



### **Islamic dress for women: the essential guide**

Muslim attitudes towards the appearance of women are rooted not in repression and subservience, but in a strong sense of public versus private – of what is due to God and what is due to one's husband and family.

This is based on religion in the sense that the Qur'an includes a blueprint for social behaviour. In particular, it admonishes women to "guard their modesty ... and not display their beauty" except to their husbands, fathers and some other relatives and family.

But there is a good deal of debate within Islam about what preserving modesty should entail, especially in terms of interpretations of the Hadith (the Prophet's sayings).

In one of these the Prophet Muhammad is quoted as declaring that "if the woman reaches the age of puberty, no part of her body should be seen but this – and he pointed to his face and hands".

From this and other references, most Muslims would agree that women's dress must cover the entire body, with the exception of the face and the hands; and it should not be so form-fitting as to reveal the shape of the body, or so eye-catching as to attract undue attention from men.

But it's still open to debate and interpretation – some abayas can be pretty eye-catching, for instance, with expensive and genuinely impressive adornments or a style that allows the wearer's stylish trousers, jeans and footwear to appear regularly. And people with different traditions and different interpretations come to the UAE, which is why so many alternative styles can be seen in Abu Dhabi.



~~Copyright © 2009 by [unclear] All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.~~