should be borne in mind that the statement here is analogous to a royal declaration and is couched in terms befitting royalty. The statement is like a boss saying to his subordinates: "Carry out this duty well, and perhaps you will be promoted." The tenor of the address subtly implies a promise in expectation of which subordinates will perform their tasks with full devotion.

***10:** This refers to an incident that took place in the early Madīnah period of the Prophet's life. A trading caravan had arrived in Madīnah from Syria exactly at the time of Friday Prayer and its arrival was announced by the beating of drums. The Prophet was then delivering his Friday sermon. The sound of the drums made people impatient with the result that all but twelve persons left the mosque and headed for the caravan.

***11:** These words indicate a kind of lapse on the part of the Companions. Had the underlying cause of this lapse been their weakness of faith or their willful preference for worldly benefits over the Hereafter, God's reproach would have been couched in much sterner terms. But what

caused the incident was the fact that the Muslims had not yet received any extensive training to live according to Islamic principles. In view of this, the rules pertaining to the Friday prayer were enunciated much in the manner a teacher would do. This was followed by expressing disapproval of the Companions' actions after which it was declared that the reward they would receive by listening to the Friday Sermon and offering the Friday prayer would be far greater than anything they could gain from engaging in business and recreation.

***12:** God is a much better Provider of sustenance than all those who are ostensibly a means to provide sustenance to God's creatures.

1.3 Comparative Review

These three verses describe the injunctions related to the Friday prayers. Like any other injunctions, their full intent and applications can be better understood in the light of the related ḥadīth and *fiqh* knowledge. The key terms, phrases, and points that could affect the understanding of the related injunctions of these verses are the following items:

- To whom this injunction is obligatory
- The clear meanings of *Idhā nūdiya*
- *Fas 'aw*
- *Dhikrillāh*
- *Al-bay'*
- *Fantashirū fil arḍi wabtaghū*
- The historical context of verse 11

These items need to become clear either in the translation text by selecting appropriate terms to communicate the intent or using parenthesis, or in the commentary of these verses. The following provides a comparison of the four translations from these points of view:

1. Although the address is to all the believers, but there are certain people who are exempted from the obligation of this injunction, such as women, travelers, sick, et cetera.⁹[9] A/M is the only one who has explained this point in the last part of comment *7.
2. *Idhā nūdiya* : In the translation of this term, the important point to be clarified is that it is meant to say that “when it is the time for the Friday prayer.” Thus, even if a person cannot hear the call for the prayer, the command applies to him. MA is the only one who has tried to clarify this point in his comment *10.
3. *Fas 'aw*: In the translation of this term, need to clarify that the intent is to give it a sense of urgency and importance, and not physical running. A/M has nicely explained this point. H&K have translated it as “come to” which is meant to avoid the literal running, but does not communicate its intended urgency. YA has translated it as “hasten earnestly” which could make the point indirectly. MA has left it with its literal translation as “hasten to”.
4. *Dhikrillāh*: In the translation of this term, need to clarify that the intent of “remembrance of Allāh” is “the *Khuṭbah* and the prayer of Friday.”¹⁰[10] H&K have clarified this point

- inside a parenthesis within the translated text. A/M has explained it in the beginning of his comment *7. YA and MA have left it to its literal translation without clarifying it.
5. *Al-bay'*: The intent is “any kind of financial and worldly occupations.” YA has explained it but not more than the literal translation. MA has clarified it in his translation as “all worldly commerce.” A/M has explained it very clearly in his comment *7. H&K have clarified it by adding “and every other thing” within a parenthesis in his translation.
 6. *Fantashirū fil ardi wabtaghū*: In the translation of this phrase, the intent is not an order to make it obligatory, but an instruction to make it permissible. YA has clarified it in his translation by using the word “may.” MA has used the word “freely” in his translation and has explained it in his comment *11. H&K have done it in his translation by using the word “may.” A/M has translated it literally, but he has explained it very clearly in his comment *8.
 7. While verse 11 has a lesson for Muslims of all times, its historical context should be clarified. YA has translated it nicely to cover the lesson, but does not mention its historical context. MA has covered both aspects very clearly. H&K do not mention its historical context. A/M has clearly translated it as a past event and has elaborated on its historical context in his comments *10 and *11 along with clarification of the fact that the Prophet’s companions did not have enough training/instructions at that time.
2. Injunction of Women’s Dress Code (*Hijāb*)

In this section, the various translations of verses 24:31 and 33:59, which provide a description of the dress code of Muslim women, will be reviewed. This injunction is referred to as *Ahkām Al-Hijāb*. Although *Hijāb* applies to both males and females, it is often referred to the dress code of women.

