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„Religion as Faith? Education Purdah and Modernity

An Ethnographic Study of Islamabad's Madrassah Jamia Hafsa“

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Notes for the reader:

In order to ensure confidentiality and conceal the identity of the interlocutors of the present study, they have been given aliases.

No specific system of transliteration is followed. For convenient reading most simple spellings have been devised for the Urdu and Arabic words. Diacritics are avoided in most of the cases except for the Urdu alphabets “hamza” and “ayn”, which are marked here by an apostrophe for the convenience of nonspecialists.

In a few cases where the Urdu terms are derived from Arabic, the latter has also been mentioned, e-g, Urdu: mazhab – Arabic madhab.

In case of the words that have a ‘broken’ plural, plural is formed by adding ‘-s’ to the singular form.

All translations for the original Arabic Quranic texts have been borrowed from the translations by Yusuf Ali, using the following weblink:
http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch

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ABSTRACT

Dress is an important component of material culture that symbolizes and communicates a hybrid of traditions; social and cultural values; economic status; religious and political ideologies. It involves transmission of certain signals on the part of wearer and their reception and interpretation from the viewer. This transmission, reception and interpretation are based on the cognitive structures of the wearer and the observer and may not necessarily be in harmonious relationship with each other, resulting in a controversial interpretation. The veil is one example of such disharmonic interpretation of the phenomenon by the Eastern wearer and the Western observer. The present study attempts at a theoretical explanation of one form of purdah called burqa, by presenting an ethnographic case study of women's dressing in an Islamic school in Pakistan. Purdah may be defined as a regional appellation of veil specific to South Asia. This topical field, like veil, has attracted a plethora of intriguing studies in the social sciences due to its socio-politico-religious aspects. The choice of Islamic school for the study owes to the fact that in contemporary times, the veil is primarily being associated with Muslim women and as a religious decree. The study reveals that women at the madrassah not only study religion but also that their uniform dress is an expression of religion worn religiously. In the absence of any formal instructions about institutional uniform, the burqa reflects itself not only as a learned behaviour but as what is termed as "social fact" in the Durkhemian sense. The present thesis establishes that purdah is symbolic of a form of religiosity that claims modesty. It explains purdah as dynamic clothing that has both symbolic and functional value for the wearer and the observance of which authenticates the identity of Muslim women.

ZUSSAMENFASSUNG

Kleidung ist eine wesentlicher Bestandteil materieller Kultur. Sie symbolisiert und kommuniziert Traditionen, die oft hybrider Art sind, soziale und kulturelle Werte, ökonomischen Status und religiöse und politische Ideologien. Kleidung vermittelt gewisse Zeichen seitens ihrer TrägerInnen, die durch BeobachterInnen rezipiert und interpretiert werden. Das Senden, Empfangen und Interpretieren solcher Zeichen ist bedingt durch kognitive Strukturen von TrägerIn und BeobachterIn, die nicht notwendigerweise miteinander in Harmonie sind; dies kann zu kontroversen Interpretationen führen. Der von muslimischen Frauen getragene Schleier ist ein Beispiel für eine solche disharamonische Interpretation durch östliche Trägerin und westliche BeobachterIn. Die vorliegende Untersuchung unternimmt anhand einer ethnographischen Feldstudie von Frauenbekleidung in einer islamischen Schule in Pakistan den Versuch einer theoretischen Interpretation einer konkreten Form von purdah, die burqa genannt wird. Purdah kann definiert werden als eine südasiatische regionale Bezeichnung der Verschleierung. Dieses Themenfeld hat, wie der Schleier überhaupt, wegen seiner zugleich sozialen, politischen und religiösen Bezüge eine Vielzahl faszinierender Untersuchungen hervorgebracht. Die Wahl einer islamischen Schule als Rahmen für die vorliegende Forschung ist dem Umstand begründet, dass der Scheier heute vor allem mit muslimischen Frauen assoziiert wird, die eine bestimmte Form der Religionsausübung praktizieren. Die Untersuchung zeigt, dass die Frauen in der madrassah nicht nur religiöse Studien betreiben, sondern dass ihre gleichförmige Kleidung ein Ausdruck „getragener Religion“ ist. Da es für die der madrassah angemessene Kleidung keinerlei formelle Regeln gibt, bildet das Tragen der burqa nicht nur ein erlerntes Verhalten, sondern einen „fait social“ im Durkheimschen Sinn. Die vorliegende Arbeit belegt, dass purdah eine Form der Religiosität symbolisiert, in deren Mittelpunkt der Anspruch auf „Sittsamkeit“ steht. Sie erklärt purdah als eine dynamische Form der Kleidung, die für die Trägerinnen sowohl symbolischen als auch funktionalen Wert besitzt und deren Beachtung, so wird angenommen, die Identität der muslimischen Frauen verbürgt.

PROLOGUE:

"Ninjas" is a metaphoric reference used often in the urban settings of Pakistan for women covered head to toe in black but without any warring qualities. The ninjas chosen for the present research, however, are different from the rest. With their six feet long sticks they are "the black brigade of the red mosque". With this public image, it was only normal that I was a bit frightened to enter the field, and mentally prepared for all sorts of reactions: rejection, aggression or skepticism. Well-prepared with my research proposal I went to discuss it with the madrassah authorities. A group of five or six bearded men sitting near the gate directed me to the place where the principal was, simultaneously warning me that masons soon would come to work. At that time I could not recognize "the warning" but it dawned soon after that I had entered into a world where the conception of purdah is if not entirely than significantly different from my own. I moved into the main courtyard and appreciated the purdah oriented architecture: windows with frosted glass and curtains to prevent outsiders from peeping inside; the lecture rooms with their small window openings to the room where male lecturers sat; the canteen with its rotating window; I heard the announcement on the loud speaker requesting all "sisters" for "purdah ka ahtamam"[1] so that the masons could pass through. A hustle and bustle started soon after, most of the girls ran to hide themselves inside the nearest rooms, those who were in the way clad in black robes and covered head to toe, pulled a veil over their face. While everybody was repeating the announcement to every girl they came across, it was interesting to see how carefully each woman made sure that nobody among them appeared with their face unveiled in front of men. At the same time, no one told me to cover my face. After the men had passed through, however, the girls I were with at the reception commented "so you do not observe purdah!" Being covered head to toe myself I was quite surprised by this comment. My response was "I do" only to know that this is not *shara'i purdah*[2]. Even

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[1] It means to observe shara'i purdah, a pre-condition mentioned whenever there is a possibility of men-women encounter.

[2] *Shari'a* is not a static concept as is believed by the women at the madrassah. Engineer points out the two most common misconceptions regarding *shari'a*, one that it is considered as "totally divine" and second that it is regarded "immutable" (Engineer, 1992:6).

before my actual research began, a set of messages thus was conveyed to me through these very first interactions: the very first announcement, the very first observation of the black burqa clad women and the glimpse of the closed architecture showed me that there is a whole body of knowledge, values and practices that needs to be explored. There is a specific dress code that needs to be followed; the rules of which have to be observed by group members, while an "outsider" may not follow them. *Shara'i purdah*, expressed through the black burqa and appending face veil as its most prominent features, is the subject matter of the present thesis.

1 INTRODUCTION:

Clothing poses an interesting aspect of social and cultural studies. Different people dress differently because dresses are culture-oriented, value-based and perform multi-faceted functions. There are professional dresses like the doctor's white gown, the lawyer's black coat; there are institutional dresses for example different colleges maintain a specific and uniform dress code: there is pop-dress-culture, for instance, the jeans culture: and then there are the religious dresses, the veiled Muslims, the nuns with their headdresses and the priests with their robes; in all its manifestations it reflects occupation, status, affiliation to an ideology and worldview of the wearer; it is a marker of identity. In short, embedded in our dress is a whole value system; we are enculturated to wear a certain type of clothing.

