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Wearing Of Hijab Not Required By Quran: Egyptian Scholar

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By Khalid Hasan

WASHINGTON: A leading Arab Islamic scholar has said that neither the Qur'an nor the authentic Sunnah demand that women wear the hijab or cover their hair.

"There is no specific verse that obliges women to wear headscarves, but you find verses setting the broad lines for public modesty or decency," according to Gamal El-Banna, brother of Hasan El-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Writing in the magazine Egypt Today, El-Banna lays to rest the controversy over the increasing use of hijab by explaining that there is no Quranic authority or injunction for donning the hijab. He writes, "The Qur'an states: 'And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent and to draw their veils over the bosoms (24:31)'. If the Qur'an wanted to oblige women to cover their hair, it would have stated it very clearly. Why would the Qur'an resort to expressions that have a variety of interpretations? The fact is that the Qur'an can be understood directly without resorting to interpretation if it couldn't, we would have clergy to lead us."

In his book al-Hijab, El-Banna declares that the veil is not an Islamic tradition, but a pre-Islamic one. He bases this view on the research he has completed on the Arab world prior to the advent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). In those days, he says, Arab women covered their heads and left the upper parts of their chest uncovered. He concludes that the Quranic verse commands women to cover their chests, not their heads.

According to El-Banna, the Prophet (PBUH) improved the status of women as much as he could given his cultural milieu. He also opened the door for further aspects of emancipation. However, the Arab society was reluctant to tolerate this new reality, so many of them started to make up ahadith that would maintain the status quo. Similarly, El-Banna says, there is no religious foundation that prevents women running for any elected office, including the presidency.

El-Banna dismisses accusations that he is calling on the faithful to abandon the Sunnah, but insists that the orally transmitted traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) are less binding on Muslims than the Qur'an itself. "We cannot deny the Sunnah, even though it has been proven that most of the sayings attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) have been made up, were narrated in other people's words or were transmitted inaccurately. This does not mean that there are no true sayings that set many Islamic fundamental principles; what it does mean is that it's high time to study the Sunnah in a different way," El-Banna says.

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?p...13-8-2006_pg1_4

Interestingly, I was watching Islam Today a few days back and something similar was said by the host. Anyone with insight into this matter, pls shed some light.

[img]http://i103.photobucket.com/albums/m157/FlameofLife/Pakistan_Zindabad_by_creativefadcop.jpg[/img]

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