These two verses are chosen because the topic of *Hijāb* is often debated, especially in Western societies, as an issue of Muslim women’s rights. Many people consider *Hijāb* as a sign of oppression of Muslim women. On the other hand, those who observe *Hijāb* consider it not only an Islamic duty, but also feel that it liberates them from the constraints of some uncongenial aspects of western modernity.

For Muslims, *Hijāb* is prescribed by Allāh, the creator of all human beings. It is a prescription for modest dressing that applies to both males and females. It is a part of the overall rules of behavior and appearance to be observed when men and women interact with one another in a social milieu. *Hijāb* is the proper Islamic dress code that is primarily intended to safeguard the modesty, dignity, and honor of men and women. *Hijāb* thus forms part of a holistic program of Islamic ethics and morals governing male and female interaction.

The word *Hijāb* comes from the Arabic word *Hajaba*, meaning to hide from view, to conceal, to screen, to veil, and to cover.¹¹[11] Therefore, *Hijāb* means a covering or a curtain. The Qur’an has used the term *Hijāb* in its common meaning, i.e. curtain, whether real or proverbial. However, because a curtain covers and conceals, it is commonly used as a verb for a woman covering herself to avoid being seen by unauthorized males. Therefore, in the common usage, the term *Hijāb* refers to the dress code and modest covering of a Muslim woman.

As a book of guidance for all aspects of human life, the Qur’an provides some essential and useful guidelines about the dress code of men and women. While the dress of human beings

is often considered as a means of only protection and adornment of the body while overlooking and ignoring its purpose of providing modesty, God calls the attention of all human beings in the following words: “O children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your nakedness, as well as to be an adornment and protection. But the raiment of Taqwa - that is the best. This is of the signs of Allāh that they may be mindful.” (7:26)

This verse makes clear that the first objective of human dress is to provide modesty and decency. To help achieve this objective, Islam provides specific guidelines for the believers to follow in their clothing. A major portion of these guidelines is provided in verses 33:59 and 24:31, which are being reviewed here.

The context of verse 33:59 is that immediately before this verse, there was condemnation of the behavior of the hypocrites and troublemakers who were abusing Muslim women by their practice of sexual harassment, false rumors, and undue accusations. They were warned of the severe punishment in the Hereafter for their depraved behaviour. Then, in this verse, Muslim women were told that, in order to avoid harassment, they should give a clear signal by their Islamic attire that they are chaste and God-fearing Muslim women. Immediately after this verse, the perpetrators of harassment were warned of dire consequences at the hands of the Prophet and his companions. In other words, the culprits were condemned and warned both of the punishment in this world and in the Hereafter to ensure that they dare not harass Muslim women; at the same time, Muslim women were commanded to take their own precautions.¹²[12]

Verse 24:31 is preceded by a verse that commands Muslim males first to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity. Both Muslim men and women have been commanded to lower their gazes and protect their private parts. It is a general command to apply whenever and wherever males and females come across each other. Lowering the gaze does not mean that Muslims should always keep their head down and should not look up. Actually, the words used are “they should lower some of their looks,” indicating that only certain type of looks are being talked about. It means that they should not look intently at someone of an opposite sex, stare, exchange lustful eye contact, or look intentionally after an initial inadvertent look. People are not accountable for the first, inadvertent look, but the second look is sinful.¹³[13] The look becomes “second” as soon as the person makes it intentional instead of inadvertent, starts assessing the attractiveness of the subject, or starts enjoying the unauthorized look. Guarding oneself from harms of a lustful gaze is extremely important for the purity of heart and mind of people. In fact, almost all bad ideas, fantasies, affairs, and relationships start with a look.