Clothing like all the other forms of material culture is a reflection of the society and people among whom it is worn. It is not mere cloth but cloth worn in appropriation to a value system established by a society. The code of dress thus developed over a period of time corresponds to all the potent variants; culture and tradition, values and ideals, religion and rituals, ceremonies and celebrations, profession, gender and space etc. The conformity to this value system renders an identity expressed through dressing. Dress, then operates as a means of "visual communication". This communication, argue Barnes and Eicher (1992: 1), takes place even before the "verbal" one to establish if communication is possible at all. This symbolic communication or interaction renders clothing "meanings" and consequently "the ways that people use and relate to the clothing as material culture becomes meaningful" (Shirazi, 2000: 115). The dress then like language becomes a characteristic peculiar to human beings who use them for "social dialogue" (Andrewes, 2005: 20). Greybill and Arthur also stress this intrinsic characteristic of dress as an "effective means of non-verbal communication during social interaction" while discussing the female dress code of Mennonite communities (1999: 9).

As discussed above clothing and dressing performs numerous functions simultaneously, physical and symbolic, it helps conceal or reveal body contours; determine the social positioning and economic status of the wearer; is a marker of identity on both levels, individual as well as group. Clothing while a well-known and well-comprehended

feature within a particular group or a society sometimes does not communicate the same symbols to a foreign observer. In the following paragraphs I would explain the veil of Muslim women as a miscommunicated form of clothing among "the others".

1.1 Arriving at the topic

Pakistani society reflects a wide diversity in clothing and consequently varied degrees of purdah observance precisely in terms of head and body covering. The opinion about purdah in dress, that is, how much should be covered and when may vary but body and head covering is a well-understood notion. The purdah system although a well-internalized issue by the members of the society is taken for granted; the diverse manifestations seldom raising any queries by the observers. It was only after my arrival in Europe that I realized how conspicuous covering the head could be in a foreign context. Often accompanied by a friend who donned scarf, it was rather hard to ignore people's apprehensions caused by the little piece of head covering; often reserved sometimes even intimidated by her covered head most of them would come up with several questions as soon as the line of formality diminished; questions like why does she cover her hair? Has she chosen to wear the scarf herself? Has her parents forced her to wear one? Does she not feel uncomfortable? Whether all the women in Pakistan are supposed to cover themselves similarly? And many related and similar questions regarding this sartorial code. The ambiguity that covering of the head carried and the questions it arose in the minds of many people that we met were too obvious and frequent to be ignored. It suggested that clothing is context relevant; the various forms of clothing as a sign are questioned, speculated, evaluated and interpreted when in a foreign context. The veil, a broad term that refers to all the regional appellations of head, face and full body covering, seemed more conspicuous, more controversial, more provoking and often revealing a communication gap between the wearer and the observer. The communicative feature of the dress in this case seemed not to work the same for both the wearer and the observer. These situations and the consequent frequent explanation of the veil with reference to culture and religion led to the reading of the relevant literature, which too seemed fraught with debates and ambiguities and only made the interest grow deeper. The veil of all the various forms of clothing seemed the most controversial and stereotyped one. Following is a brief overview of why and how the veil has been stereotyped over the years.

1.2 The Stereotyped Veil or Veil: The Stereotype[3]

Despite the versatility of veil and evidences of its occurrence in relation to different cultures and religions across history in the modern global era, the veil has been reduced to Muslim women's body especially the head coverings. The predicament lies not in the reduction in meaning but in the misconception and misinterpretation of symbolic significance of the practice. Hirschmann points out the dilemma of veil that despite the fact that it is depicted in a variety of ways in diverse cultures what is "fairly universal is Western reaction to it" which sees it as an "inherently oppressive practice" (1997: 467). This misinterpretation can theoretically be explained through the notion of "symbolic interaction", "a two way interaction: appearance management and appearance perception." If the message conveyed by the wearer does not correspond with the one perceived by the observer, the "intended messages" lose their meanings (Shirazi, 2000: 115). This is what has caused the conflict; the perceptions of the observers often from the west regarding the veil do not correspond to that of the wearers.

The emergence of this conflict has a long history, dating back to the colonial period (Papanek, Elguindi, Killain: 1971, 1999, 2003). Veil, in any of its various forms, was taken as a sign of backwardness. Thus, the "British and French colonizers encouraged Muslim women to remove the veil and emulated European women" (Killain, 2003: 570). Elguindi writing with reference to Algeria suggests that the attempts to unveil the local women by the French colonizers may be taken as steps to "modernize Algeria to match the colonists' taste" (1999: 170). She continues to argue that such attempts were aimed to "control and uproot" the colonized culture (ibid). Talking particularly with reference to South Asia Papanek informs that it was during this time that missionaries, journalists and indigenous reformers showed interest in certain features of women's life in South Asia including the peculiar purdah[4] system of the region. According to her, "these people saw the purdah system as one of the major iniquities of a backward society, which it often was, but their approach was not very conducive to a systematic

[3] This review has already been published by Abid, 2009: 47-50

[4] The purdah system refers to seclusion of women from public space through concealing dress and restricting mobility.

understanding of the relationship between men and women in South Asian societies" (1971: 517,518).

Starting with the colonization till present day the Islamic veil is being targeted as symbol of backwardness and oppression of women. Emma Tarlo points out the role of the academia in stereotyping the image of veil. The interest in the study of veil owes to the fact that it is considered as a part of dress of the "others" and in the academia any phenomenon related to "other" and different form the "self" has always grabbed more curiosity of the researchers and scholars. Tarlo argues the same; according to her different academic disciplines including anthropology is influenced more by western than eastern and despite efforts for objectivity, there are traces of subjective opinions (1996: 1). In another article, she points out media's portrayal of the Islamic dress a sign of "religious extremism", "backwardness" and even "terrorism" and the negative impact of these stereotypes on those who dress similarly but hold different opinion. (2005: 13) Likewise, Elguindi misses "scholarly discussions" on veil in articles about veil rather what she finds is the practice being "attacked, ignored, dismissed, transcended, trivialized or defended". She also points to media's hostility towards veil in the name of "humanism, feminism or human rights" (1999: xi).

Several scholarly articles suggest that western ideology feminism has further helped stereotyping veil as restricting women and negating them their freedom (Hirschmann, Elguindi, Saharso: 1997, 1999, 2008). Veil is perceived as a tool of oppression and subjugation of women used by the patriarchal systems to maintain male superiority and authority over women (Elguindi, 1999: 3). The reason for this thought being many, the primary being the notions of freedom in these patriarchal societies and the issue of human agency is different compared to the western ones where individualism is the supreme priority. Feminists encourage the study of not only external forces of the patriarchal system but also the internal forces that will impose sexist restrictions and "produce people who will support and perpetuate its power by wanting the "right" things" limiting the freedom of women. They fail to realize that notions of "freedom" and "feminism" based on western ideology feminism may not hold true for Eastern women. Thus, what is a tool of oppression for the western women is a tool to practice and manipulate power by the Eastern. Thus, she writes "the veil can be seen as a tool of women's agency in that it allows women to negotiate the strictures of patriarchal

custom to gain what they want, to assert their independence, to claim their own identity" (Hirschman: 1997: 461-488).

The misunderstanding, stereotyping, and the never ending inconclusive debates about the Islamic veil naturally had serious repercussions. A traditional practice with its roots embedded in religion, acting as a means to maintain women's agency in a given society was started being used as a tool to meet political ends. Elguindi discusses this function of veil during the colonial era when the colonizers promoted integration in a way that required major changes to be brought about among the colonized cultures and not theirs. While discussing the revolutionary role of veiling in Algeria she considers it as a reaction to the French colonizers efforts of gallicization. It became a strategy to maintain indigenous identity (Elguindi, 1999).

Just as Islamic veil is continued to be targeted so has the reactions to it. Muslims communities all over the world now use veil as an expression disapproving western values. Veil is a political tool to "reaffirm tradition and culture." For example, in Iran the resurgence of veil was a reaction to the "Westernizing crusade" by Reza Shah who banned the veil in 1936 (Elguindi, 1999). Shirazi confirms that veiling has always been a part of Iranian culture and was not introduced but only revived with the inception of Islamic Revolution. Veiling in post revolutionary Iran was emphasized on the grounds that it would help "distinguish revolutionary Islamist women from corrupt (westernized) women from the previous regime" (2000: 119). She quotes MacLeod to present similar cases in Turkey and Palestine where veil is actually an "outward expression of their anti-Western sentiment" (2000: 118).

In West where Muslim population exists as a minority the stance against Muslim veil has taken even a more serious shape. The popular perception distinguishes between the Muslim veil and other forms of veil whereas "….a French woman with a scarf is chic, ….a Muslim woman with a scarf is a threat to civilization."[5] The Muslim veil is discriminated against often directly in countries following rules of assimilation for example France where Muslim veil is considered a threat to national identity and indirectly in those that are pluralist as is in the case of England (Poulter, 1997: 43-74).

[5] Poulter quotes from Muslim Minorities in the West (London, 1995; 5)

Saharso fears that "the negative image of Islam prevalent in many European societies today may lead Islamic communities again to revert to traditional Islamic values." (2008: 8) Tarlo brings into light even a more serious reaction, that is, counter stereotyping. Presenting the case of England she points out how some radical Islamist organizations are using the stereotyped Muslim veil to meet their political goals. The stereotyped image of the veiled Muslim woman is used to build counter stereotype of Western woman as "the real victim of patriarchy and oppression", as highly vulnerable and because of her "revealing clothes and bodily exposure". Emphasizing "otherness" they promote veil as a "shield against the corrupting forces of 'integration' and a tool on the path towards the establishment of an Islamic state" She emphasizes the expansion of anthropological study of stereotypes, whereby stereotypes are "taken seriously as a social fact" and not only their "production" but also the "generation and circulation of counter stereotypes" is explored. (2005: 13-14). In the light of this review it is evident that veil in the present times is regarded as a practice specific to Muslims. The following research question was developed to understand the veil as a form of religious dress

1.3 Research Question:

If a religious decree, how is purdah (veil) observance, defined, illustrated and regulated in Islamic schools and what meaning and significance does purdah (veil) observance hold for the girls who study religion there?

1.4 Objectives and Significance of the Study:

It is with this background of veil as a stereotyped dress that the present ethnographic study aims to explore veil/ purdah using primarily an emic approach to document the significance of it for those who observe it. The emic approach is reasoned on the grounds argued by Mahmood, that is, to be able to analyze a practice, including those that one considers "objectionable", in a "morally and politically informed way", it is "important to take into consideration the desires, the motivations, commitments and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important" (2001: 225). It is important to note here that even when the veil is shown as cultural and traditional practice in Muslim societies the fact that its roots are embedded in religion cannot be ignored. Interestingly enough, despite this link between veil and religion, so far there

has been no exclusive study on veiling as practiced by those girls/women who study religion. In Pakistan the all concealing burqa is not particular to women from madrassah (Islamic school), however the particularity of these women in covering themselves completely and uniformly in the absence of a uniform dress code, suggests a causative connection between madrassah and their dress and poses an interesting topic for study. The present study is unique and significant in the sense that it attempts to fill in this gap in the literature available on the subject.

The objectives of the study are targeted to achieve goals that will make significant contribution in the academia. In doing so it will help better understand a dress form that is so widely prevalent and yet greatly misunderstood. It focuses on the dress pattern of women in a well-established and renowned madrassah namely Madrassah Jamia Hafsa, located in the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad. The research aims to study:

- The ideology behind the establishment of women's madrassah.
- The identity inculcated by the madrassah and its relation to the wider society in general.
- The use of religious literature for establishment of a particular identity, which also includes analyzing the relationship between madrassah and purdah.
- To understand the notion of purdah in relation to the wider worldview of the madrassah as a religious school.
- The popular discourse regarding purdah taught and discussed in the madrassah and its significance for the students in their daily lives.
- To understand the role of purdah as a gendered dress and its role in gender construction

The main focus of the research is purdah in dress observed in a women's madrassah. In order to present a complete picture and detailed analysis it was important to study the notion of purdah in relation to its context. Therefore, the study outlines a brief ethnography of the madrassah as an educational institution. In doing so it contributes to the study of religious education in general and sacralization of a specific form of dress in particular; making significant contribution to both anthropology of religion and anthropology of dress. In discussing purdah as a dress worn in relation to a particular

ideology the study focuses on the vital functions of dress; the visual communication (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 1); the formative function which requires the wearer to act in a culturally appropriate manner (Andrewes, 2005:3) and the "symbolic interaction", the transmission of signals between image management and image perception. In short, the study aims to help determine the social life of clothing and its significance in a particular setting (Kaiser, 1990: 39).

Papanek argues that "[F]or the foreign observer the experience of encountering large numbers of human beings whose faces cannot be seen is a considerable shock, and this is probably an important element in the strong feelings which foreigners usually express about purdah as an institution. Persons inside burqas are experienced as non-persons by those who are not used to seeing them, but it remains to be explored further whether the persons inside burqas also feel depersonalized, and whether they are seen as less than persons by the people who interact with them" (Papanek, 1973: 298). One of the main objectives of the present study is to explore the issue of depersonalization especially from the wearer's point of view.

Also connected to it is the notion of agency. As Hirschman points out that the notions of freedom and feminism based on western ideology feminism may not apply to the Eastern women (Hirschman, 1997). The research aims to figure out the notions of freedom and feminism that this form of dress symbolizes and the gender constructs that it signifies.

In presenting purdah as observed in madrassah in relation to the wider society the present study establishes that purdah observance in dress is expressed invariably. It also brings to light the fact that veil is a much debated issue even among Muslims, both scholars and the masses, hence the diversity in dressing in Muslim societies. There may exist lines of similarities, however, the research negates the general tendency to stereotype and cluster all the different forms of veil and varied degrees of head and body coverings as one.

1.5 Chapter Outline:

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the literature within which the study of Purdah is located. Starting with the broader notion of Material Culture Studies, it narrows down to the Anthropology of dress, further narrowing it down to Veil, a form

of dress burdened with religious, political, social, cultural and economic symbolism. Purdah is identified as a regional appellation of this form of clothing. The chapter concludes with the presentation of two theoretical models most significant to analyse purdah, Mandelbaum's Model of Men's Honour and Women's Seclusion (1988) and Papanek's Model of Purdah as creating Separate Worlds and providing Symbolic Shelter (1973).

Chapter 3 discusses in detail the combination of various qualitative research tools employed to make the most out of the research with limited resources and within less time. These primary anthropological techniques of Field work and Participant Observation lie at the core of this method mix. In order to enhance the data collection process Opportunistic/ Purposive sampling, Key Informant, Interview Guide, Open Ended Questionnaire, Focused Group Discussions, Case Studies and Secondary data analysis, were also employed. The chapter discusses the usefulness of each technique during the course of research along with a reasoning of when and why a particular technique has been used. It presents an interesting case of anthropology at home, explains the multifaceted identity of native anthropologist, the problems encountered and the benefits enjoyed.

Chapter 4 introduces the research locale, namely, Madrassah Jamia Hafsa, a women's seminary located in Islamabad, Pakistan. It discusses various features of the madrassah, including, its history, ideology, the administrative structure as well as the setup of the madrassah as a boarding house. Keeping in view the significance of visual data, the chapter offers a photographic tour of the madrassah.

Chapter 5 is divided into two parts; the first part situates the madrassah system within the wider educational structure of the society. It scrutinizes madrassah as an alternative education system co-existing with the mainstream one. The second part presents an ethnographic account of the education system in MJH. In doing so it explains how a particular religious identity is inculcated through education among the pupils studying in the madrassah.