While lowering of gaze and protecting of the private parts have to be observed by both men and women as explained in verse 24:30, verse 24:31 requires women to cover their *zīnah*. The *zīnah* of women is defined as natural physical beauty (except certain parts that have to be revealed) and their ornaments.¹⁴[14] As it is explained in the middle part of verse 24:31, *zīnah* has to be covered from everyone except certain relatives and people -- her fathers, including grandfathers and uncles, fathers of the husband, her own or her husband’s sons, her brothers, and her nephews (sons of sisters and brothers), her female friends or relatives, those feeble dependent males who do not have any sexual inclinations, and children who do not have exposure to sexual matters.

The next part of verse 24:31 calls on women to walk and move around gracefully without stamping their feet lest they attract attention of people because of the sounds produced by such walking and by jingle or clink of jewelery. Verse 24:31 ends with an invitation to all of the believers to turn to God for true success.

Both for men and women, there is a minimum limit of the body parts defined to be covered, which is called *'awrah*. The *'awrah* must be covered with loosely fitting clothes that do not show details of the physical figure and through which neither skin nor its tone is visible. *'Awrah* of a person's body must be protected from anyone's sight or touch, male or female except from spouses. It should be kept covered even if no one is around, and is also the minimum that must be covered for a person's prayer (ṣalāh) to be valid, even if the person is praying alone at home. The *'awrah* for males is the part of the body from the navel's height to the knees. A woman's *'awrah* is her whole body except her face, hands, and feet. General scholarly opinion is that the minimum part of the body that has to be exposed to perform daily chores and functions of life is not included in *'awrah*. That is why even if some portions of forearms close to wrist or of calves close to ankles are exposed during performing tasks, it is considered acceptable.¹⁵[15]

The following review will provide a more detailed understanding of the requirements and issues of *Hijāb*.

1.3.1 The Qur'anic Text

Verse 33:59:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزُومًا رَحِيمًا

Verse 24:31:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَعْضَضْنَ مِنْ أْبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِمَخْرَجِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِزَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوْ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

1.4 Text of Translations and Commentary

YA:

33:59. O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, (*3764) that they should cast their outer garments over (*3765) their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (*3766) (as such) and not molested. And Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, (*3767) Most Merciful.

***3764:** This is for all Muslim women, those of the Prophet's household, as well as the others. They were asked to cover themselves with outer garments when walking around. (R).

***3765:** *Jilbāb*, plural *Jalābīb*: an outer garment: a long gown covering the whole body, or a cloak covering the neck and bosom.

***3766:** The object was not to restrict the liberty of women but to protect them from harm and molestation. In the East and the West, a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has

always been a badge of honor or distinction, both among men and women. This can be traced back to the earliest civilizations. Assyrian Law in its palmist days (7th century B.C.), enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame.¹⁶[\[16\]](#)

***3767:** That is, if a Muslim woman sincerely tries to observe this rule, but owing to human weakness falls short of the ideal, then "Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful," (*CJ.* 24:50-51). (R).

24:31. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard (*2984) their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments (*2985) except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. (*2986) And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards Allāh, that ye may attain Bliss. (*2987)

***2984:** The need for modesty is the same in both men and women. However, due to the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom.

***2985:** *Zīnah* means both natural beauty and artificial ornaments. Both are implied here, but chiefly the former. The woman is asked not to make a display of her figure or appear in undress except to the following classes of people: 1. her husband, 2. her near relatives who would be living in the same house, and with whom a certain amount of *negligee* is permissible: 3. her women, *i.e.*, her maidservants who would be constantly in attendance on her: some commentators include all believing women; it is not good form in a Muslim household for women to meet other women, except when they are properly dressed; 4. slaves, male and female as they would be in constant attendance (but with the abolition of slavery this no longer applies); 5. old or infirm men-servants; and 6. infants or small children before they get a sense of sex. [*CJ?* also 33:59.]

***2986:** It is one of the tricks of showy or unchaste women to tinkle their ankle ornaments, to draw attention to themselves.

***2987:** While all these details of the purity and good form of domestic life are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the chief object we should hold in view is our spiritual welfare. All our life on this earth is a probation, and we must make our individual, domestic, and social life all contribute to our holiness, so that we can get the real success and bliss that is the aim of our spiritual endeavor.

MA:

(33:59) O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters, as well as all [other] believing women, that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]: this will be more conducive to their being recognized [as decent women] and not annoyed. (*74) But [withal,?] God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace! (*75)

***74:** Cf. the first two sentences of 24: 31 and the corresponding notes.

***75:** The specific, time-bound formulation of the above verse (evident in the reference to the wives and daughters of the Prophet), as well as the deliberate vagueness of the recommendation that women “should draw upon themselves some of their outer garments (*min jalābībihinna*)” when in public, makes it clear that this verse was not meant to be an injunction (*hukm*) in the general, timeless sense of this term but, rather, as a moral guideline to be observed against the ever-changing background of time and social environment. This finding is reinforced by the concluding reference to God’s forgiveness and grace.

(24:31) And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity, and not to display their charms [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof; (*37) hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms.

(*38) And let them not display [more of] their charms to any but their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands’ fathers, or their sons, or their husbands’ Sons, or their brothers, or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women folk, or those whom they rightfully possess, or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire, (*39) or children that are as yet unaware of women’s nakedness; and let them not swing their legs [in walking] so as to draw attention to their hidden charms (*40) And [always], O you believers -- all of you -- turn unto God in repentance, so that you might attain to a happy state! (*41)

***37:** This interpolation of the word “decently” reflects the interpretation of the phrase *illā mā zahara minhā* by several of the earliest Islamic scholars, and particularly by Al-Qaffāl? (quoted by al-Rāzī) as “that which a human being may openly show in accordance with prevailing custom (*al-‘ādah al-jāriyah*).” Although the traditional exponents of Islamic Law have for centuries been inclined to restrict the definition of “what may [decently] be apparent” to a woman’s face, hands and feet -- and sometimes even less than that -- we may safely assume that the meaning of *illā mā zahara minhā* is much wider, and that the deliberate vagueness of this phrase is meant to allow for all the time-bound changes that are necessary for man’s moral and social growth. The pivotal clause in the above injunction is the demand, addressed in identical terms to men as well as to women, to “lower their gaze and be mindful of their chastity” and this determines the extent of what, at any given time, may legitimately -- i.e., in consonance with the Qur’anic principles of social morality -- be considered “decent” or “indecent” in a person’s outward appearance.

***38:** The noun *khimār* (of which *khumur* is the plural) denotes the head-covering customarily used by Arabian women before and after the advent of Islam. According to most of the classical commentators, it was worn in pre-Islamic times more or less as an ornament and was let down loosely over the wearer’s back; and since, in accordance with the fashion prevalent at the time,

the upper part of a woman's tunic had a wide opening in the front, her breasts' cleavage were left bare. Hence, the injunction to cover the bosom by means of a *khimār*, (a term so familiar to the contemporaries of the Prophet) does not necessarily relate to the use of a *khimār* as such but is, rather, meant to make it clear that a woman's breasts are not included in the concept of "what may decently be apparent" of her body and should not, therefore, be displayed.

***39:** i.e., very old men. The preceding phrase "those whom they rightfully possess" (lit., "whom their right hands possess") denotes slaves; but see also second note on verse 58.]

***40:** Lit., "so that those of their charms which they keep hidden may become known," The phrase *yadribna bi-arjulihinna* is idiomatically similar to the phrase *daraba bi-yadayhi fi mishyatih*, "he swung his arms in walking" (quoted in this context in *Taj al-Arus*), and alludes to a deliberately provocative gait.

***41:** The implication of this general call to repentance is that "since man has been created weak" (4:28), no one is ever free of faults and temptations -- so much so that even the Prophet used to say, "Verily, I turn unto Him in repentance a hundred times every day" (Ibn Ḥambāl, Bukhārī and Bayhaqī, all of them on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn Umar).

H&K:

33:59. O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. And Allāh is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (*1)

***1:** See the footnote of (V.24:31)

24:31. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, et cetera.) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like palms of hands or one eye or both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, et cetera.), and to draw their veils all over *Juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islam), or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigor, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allāh to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful (*1).

***1:** About "And to draw their veils all over *Juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment..."

Narrated 'Āishah (RA): "May Allāh bestow His mercy on the early immigrant women. When Allāh revealed: "And to draw their veils all over *Juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)" – they tore their *Muroots* a woolen dress, or a waist-binding cloth or an apron) and covered their heads and faces with those torn *Muroots*." (Ṣahīh Bukhārī, ḥadīth no.4758).