Chapter 6 discusses the popular discourse on purdah, as perceived, taught, learnt and practiced in the madrassah. It addresses the four fundamental queries about Purdah, i.e., what, when, why and how purdah in dress is observed. The question "what" deals with

the physical features of purdah, especially with reference to dress. The question "when" discusses the contextual and conditional nature of purdah while the question "why" enumerates the physical, symbolic and functional value of Purdah. The inquiry "how" establishes that black burqa best manifests purdah in dress. These questions help to explicate the relationship between dress and gender; the role of a particular dress in constructing gender. Burqa is not mere a dress it rather shows the significance of being a woman.

Chapter 7 discusses the further extensions of purdah and explains the notion with reference to body and space. In discussing the madrassah as a gendered space it explains the architectural features used to ensure privacy and seclusion of the girls in the madrassah. The relationship of purdah to behaviour depicts the body comportment demanded of the dress.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions from the findings presented in chapters 5-7. It incorporates the emic perspective of the previous two chapters with the etic approach of the theoretical framework in an effort to better understand purdah in dress and the entailing features. It places the empirical research within a theoretical framework concerning dress, body, space, semantics and symbolism.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study tends to locate purdah as practiced in Islamic schools within the broad context of material culture studies, anthropology of dress and Purdah as a regional appellation of veil characteristic of the South Asian region. Following is an introduction to each of the three categories, starting from the broader notion of material culture, narrowing down to the dress, to veil as a much researched-upon form of dress and finally to purdah.

2.1 Material Culture Studies:

2.1.1 A Brief History:

The origin of the term material culture is rather blurring. The first known use is of a similar term "material civilization" by Prescott who applied it for Mexico in his travelogue. The term material culture was coined by the Victorians and was first used in the 19th century (Buchli, 2002: 3). During the early 19th century when Anthropology was establishing as a discipline the study of material culture lied at the core of it because of the representational characteristic of the objects (Haddon & Tylor in Miller, 1987: 110). It is also long regarded as a distinctive sub-discipline of archaeology (Bernard and Spencer, 1996: 612). With the changing political and economic scenario and the expansion of colonization anthropology was primarily concerned with preserving what was perceived as "primitive" culture. This trend of collecting, classifying and studying artefacts lasted until 1920's and resulted in "great museum collections through systematic collecting" (Tilley, 2006: 2). The study of material culture during that time formed the basis of the great paradigms of social evolution, diffusion, acculturation and change (ibid).

From 1920s, with the emphasis on field research and a shift from social evolution to structuralism and functionalism, the focus of anthropology transited from material culture to immaterial aspects of culture including social relations. Objects were considered primarily as items of utility, as "passive markers" of identity and social status and as illustrations of the fundamental aspects of social relations, political and economic systems. Material cultural studies mainly reflected upon two aspects of objects: technological and as illustrative of the fundamentals of society including social

relations, economic and political systems (ibid). During this period the material cultural studies was no longer the primary concern of anthropologists but museums where the collection and display of artefacts to "signify different people on comparative basis' was still the primary goal (ibid).

It was only after 1960's that a paradigmatic shift occurred in the field of anthropology. The interest shifted from structuralist and functionalist aspects of culture to that of the symbolic ones. With this came a renewed interest in the study of material culture with an emphasis on its social usage (Tilley, 2006: 2). At the same time in archaeology the study of artefacts gained importance as markers of identity and as reflections on the ideas of the makers. The technological aspect of artefacts still held immense importance with reference to the evolutionary studies (Tilley, 2006: 2). During this period while the focus of anthropological studies shifted from functionalist approach, archaeology made extensive use of functionalist and positivist approaches. Material culture was studied with reference to "environmental adaptation" and for facilitating the function of social systems. The growing interest in functionalism resulted in "disciplinary divergence" between anthropology and archaeology. However, it also led to development in ethno-archaeological studies and helped give shape to the material cultural studies their present shape and scope (Tilley, 2006: 3).

In anthropology material culture gained enormous importance from 1980's with the growing interest in consumer culture (Bernard & Spencer, 1996: 612). Woodward notes that the current interest in material cultural studies is closely related to the two developments in social sciences "the profusion of research into consumption" and the increasing interest in "the post-structural and interpretive theories" (Woodward, 2007: 5). Given the fact that material culture arose from a wide variety of disciplines and research traditions their investigation field is rather diverse and expanded.

> "Empirically material culture studies involve the analysis of a domain of thing, or objects, which are endlessly diverse: anything from a packet of fast food to a house to an entire landscape, and either in the past or in the present, within contemporary urban and industrial cultures in the United States and Europe to small-scale societies in Africa, Asia or the Pacific." (Tilley, 2006: 2-3)

Hodder also reflects upon the diversity of material culture as "ranging from written texts to material symbols surrounding death, drama, and ritual, to shopping behaviour and to the construction of roads and airplanes" (160: 2003).

2.1.2 MCS: an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach

It is interesting to note that material cultural studies which has never really been a discipline of its own (Buchli, 2002: 3) has a long multidisciplinary history (Woodward, 2007: 17). Material culture is studied in various social sciences disciplines and denoted by a variety of terms to describe the relationship between the inanimate objects and the animate subjects. The psychoanalytic theorists use the term "object relations", the sociologists "the physical manifestation of culture" and the anthropologists "the objectification of social relations" (Attfield: 2003: 1). The fact that the material culture studies is undisciplined rather than disciplined is regarded as its "strength" making it "relatively unbounded and unconstrained, fluid, dispersed and anarchic rather than constricted" (Tilley, 2006:1). This allows the study of material culture to employ both an inter-disciplinary as well as a cross-disciplinary approach to study the object-human relationship. The interdisciplinary approach makes use of multiple disciplines while the cross-disciplinary approach promotes utilization of discrete studies of material culture across multiple disciplines (ibid 27). Miller proposes that the study of material culture is as an "integrative endeavour" traces of which can be found in "evolutionary thought in the 19th century", "Marxian social analysis and revolution in the early twentieth century" and "progressivist New Archaeology and Marxian social theory in the second half of the twentieth century. Though the current material culture studies lack this integrative approach nevertheless their perseverance across disciplines owes to its "persistent heterogeneity" and the ability of material culture studies to translate across not only the physical and social realms but also across disciplines (Buchli, 2002: 13). The interest in the study of material objects owes to their varied roles played in a society, some of them are discussed in the following.

2.1.3 Materiality:

The concept of materiality is central to the material culture studies. Tilley argues that although the material and the cultural have long been regarded as "fundamentally opposed" yet in order to fully understand a culture it is integral to study its material

aspects alongside the immaterial ones for example language or social relations or time or space. Material culture studies as an interdisciplinary study justifies itself on the idea that materiality is an "integral dimension of culture" which helps to comprehend fully the "social existence" (Tilley, 2006: 1). He finds materiality a rather "heterogeneous" and "ambiguous" term with plurality in meaning. "It can mean substance, something comprised of elements or constituents, of variously composed matter: the tangible, the existing or concrete, the substantial, the worldly and real as opposed to the imaginary, ideal and value-laden aspects of human existence" (Tilley, 2006: 3). It may also mean "individual things, or collections of things, rather than persons or societies". In such a definition of materiality the "object and objectivity of things stands opposed to the subject and subjectivity of the person (Tilley, 2006: 3) Contemporary material culture studies approach materiality from two angles: with objects as the main focus analysing its various properties and characteristics or alternatively the relationship between objects and subjects with "human subject" or the "social" as the starting point. The objects help to make meaning and construct identities. The material culture studies then establishes an inevitable link between the "subject" and the "object"; each reflecting the other. It emphasizes a "dialectical" and "discursive" relationship between the two: "that persons make and use things and that the things make persons" (Tilley, 2006: 4).

The concept of materiality forms the basis of all the systems of humanity as diverse as religion and finance. Miller argues that "the stance to materiality [also] remains the driving force behind humanity's attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be" (Miller, 2005: 2). The scope of materiality he argues cannot be restricted simply to the study of artefacts; it rather transcends to "ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological and the theoretical". Or as Bourdieu suggests the less tangible is grounded in the more tangible (Miller, 2005: 6).