Narrated Ṣaffīyah bint Shaybah: “‘Āishah used to say: when the verse “And to draw their veils all over *Juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)” was revealed, (the ladies) cut their waist sheets at the edges and covered their heads and faces with those cut pieces of cloth.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, ḥadīth no.4759).

A/M:

(33:59) O Prophet, enjoin your wives and your daughters and the wives of believers, to draw a part of their outer coverings around them. (*20) It is likelier that they will be recognized and not molested. (*21) Allāh is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

***20:** That is, they should wear their over-garment (*chaadar*) and veil. In other words, they should not move about with their faces uncovered.

***21:** " ...It is likelier that they will thus be recognized..." that is, when people see them dressed in garments exuding simplicity and modesty they will be recognized as honorable and chaste women. They will appear distinct from women of loose character who are ever on the hunt for lewd encounters. These women are unlike those whom immoral men would seek out to gratify their desires. As for the words "and will not be molested," they mean that since those women will be perceived as decent ladies they will not be subjected to teasing and harassment to which men of vile character have recourse when they encounter women not particularly known for their uprightness and firmness of character.

(24:31) And enjoin believing women to cast down their looks and guard their private parts and (*20) not reveal their adornment except that which is revealed of itself, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, (*21) or of their own sons, or the sons of their husbands, (*22) or their brothers, (*23) or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, (*24) or the women 'With whom they associate, (*25) or those that are in their bondage, or the male attendants in their service free of sexual interest, (*26) or boys that are yet unaware of illicit matters pertaining to women. Nor should they stamp their feet on the ground in such manner that their hidden ornament becomes revealed.

***20:** It should be noted that the demands that the Divine Law makes on women, (as mentioned in this verse), are not just what is expected of men, i.e. avoiding to look at what is improper to look at and guarding one's private parts. It also demands of women more than what it requires men to do. This clearly shows that women are not equated with men as far as this matter is concerned.

***21:** The word *abā'* used in this verse covers one's father, both maternal and paternal grandfathers and great-grandfathers. A woman may, therefore, appear before these elders of either her own family or of her husband's family in the same manner as she may appear before both her father and father-in-law.

***22:** The word *abnā'ihinna* ("their sons") covers, apart from their own sons, their grandsons and great-grandsons, i.e. those born both of one's sons and daughters. Furthermore, no distinction is

made between one's own sons and one's stepsons. A woman may appear freely before the children of her stepsons as she may appear before her own children and grandchildren.

*23: "Brothers" here covers both real and stepbrothers.

*24: This refers to a woman's nieces and nephews, whether they are born of her brother or sister, and whether those brothers and sisters are real or are stepbrothers and stepsisters.

*25: This by itself shows that a Muslim woman should not display her attractions before immoral and immodest women.

*26: That is, as they are in a state of subservience there is no room to suspect that they would dare harbor evil designs regarding the women of the household.

1.5 Comparative Review

The review of these two verses is carried out based on how some of the key words and phrases that affect the understanding of the teachings of the verses and its legal aspects are rendered and commented. The key words and phrases in these two verses are:

- *Zīnah*
- *Khimār*
- *Jilbāb*
- *Wal yaḍribna bi khumurihinna 'alā juyūbihinna:*
- *Illā mā zahara minhā*
- *Yudnīna 'alayhinna min jalābībihinna*

1. ***Zīnah***: It includes the natural or bodily beauty and the acquired adornments such as rings, bracelets, and clothes.¹⁷[17] It includes the women's decorations, ornaments, clothing, hair-do, et cetera.¹⁸[18] It includes the natural physical beauty of a woman as well as all beautification aids and adornments used to increase her attractiveness such as hairstyle, make-up, and jewelery.¹⁹[19] YA has translated it as "beauty and ornaments" that covers both aspects. MA has translated it as "charms" which means attractive features. It is an alternative idiomatic usage. H&K and A/M have translated it as "adornment" that may not cover the natural beauty.
 2. ***Khimār*** (of which *khumur* is the plural): *Khimār* means anything that covers the head of something.²⁰[20] It is what covers the head of the woman.²¹[21] *Khimār* means a head
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cover.²²[22] *Khimār* is a cloth to be worn or wrapped that must be big enough to cover hair, neck and bosom, and must not be transparent so that it can truly cover up or hide *Zīnah*. To hide the *Zīnah*, they must wear *Khimār* in such a way that it covers their chests as well as adornments.²³[23] MA translated *Khimār* as “head covering,” but the rest have translated it as “veil.” Thus, they do not differ much. However, MA and H&K have made some comments related to the usage of *khimār* that will be addressed later.

3. ***Jalābīb***: It is plural of *jilbāb*. *Jilbāb* means a big sheet that covers the head and the whole body.²⁴[24] It is a cloak or a big sheet of cloth that is wrapped around the body as an outer garment.²⁵[25] It is a sheet that covers the head and the entire body and clothing of a lady.²⁶[26] YA and MA rendered it as “outer garments,” but YA has further explained it in his comment *3765 as “an outer garment: a long gown covering the whole body, or a cloak covering the neck and bosom. H&K have rendered it as “cloaks (veil)” and A/M has rendered it as “outer coverings.” Basically, they all have covered the essence of the meaning and there is not much of a difference between their translations of this term.
4. ***Yudnīna ‘alayhinna min jalābībihinna***: The translators have rendered this phrase as follows:

YA: “They should cast their outer garment over their persons (when abroad)”

MA: “They should draw over themselves some of their outer garments (in public)*75”

H&K: “To draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way).”

A/M: “To draw a part of their outer coverings around them.”

In the translation, they all use similar wording except that MA and A/M translated the word *min* in its discriminatory (*Tab‘īd*) meaning as “some of” and “a part of,” respectively. However, more significant differences appear in the commentary of MA and A/M, and what is added inside the parenthesis by H&K. MA explains this phrase in his comment *75 that this is a time-bound formula and it is not meant to be an injunction, but only a moral guideline. His reasoning for this argument is that there is a deliberate vagueness in this phrase and there is a reference of God’s forgiveness at the end of the verse.

However, this conclusion and reasoning is very weak for many reasons, such as:

1. the wording of the verse is a clear order on the Prophet to convey.
 2. The orders (injunctions) of the Qur’an are for all times unless there is an evidence for its time limitation from the Qur’an or the Sunnah.
 3. The claimed vagueness is not confirmed by any of the famous commentators of the Qur’an.
 4. Allāh’s forgiveness at the end of the
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verse is often mentioned at the end of the orders to show Allāh’s mercy and pardon for any disobedience that takes place due to one’s in-ability or forgetfulness, et cetera. Therefore, MA’s commentary for this phrase is problematic and his reasons are not based on any solid position.

H&K have added a statement to the translation of this phrase inside a parenthesis as: (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). The main intent of adding this statement is to imply that the face should also be covered. A/M has also mentioned covering of the face in his comment *20 to this phrase. This issue will be discussed in the review of the next phrase.

5. *Illā mā zahara minhā*: The translators have rendered this phrase as follows:

YA: “except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof”

MA: “beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof”

H&K: “except only that which is apparent (like palms of hands or one eye or both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, et cetera.)”

A/M: “except that which is revealed of itself.”

The meaning of this phrase, which offers an exception to the rule of not revealing the beauty and ornaments of women, has been discussed and debated extensively by the commentators of the Qur’an. The majority understands it as “the face and hands of the women and that part of the ornaments that can not be hidden,” but some do not agree with the exception of the face and hands. Among these four translators, as it can be seen, the differences are indicated in what is added inside the parenthesis.

YA has clarified it as that which is beyond one’s ability. He has left it there without further explanation. MA has added the word “decently” in the parenthesis and explains it in his comment *37. He argues that this exception of “what not to reveal” depends on the prevailing custom and time-bound changes of the society. However, this argument seems weak from many points of views. The Qur’an’s injunctions are for all times and places unless there is an evidence for its limitation. Even in the case of difference of exception of revealing the face and hands, it is not due to customs, but due to the technical differences in the approaches of some scholars. For example, those who insist that the women’s face should not be revealed, they cover it wherever they live in, including Europe and the U.S.

H&K have added the description inside the parenthesis and have provided the commentary *1 to indicate the necessity of covering the face and the hands of women as part of their *Hijāb*. Further, they have even added extra words in the translation of the ḥadīth in the commentary to prove that the face should be covered. The wording of both *Aḥādīth* of Bukhārī, which have been referred to in the *1 comment, end with “*fakhtamarna bihā*,” that simply means “they covered with it.” But H&K have added the words “heads and faces” which are not in the original Arabic text at all.