2.1.4 Objectification:

Lying at the core of Material Cultural Studies is the concept of objectification; a closely related concept to materiality (Tilley, 2006: 60). Objectification refers to embodiment of an idea. Human beings are constantly objectifying their environment which reflects their social existence and knowledge. For Miller objectification refers to a relationship between subjects and objects: a relationship that is not static but rather works as a "process" and that it is "progressive" (Miller, 1987: 29). In this process of

objectification both the subjects as well as the objects are created (ibid). Objectification as a process not only creates but is also responsible for the development of the subject. In the words of Miller it is "a process of externalization and sublation essential to the development of a given subject" (Miller, 1987: 86). He argues that "we cannot comprehend anything, including ourselves, except as a form, a body, a category, even a dream" (Miller, 2005: 8). Tilley explains objectification as a way in which the relationship between the objects and subjects can be analysed. There exists a "dynamic", "dialectic" and "reciprocal" relationship between persons and things (Tilley, 2006: 61). Objects help to gain knowledge of one's person:

> "Personal, social and cultural identity is embodied in our persons and objectified in our things. Through the things we can understand ourselves and others, not because they are externalizations of ourselves or others, reflecting something prior and more basic in our consciousness or social relations but because these things are the very medium through which we make and know ourselves" (Tilley, 2006: 61).

2.1.5 Agency:

The study of material culture has also brought forth the quality of the objects acting as agents and effecting human interactions and cultural settings. Miller argues that "[W]here material forms have consequences for people that are autonomous from human agency, they may be said to possess the agency that causes these effects….what matters may often not be the entities themselves, human or otherwise, but rather the network of agents the relationships between them" (Miller, 2005: 11). Gell recognizes this agency of the objects as "social agency" where "persons form what are evidently social relations with 'things'" (Gell, 1998: 18). This social agency "can be invested in things" or "can emanate from things" in a variety of ways (Gell, 1998: 18). Given the definition of agent "as one who has the capacity to initiate causal events in his/her vicinity, which cannot be ascribed to the current state of the physical cosmos, but only to a special category of mental states; that is, intentions" and given that "human agency is exercised within the material world"; Gell distinguishes between the "primary agents" who are "the intentional beings" and the "secondary agents" including artefacts and material objects (Gell, 1998: 19-20). Objects in this way become "agents in

particular situations"; they are social agents whose "social agency manifests and realizes itself, via the proliferation of fragments of 'primary' intentional agents in their 'secondary' artefactual forms" (Gell, 1998: 21). His concept of agency is "relational" and "context-dependant" (Gell, 1998: 22).

2.1.6 Objects as symbols and signifiers:

The fact that "people make a sense of the world through physical objects" argues Attfield have been a motivating force for studying them (2000: 1). The objects produced and consumed by a particular society or a group of people are not simply objects of utility and/ or aesthetics; their meaning and purpose goes far beyond these apparent ones. Material Culture is in fact reflective of a particular worldview, values and beliefs, culture and tradition of the people it is used by. Its study involves a study of the use as well as the meaning and the value attached to the object as material and its use by the people. Woodward argues that objects which are commonly spoken of as material culture are "material things people encounter, interact and use".

> "The term 'material culture' emphasizes how apparently inanimate things within the environment act on people, and are acted upon by people, for the purpose of carrying out social functions, regulating social relations and giving symbolic meaning to human activity" (Woodward, 3: 2007).

The objects are laid with meanings. The representational and recognizable characteristics of objects call for their semiotic analysis. Objects act as symbols; they refer to some aspect of a particular culture and are recognized by the members of that culture (Woodward, 2007: 28). Thus according to the semiotic approach material culture is a signifier that communicates things to others, accomplishing some kind of social work (Woodworth page: 58). It is because of this semiological analysis of material culture that Tilley proposes the analysis of objects through the process of signification using the langue/ parole distinction. He argues that "the terms 'language' and 'speech', although by no means ideal, can readily be used to understand non-verbal communicative practices in general and material culture in particular". Material culture is analogous to language in the sense that both convey meanings and material objects can be regarded signs just as linguistics signs (Tilley, 1991: 18-20). Pearce also finds

the semiotic approach of Saussure useful for understanding the signification of material culture (Pearce, 1994).

Hodder, however, argues that the analogy of language fails to encompass the functional value of material culture especially in the case of the objects that acquire their meaning through "association" and "practice". The objects are not created to mean something rather for the "evocation of sets of practices within individual experience". Only a common experience of a particular object will render it with a common evocation and common meaning. According to Hodder it is rather difficult to develop "dictionaries" and "grammars" for common meanings for two major reasons. There exists a dialectic relationship between "structure and practice" of an object. The experience and evocation attached to a particular object varies from person to person. Secondly the meanings are often "implicit" and rooted in practices closely linked to "class, status, goals and aesthetics". In such cases the evocation of meaning is embedded in the knowledge built up form our practical associations (2003: 161-162). Thus, the meaning can best be articulated when studied together with the practice of a particular object.

2.1.7 Motoricity:

Motoricity is another significant aspect of material culture though it has not been employed as extensively as the meaning and values attached to the objects have been. Motoricity of material objects explain the relationship of material objects with the motor habits of the subject and lead to a better understanding of the utility, meaning and value of the object. Warnier puts it as "one step further". The idea of motoricity is not new to the study of material culture; Warnier informs that it has been introduced by Ponty some 50 years ago and only recently employed extensively in the works of Daniel Miller, Thomas Csordas, Alfred Gell to name only a few. The importance of motoricity lies in its involvement in all the techniques of the body which are "socially determined" and hence varies in different societies. Its analysis argues Warnier requires a co-ordinated approach from three different angles; "biological", "psychological" and "sociological" (2001: 5-6). The incorporation of material culture into sensori-motoricity leads to subjectivization, the material objects then act as signifier (ibid: 21).

The next section of the chapter narrows down the vast world of material objects to one aspect of material culture, that is, dress and clothing. It presents an overview of the development of the interest in study of dress in the academia.

2.2 Dress in Anthropology:

In Anthropology the study of dress is not limited to cloth and clothing; rather it extends far beyond the textile and includes as well ornaments, body modifications and adornments as significant sartorial expressions. Arthur defines dress as including not only "clothing, grooming, and all forms of body adornments" but also "behaviors related to the control of the body, such as dieting, plastic surgery and cosmetics" (Arthur, 2005: 94-95). The term dress has been most comprehensively defined by Eicher and Roach-Higgins as "an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by persons in communicating with other human beings" (1992b: 15). The codes of dress include "visual as well as other sensory modifications (taste, smell, sound and feel) and supplements (garments, jewelry and accessories) to the body which set off either or both cognitive and affective processes…" (Eicher, 1995: 1). They argue that the "[D]ress, so defined, includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body supplements" (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992a: 1). Having given this all encompassing definition of dress, they also advocate the use of the term dress in place of other terms frequently used in Anthropology like appearance, ornaments, clothing, apparel, costume and fashion, believing that the term dress is best suited for the description of clothes, clothing, modifications and ornamentations. Nevertheless, a variety of terms have been used interchangeably during the course of development in anthropological interest in the study of dress. This development is briefly outlined in the following paragraphs:

The study of clothing and dress is not a "separately identifiable" branch of anthropology. Like the material cultural studies it is inter as well as multidisciplinary. It has been considerably influenced by the interdisciplinary studies of the dressed body including "dress/costume history", "design/art history", "social economic history", "representation and textual analysis in cultural and media studies". Despite these influences the anthropological study of dress was marked by its distinct features; the

holistic as well as the cross-cultural analysis of dress and deciphering their symbolic and cultural meanings (Hansen, 2004: 370). It is important to note here that the distinctive anthropological interest in sartorial expressions is only a recent phenomenon. Historical texts reveal that human beings have always been interested in adorning and changing their body forms through the use of "clothing, paint, or jewelry and even alter the shape of their body parts (Barnes and Eicher, 1992 :1). Despite this general tendency of paying attention to one's bodily adornment, dress has not been given due importance by anthropologists until only recently. Jones informs that the first documentation of dress styles and ornaments comes from the accounts of explorers and travelers. These earliest writings showed an interest not only in the material aspect of the dress but also understanding them. This initial interest led to the inclusion of the study of dress in anthropology (Jones, 2005: 24). Taylor argues that ethnographic studies had always been interested in the holistic study of human societies from beliefs to social values to a detailed assessment of the artefacts. Central to this study lays the analysis of clothing and textiles but this has not been the case during the initial years of the discipline (Taylor, 2002: 193). Steele argues that the basic fact that virtually all humans wear clothes on a daily basis was perhaps too obvious to be noticed; it faded into the background of ordinary behavior (Steele, 2005: xvii). Elguindi notes a similar shortfall in the interest and states that "relatively little attention has been given to the study of dress as a topic in and of itself in anthropology….perhaps because of the relatively secondary significance attached to dress in comparison with other aspects of society and culture, such as kinship, law, marriage, religion, etc." (Elguindi, 1999: 49). In the earlier years of the discipline, the study of dress was merely descriptive lacking an in-depth analysis notes Ronald Schwartz (Taylor, 2002: 195). For the lack of specialization in the study, Barnes holds responsible the research methodology established by the Royal Anthropological Institute's handbook to field whereby "clothing fell under the general category of material culture and although items were carefully collected and identified, little real interest was shown in trying to understand their coded meanings and cultural functions" (Barnes in Taylor, 2002: 195). Steele holds a rather different position. Speaking broadly about the study of dress, irrespective of the discipline, she argues that a descriptive and historical study of dress started as earlier as the nineteenth century and it is only that in recent studies have been revolutionized "as scholars from the other disciplines began exploring the intersections

between the dress, body, and the cultural construction of identity" (Steele ed. 2005: xvi, xvii).

The study of dress in its earlier times is somewhat scattered. In their attempt to trace the writings on dress among earlier works, Eicher and Roach-Higgins quote Spencer's article on dress in The Principles of Sociology (1879) as one of the earliest writings on the topic (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b, 24 n.6). His first venture into the topics of dress, however, occurs as early as 1854 in his essay 'Manners and Fashion' but it was not until the Volume II of The Principles of Sociology that he attempts a comprehensive explanation of the two phenomena, dress and fashion (Carter, 2003: 19). Being an evolutionist Spencer's treatment of the dress carries an evolutionary stance; he studied the different types of dress, categorized them and then fitted them along the evolutionary scale. His main focus was to search "for types of dress that distinguished primitive people from nineteenth century western Europeans, whom he considered to be representatives of higher level of social evolution (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b: 24 n.6). Another important feature of Spencer's study of dress is the role of dress in "social patterns of authority and deference in human encounters" (ibid).

For George Darwin the evolution of dress occurs simultaneously with the evolution of the species. He uses the concept of evolution to describe "change" and believes that "the law of progress holds good in dress and forms blend into one another with almost complete continuity" (Darwin, G. in Johnson, Torntore and Eicher, 2003: 91). He defines dress as "garments and accessories" and the term fashion as "the love of novelty and extraordinary tendency which men have to exaggerate any peculiarity". Applying the concept of sexual selection to fashion and dress, G. Darwin argues that through fashion selection only those forms of dress that are beneficial and functional remain in existence while the rest are wiped out (ibid: 91). His work relies heavily on his father Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory. The latter in his book "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex" attributes the "development in dress by both sexes to a general inborn similarity in the mind of "man". He perceives the difference paid to attention in dress by both sexes as "innate" with females reflecting a "greater delight" in dress related activities as compared to the men. He further elaborates his position on dress later in his other book "The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals" where he argues that female show a "greater sensitivity to others views of

dress than do men". According to Eicher and Roach-Higgins such an argument carries along "rudimentary social-psychological" connotations (1992b: 24, n.7).

However, not all social evolutionists mention dress while theorizing the social evolutionary process. Morgan, for example does not discuss dress even in his commentary on organisation of the society on the basis of sex and how dress may influence this social organisation or the interpersonal conduct. In his book Ancient Society, the chapter on social organisation on the basis of sex, reflects "his special interest in kinship designations almost exclusively in the discussion of this topic". Eicher and Roach-Higgins take a note of "what he perceived as material and non-material progress made in each of the six stages of social evolution that culminated in the attainment of the seventh stage: civilization". The initial six stages are divided into savagery and barbarism, each donated three levels. Analysing from his mental mapping Eicher and Roach -Higgins extract how dress for Morgan fits into this evolutionary scheme; "he saw humans entering the first social level of savagery naked, the first level of barbarism is skin garments, and arriving at civilization in woven garments" (ibid, 1992b: 25, n.9). Tylor too did not pay much attention to dress in his book Primitive Culture (1871) and mentioned only the changes in a few historical forms. His work on dress is set on a premise to show "cultural survival" as one of the aspects of social evolution (ibid, 1992b: 24, n.8).

The first systematic and quantitative scientific study of the dress in anthropology was perhaps that of Alfred Kroeber (1919, Kroeber and Richardson 1940). Kroeber's essay "On the Principles of Order in Civilization as exemplified by changes of fashion" published in American Anthropologist in 1919 is interesting in the sense that it neither ascribes any "external function" to the dress nor does it aim to decipher the underlying "symbolic" meanings (Carter, 2003: 88). His essay and later joint venture with his student Richardson, "Three Centuries of Women's dress fashions: a quantitative analysis" in 1940, rather promotes questioning and identifying the stimuli for change in fashion (ibid: 91). Eicher and Roach-Higgins find Kroeber's work significant in the sense that it involves "developing methods for measuring properties of dress and searching for ways to link historical fluctuations in properties of dress to fluctuations in other cultural phenomena" (1992b: 21). However, this kind of study was never been

replicated except the study by Robinson on men's trimmed beards (Elguindi, 1999: 49, Robinson, 1976).

A rather neglected work on dress is that of Crawley who was influenced by the social evolutionary theory originated in 1860's and remained a dominant paradigm for quite some time. Carter comments that the social evolutionary treatment of dress by earlier writers including Spencer and Tylor reached its pinnacle with Crawley's entry of "dress" in Encyclopedia of Religion in 1919 (Carter, 2003: 25). Crawley's work on dress reinforces the features of the evolutionary theory, the principles of survival, the comparative studies, the uniform stages of social progress from barbarism to civilization and the psychic unity. He does not explain the genesis of dress as that is too speculative for him. His scheme of social evolution of dress carries a psychological dimension to it; "when once instituted for whatever reasons or by whatever process, dress became a source of physical reaction, often complex, to a greater extent than any other material product of intelligence" (Crawley in Johnson, Torntore and Eicher, 2003: 21).

Crawley's work on dress presents speculations regarding the functions of dress termed as "hypotheses". The decorative hypothesis argues for the origin of clothing for the purpose of decoration and ornamentation, a cause that operates with "unconscious intelligence" and an "automatic feeling" (ibid: 23). He observes "in the most primitive clothing a curious interchange of concealment, protection, decoration and advertisement" (1931: 12). He attaches special significance to the decoration hypothesis and believes that "the natural man will undergo any trouble, any discomfort, in order to beautify himself to the best of his power" (Crawley: 1931: 6). He argues that "the less body body-covering…the greater the tendency to painting, scarfication, and tattooing (quotes Gautier)… having no cloth to embroider, they embroider themselves" (ibid: 22).

Crawley's protection hypothesis establishes the origin of clothing as an attempt to protect the body against the weather and environment. "Sudden falls in the temperature, rains and winds and burning sunshine, the danger of injuring the feet and the skin of the body generally when in the forest, and the need of body-armour against the attacks of insects and of dangerous animals seem obvious reasons for the invention of dress"

(ibid: 24). This hypothesis suggests that dress evolved for the purpose of fitness and balance required to keep a harmonious relationship with the environment.