This issue of whether face and hands are exempted from the requirements of women’s *Hijāb* has been extensively discussed among some scholars for centuries. Sheikh Aḥmad Kutty summarizes this issue as follows: The majority of Imams -- including those of the Four Schools as well as others -- share the interpretation of Ibn

`Abbās that hands and face are exempted per the interpretation of the phrase “except what is apparent,” and thus hold the opinion that a woman is not obliged to cover her face and hands. However, a group of scholars, the majority of whom belong to the Hanbalite Juristic School, teaches that a woman must cover her face and hands as well. In support of their position, they invoke a tradition attributed to the Prophet, stating, “Woman is all *`Awwrah*,” and hence as such, needs to cover up completely. They also reason by saying that the most attractive parts of a woman’s body capable of enticing men are her face and hands.²⁷[27] Kutty further explains the validity of Ibn ‘Abaas position as in the following:

The aforementioned position of the majority on this issue seems to be more consistent with the general understanding and evidences of the Qur’an and Sunnah than of those who advocate covering the face and hands as well. There are several proofs that point to this conclusion: Firstly, the verse quoted above from the Qur’an, seems to presume that the women it addresses are not wholly covered (i.e. face and hands), since otherwise, there is no sense in ordering both genders to lower their gazes. Secondly, it is a general consensus among scholars that a woman is not required to cover her face and hands while performing salah; if these were deemed to be *`Awwrah*, it would certainly have been necessary to cover them. Thirdly, a woman is required to bare her face while she is in a state of *Ihrām* (during *Hajj* and *‘Umrah*), which again, confirms what we said earlier. Moreover, the evidences in the sources – the Qur’an and the Sunnah - are overwhelming in showing that the *Hijāb* as prescribed by Islam was not meant to segregate women or shut them out of the social involvement and participation in the affairs of the Muslim community since the participation of Muslim women -- at all levels of Islamic life -- is fully documented beyond a shadow of doubt in the sources of Sharī‘a. Such active participation as described in the sources is conceivable only if we assume that women were not wholly covered from head to toe. In light of the above, we conclude: a Muslim woman is required to cover all her body except her face and hands, according to the majority of scholars belonging to all schools. Covering the head, however, is not at all a disputed issue among them - they all agree that this is a necessary part of *Hijāb*.”²⁸[28]

Al-Bānī²⁹[29] and Abū Shuqah³⁰[30] have written outstanding books on *Hijāb* of Muslim women. They both prove with extensive references that covering of the face and

hands of women are not required by Islam. Similarly, Al-Darsh has addressed this topic as *Hijāb* or *Niqāb* in his book dealing with the Hijab³¹[31]. In the mean time, some scholars have argued this position and defended the covering of the face and hands, such as Al-Barazī.³²[32]

6. ***Wal yadribna bi khumurihinna ‘alā juyūbihinna***: This phrase has been translated in the following ways:

YA: “they should draw their veils over their bosoms”

MA: “let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms”

H&K: “to draw their veils all over *Juyūbihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks, and bosoms)”

A/M: “to draw their veils over their bosoms”

The translations of all four are not much different from each other except H&K who provide the parenthetical description. In this description, the words “bodies and faces” are added that do not necessarily correspond with the meaning of the word in the verse. *Juyūb* is the plural of *Jayb* and means “bosoms, breasts, cavity, and opening.”³³[33]

MA made some remarks in the last part of his comment *38 that need to be addressed. He argues that “the injunction to cover the bosom by means of a *khimār* does not necessarily relate to the use of a *khimār* as such,” but it only meant to clarify that the women’s breasts should be covered. This argument can be interpreted in two ways. If it is meant to confirm the necessity of covering the bosom, it is fine. However, if MA has tried to say that the intent is to cover only the breasts, then the meaning of both the words *Jayb* and *Khimār*, as explained earlier cannot support it.

Conclusion

In reviewing the translations of the verses with the Friday prayers injunction, among the four translators, YA and A/M have provided detailed and useful commentary for these verses. YA provides a good introduction about the Friday prayer and a useful comparison to the Judeo-Christian weekly religious days. A/M has explained the verses with useful fiqh details. MA has minimal commentary, but enough to clarify some of the major points. H&K do not offer any commentary on these verses except some parenthetical words within the translated text in order to clarify the meaning.

In reviewing the translations of the verses with the women’s dress code injunction, among the four translators, YA has provided much of the necessary details in his commentary to explain and clarify the subject. While the other three translators have tried to expound, each one of them has made some statements that needs to be clarified and addressed. Such a theme-based approach to assess the translations of the Qur’an can highlight some meaningful differences

among the translators and can identify the need for certain qualifications in the expertise of the translators.

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- 34[1] Muñir Ba‘lbakī, *Al-Mawrid Arabic-English Dictionary*, (Beirut, Dār al- ‘Ilm Lilmalāyīn, 1998), p.483.
- 35[2] ‘Imrān Aḥsān Khan Nyazee, *Islamic Jurisprudence* (Islamabad: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), p.161.
- 36[3] (24:51-52).
- 37[4] (33:36).
- 38[5] Jamāl al-Dīn Zarabozo, *The Friday Prayer* (Islamic Assembly of North America, 1994), p.1.
- 39[6] Wāil khayrū, *Speaking for Change: A Guide to Making Effective Friday Sermons* (Maryland: Amana Publications, 1998), p.1.
- 40[7] For example: As-Sayyed Sābiq, *Fiqh Al-Sunnah* (American Trust Publications, 1996).
- 41[8] For example: Abdul Ḥamīd Tahmaz, *Al-Fiqh Al-Ḥanafī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1998).
- 42[9] Abū Bakr Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām Al-Qu’rān*, vol.5 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ alTurāth al-‘Arabī, 1985), p.340.
- 43[10] Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*, vol.4 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1982), p.1805.
- 44[11] Ba‘lbakī, *Al-Mawrid Arabic-English Dictionary*, p. 454.
- 45[12] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām Al-Qu’rān*, vol.5, p.245.
- 46[13] It is based on the following ḥadīth: “O ‘Alī! Do not follow up with another look after the (inadvertent) first look. The first is forgiven but not the second.” (Reported by Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, and Abū Dāwūd).the full source of the ḥadīth?
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- 47[14] Jamāl Badawī, *The Muslim Woman's Dress* (Indiana: MSA, 1980), p.5.
- 48[15] Ayūb A. Ḥamīd, *Unveiling the Commands: The Truth about Hijāb, Jilbāb and Khimār* (Ontario: Bayān Communications and Publications, 2004), p.10.
- 49[16] See *Cambridge Ancient History*, III, 107. Detailed source?
- 50[17] Badawī, *The Muslim Woman's Dress*, p.6.
- 51[18] ‘Abd Braḥman Doi, *Women in Sharī’a* (London: Ṭāhā Publishers, 1989), p.25.
- 52[19] Ḥamīd, *Unveiling*, p.26.
- 53[20] Al-Fayrūz Abādī, *Al-Qamūsu al-Muḥīṭ* (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2003).
- 54[21] Muḥammad Fawad Al-Barazi, *Hijābul Muslima* (Riyādh: Maktab Adwa Assalaf, 1995), p.36.
- 55[22] Muhammad Naṣr al-Dīn al-Bānī, *Hijābul Mar’at-il-Muslimah Fil-Kitāb Wassunnah* (Beirut: Al-Maktabul Islāmī, 1969).
- 56[23] Ḥamīd, *Unveiling*, p.26.
- 57[24] Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li al-Ṭibā‘a wa al-Nashr, 1955), p.139.
- 58[25] Ayūb Ḥamīd, *Unveiling*, p.18.
- 59[26] Al-barazi, *Hijābul*, p.33.
- 60[27] Sheikh Aḥmad Kutty. <http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/FatwaEAskTheScholar>, accessed on October 20, 2007.
- 61[28] Ibid.
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62[29] Al-Bānī, *Hijābul*.

63[30] Abdul Ḥalīm Abu Shuqah, *Tahrīr Al-Mar'a fī 'Asr Risālah*, vol.4 (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1990).

64[31] Sayyed Mutawallī al-Darsh, *Muslim Women's Dress: Hijāb or Niqāb* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1997).

65[32] Al-Barazī, *Hijābul* pp.143-238.

66[33] Muḥammad Mohar 'Alī, *A Word for Word meaning of the Qur'an*, vol.2 (Oxford: Jam'iyat Iḥyā' Minhāj al-Sunnah, 2003), p.1116.