The concealment hypothesis establishes that "male jealousy instituted clothing for married women". According to this hypothesis wives become the property of men and the institutionalization of modesty is a corollary to the institutionalization of clothing. "When clothing once established, the growth of women as property emphasizes its importance and increases the anatomical modesty of women" (ibid: 24). The hypothesis claims that clothing renders the body unattractive. Crawley quotes Ratzel, who wrote that "the first to wear complete clothes is not the man, who has to dash through the forest, but the married women" and infers that for Ratzel "the primary function of her dress is to render her unattractive to others, to conceal her body from other men's eyes" (Crawley, 1931: 9). Crawley, on the contrary, considers the connection between modesty and dress of little importance and believes that dress once instituted "mechanically" brings into focus the issues of modesty. It is the "possibility of attraction by mystery" that Crawley finds more significant to the concealment hypothesis and not modesty (ibid: 24). Hence, he criticizes this hypothesis on the basis that it ignores the principle possibility that concealment evokes mystery and enhances attraction.

Eicher and Roach-Higgins argue that these earlier works of dress have a considerable influence in the recent studies on the topic. The Spencerian argument that dress affects "social patterns of authority and deference in human encounters" is supported by "numerous examples of [how] different types of men's dress" which either "make clear, or reinforce, these patterns". Such proposals foreshadow the observations of later social scientists particularly Goffman who "emphasized that various types of dress serve as guides to interpersonal conduct within the daily and special "ceremonies" of life" (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b: 24, n.6). Another example of the continued influence of earlier works is that of Westermarck, who following Spencer gave considerable attention to dress in his book History of Human Marriage but unlike Spencer he restricted the discussion to "primitive" people's use of self-decoration as a way of enhancing "sexual attractiveness". His work provided a framework to the later scholars and helped set "a pattern that anthropologists generally still follow: the practice of separating dress into the two overlapping categories of ornament and

clothing" (ibid: 25, n. 10). Eicher and Roach-Higgins also notice a similarity between the "rudimentary social-psychological" viewpoint of Darwin to the present symbolic interactionists' stance that claims "people's self evaluations of their presentation of the outwardly observable self are learned through their social interactions with other people" (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 24, n.7). Notwithstanding his "downplaying of the social significance of dress, and observable survivals in it", Eicher and Roach-Higgins argue that the subsequent scholars from various disciplines followed Tylor and "included virtually obligatory sections on such survivals in their work" (1992b: 24, n. 8).

Despite that fact that these earlier works carried an influence in the later studies of dress, they however, failed to establish the study of dress as an independent field often lumping it together with the general study of material culture. The study of dress was restricted to its development in the evolutionary process or descriptive analysis of a form or changes in the form. It was only in 1960's that the marginalization of clothing studies was realized and that its value as a "basic cultural signifier" has not been properly explored (Taylor, 2002: 195). From mid-1960's anthropologists including Annette Wiener, Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Jane Schneider, Justine Cordwell, Ruth Barnes and Joanne Eicher launched a campaign to give the study of clothing its due attention (ibid: 197). The major works of this period include Dress, Adornment and the Social Order (Roach and Eicher, 1965) and The Fabrics of Culture-the anthropology of clothing and adornment (Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A Schwartz, 1979). Dress started being approached from diverse angles highlighting its functional, aesthetic and symbolic significance as well as its role in social change and individual behaviour. Scholars also started to research upon dress related consumption patterns.

The efforts that started in the year 1960's paved way for the expansion and maturation of the study of dress from 1980's till now. Hansen notes that it was in the late 1980's that the focus on dress moved from "symbolic", "structural" and "semiotic" explanations to the body. The changing focus is a result of the change in the paradigmatic shift from "social structure" to "agency and performance" (2004: 370). Anthropology is now paying due attention to the topic and is significantly adding to the growing body of literature on the subject. The new interdisciplinary journal, Fashion Theory in America and Dress in the United Kingdom have started to publish dress-

related articles from across the disciplines. The new book series Dress, Body, and Culture by Berg publishers is also making important contributions to this topic (2004: 369). The following section analyzes the recent works on dress primarily bringing into focus the interplay between the dress and the body that wears it.

2.2.1 The Dressed Body: Dress as a framework:

The body experiences the dress in a variety of ways physically, socially and sensually. Roach-Higgins and Eicher argue that "dress of an individual is an assemblage of the modifications of the body and/ or supplements to the body" (1992a: 1). The relationship between dress and body is intertwined and therefore dress cannot be studied independent of the body it is worn on. De La Haye and Wilson note that it is difficult to "to divorce analyses of fashion/dress from discussion on the human body" (1999: 2). The dressed person is a "gestalt that includes body, all direct modifications of the body itself, and all three dimensional supplements added to it" (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b: 13). Barnes and Eicher find the traces of the relationship between the body and the dress/ornamentation/adornment since earlier times. Human beings throughout the history have shown an interest to alter their appearance as well as their body form (1992: 1). They accept Crawley's protection hypothesis (explained in the previous section) but consider the functional values of dress and its implication on the wearer as extending far beyond it. For them dress carries cultural significance imbued with social values, as they state "textiles or skins as dress may be fundamentally protective, but they also have social meaning" (ibid). It renders identity, symbolizes socio-economic position and signifies power.

Another dimension to the experience of dress is the sensual effect is has on the wearer. Dress is experienced not only socially but also sensually as Barnes and Eicher argue that "dress is not only visual; it may also include touch, smell, and sound" (1992: 3). The colour, the texture, the design all have a bearing on human senses. For example certain textures on the skin may be experienced as having either a "positive" or a "negative" effect while certain textile designs may "delight" or "displease" the person wearing them. Dress in any from evokes reactions from the body it is donned on. However, in the classification system for various types of dress and their properties presented by Roach-Higgins and Eicher, one notices that the preponderance of the visual stimulus far exceeds the impact of other sensory stimuli including sound, touch,

odor and taste. The visual stimulus may be held more important since it does not require one to be in close proximity of the wearer for realization (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b: 17&18).

Of all the functions of the dress the physical, the sensual and the social, it is the social that has been studied extensively by the scholars in the recent years. Schneider discusses the function of dress in emphasizing the kinship relations. She argues that "cloth intensifies sociality not only at marriage and death but in rituals of birth, initiation, and curing, too (Schneider, 1987: 411). Referring to various case studies she establishes that cloth exchange and distribution during the rites de passage emphasize consolidation of social relations (1987:410, 411).

Goffman discusses the importance of dress with reference to social interaction. The dressed body carries out three functions: it acts as a social resource; communicates and it renders social and personal identity. As a social resource it manipulates social situations for the benefit of the body. The dressed body locates itself within a particular social and cultural setting. It also locates others on the basis of their dress within it and dress in this way is used as a means of "non-verbal communication" and forms a "shared vocabulary". The dress becomes imbued with symbolic meanings (Goffman in Arthrur, 2000: 2). Kaiser argues that this social interaction takes place within a given context - "the more complete framework or social circumstances of daily life". The context for her includes "the total appearance of the wearer, the attributes of a wearer and perceiver of dress, as well as the entire history of their relationship and the nature of the setting in which the interaction occurs" (Kaiser, 1993: 39).

The notion of social interaction emphasizes the communicative feature of dress and is mentioned in several works on the topic including Arthur, 2000 and 2005, Barnes and Eicher 1992; Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992a, Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993. Eicher labels this communicative property of dress as a "coded sensory system of non-verbal communication" (1995:1). Visual as well as sensory modifications formulate these codes, which influence both the "cognitive" and "affective processes". They are either identified or go unrecognized by the observer. The visual communication precedes the verbal one; the cognitive and effective processes resulting from this communication either facilitate or obstruct the verbal communication (ibid). The stance of visual communication borrows heavily from symbolic interactionist approach. According to

this approach clothing performs two functions; one "the negotiation of identities" (McCall, 1976) and second the "the definition of situations" (Thomas, 1923). The negotiation of identities involves two steps, identification "of" the other and identification "with" the other (Stone 1962) (Kaiser, 1983: 2). In cases where clothing symbolizes mutual definitions for a particular situation, the people involved in social interaction find it easier to communicate and identify with each other (ibid).

It is probably this communicative property of the dress that many theoreticians find dress analogous to language and derive an inspiration for a semiotic analysis of dress (for example Barthes, 1985, Lurie 1981). Entwistle and Wilson bring forth two features of dress that makes dress appear similar to language, one that both communicate, second that fashion and dress are considered as "ubiquitous to culture, a fundamental feature which defines humanity" (2001: 3). Dress seen semiotically appears as a sign, where the meaning is the signified and the embodied dress is the signifier. The "concrete" nature of clothing and its "familiarity" help in better understanding of the semiotic theory (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993: 108). Pearce in her semiotic analysis of an infantry officer's red jacket in the National Army Museum, London, utilizes Saussurians concept of langue and parole and Barthe's terms signifier and signified, to explain the significance of the jacket within its given context. She establishes that that jacket is a "signe" in Barthe's sense "uniting the message (the signified) and the physical embodiment (the signifier)" (1994: 21). Culler argues that semioticians study whatever conveys meaning to the people being studied and to document their interpretation. Whatever makes meaning to the people is meaningful for semioticians (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993: 109).

Leeds-Hurwitz regards clothing as "polysemic….capable of conveying multiple messages depending upon the audience" (1993: 114). She [quotes McCracken 1988] points to the two different sets of messages conveyed by dress and conceptualizes it as a "concrete manifestation of social reality" in both the ways it functions. The first set includes messages regarding cultural categories, cultural principles and cultural processes. Cultural categories are categories "of person defined by rank, sex, marital status, occupation and so forth". The principles refer to established rules for instance "hierarchy vs. egalitarianism" while the rites de passage and the like fall under the category of processes. The second set is about individual meanings whereby clothing

describes “social distance”, that is “shifts in tone of a relationship, mood etc.” as well as information about confirmation or initiation of a “change” (1993: 111-112). Equally meaningful do Eicher and Roach-Higgins find dress and argue that the “objectively discernable” features of dress are subjectively interpreted by a person. The interpretation also depends on the socialization of the person within a particular cultural context as well as the “improvisations” he exercises during a social situation (Roach-Higgins, 1992a: 5). Enumerating some of the “endless” “possible meanings” communicated through dress they state that “[D]ress may, for example, make a statement about age, gender, social class, school affiliation, or religion” (ibid). Barnes and Eicher enlist the essential attributes of dress as a cultural phenomenon: it defines a person’s identity historically and geographically, assigns group membership, indicates the social position, signifies power and symbolizes economic status (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 1). The present study concerns primarily with the role of dress in identity and gender construction and its relationship with religion.

During social interaction dress plays a vital role in communicating the social position of the wearer to both the wearer and the observer as Entwistle points out that dress is the “visible envelope” of the self and serves [quotes Davis] as “a visual metaphor for identity” (2001: 37). Stone uses the term “individual’s program” for the communication of self whereby he constructs his self and assessment of the observers that he termed as the “review” (Stone in Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992a: 5). Arthur argues that dress is “bound by tacit set of rules, customs, conventions and rituals that guide face-to-face communication” (Arthur, 2005: 94). Every individual learns to predict this review through experience; the accuracy of these predictions facilitates or hinders communication (Stone in Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992a: 5). This programming of the self helps a person to announce his identity in various social situations.

Identities are derived from the social positioning of an individual within a social structure. Roach-Higgins and Eicher argue that because an individual can “occupy a number of social positions and hence can have a number of identities that contribute to the total configuration of the self” (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992a: 5). These identities are constructed on both levels, personal and social; personal because “no two people encounter the same environmental circumstances, social and otherwise, for acquiring the ways of behaving that lead to establishing of identities” and social

because identities are "socially acquired "selections" from socially constructed ways of attributing identities on the basis of social positions individuals fill" (ibid). Leeds-Hurwitz notes the presence of private-public notion in clothing "clothing is the place where individual, private concerns and societal, public ones intersect, the place where we each identify a visible self within the context of the larger community" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993: 112). The personal/private and the social/public affect the body simultaneously. Mary Douglas establishes that there are actually "two bodies"; the personal and the social and explains the relationship between the two. "The social body constraints the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of the society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other" (Douglas, 1973: 93 in Entwistle, 2001: 37).

The influence of the social on the personal reflects that clothing is not mere representation of the self but a code that is followed within a particular social setting. Kress points to the various constraints a person faces when he/she dresses including financial, weather and social ones, and argues that a person is restricted by this code, by both conformation as well as contravention to the code (Kress, 1989: 15). Goffman recognizes the body as both "the property of the individual and the social world". The body is the carrier of identity which needs to be "managed" in accordance with "the definitions of the social situation which impose particular ways of being on the body" (Goffman in Entwistle, 2001: 47). The social situation settles codes for the body; Entwistle notices the presence of this code in all social situations, formal as well as informal and states "[M]ost situations, even the most informal, have a code of dress and these impose particular ways of being on bodies in such a way as to have a social and moral imperative to them" (2001: 48).

The codes of dress defined by a particular cultural setting and followed by the people helps to reiterate their individual identity. An individual is believed to have multiple identities acquired as well as achieved ones. Following is a brief account of the role of dress in gender construction and building up a religious identity; the two features that are most significant to the present study.

2.2.2 Gender Dress:

The Ethnographical studies interpret cloth as "an indicator and a producer of gender". There is a realization that even the "seemingly insignificant items" connote "important ritualized gender functions" (Taylor, 2002: 204). This association of gender with clothing in Anthropology dates back to the works of Crawley, who used the term "sexual dress" to indicate the gender distinction communicated by means of dress. Eicher and Roach-Higgins use the term "gendered dress" to connote the learned gender roles depicted through it (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992b: 10). Associating gender with dress is a universal phenomenon; however, what is held as appropriate dress for either gender varies tremendously. Eicher notes that "designating gender by dress is common throughout the world and has been associated with both prescriptive and proscriptive behavior" (Eicher, 2000: 423). It is one of the "most consistently gendered aspects of material and visual culture" which is "consumed on daily basis" (Burman and Turbin, 2003: 1). The gendered meanings communicated through dress are cultural specific for "[G]ender is a socially constructed phenomenon, and not all cultures aspire to the same physical ideal for men and women as those in Western societies. Likewise, dress can symbolically convey meanings about gender specific only to one culture" (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 130).

Gender-specific dress and appearance are closely linked to sexuality (Barnes and Eicher, 1992: 6). Gender is a "social, psychological, and cultural construct" whose polarization is based on sex "the biological dichotomy" of male and female (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 129). Barnes and Eicher establish that "gender distinctions are a crucial part of the construction of dress, whether they are made on biological or social grounds" (1992: 7). Dress codes developed within a culture reflect well-understood gender meanings. These codes reiterate gender behavior patterns using dress as a means of visual communication. Wiener and Schneider present a dual stranded approach whereby clothes on one level are interpreted as "a cultural signifier/ indicator of gender difference" while on the other level it is "the carrier/ producer of socialized gender meanings" within a cultural setting (Taylor, 2002: 205).

The "norms governing gender-appropriate attire" are powerful in their own right requiring the members to conform to them. "Gender specific attire enhances the internalization of expectations for gender-specific behavior". The process of

internalization starts at an early age; "[T]hrough the subtle and frequently nonverbal interactions with children regarding both their appearance and behavior, parents either encourage or discourage certain behaviours often related to dress that leads to child's development of their gender identity" (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 129). Colour codes in dressing are equally important; "[B]abies are also often "colour coded" prior to their arrival. Once parents know the sex of their baby, nursery rooms are painted in blue colours for boys and pink for girls" (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 131). Entwistle, while discussing fashion and its "obsession with gender", also argues that the "preoccupation with gender starts with babies and is continued throughout the life cycle involving significant moments when dress forms get clearly gendered". She believes that formal occasions and weddings are particularly significant in emphasizing gendered roles through dress. Such styles and forms of dress "enable the repetitious production of gender, even when gender appears to break down as with androgynous fashion, and are aided in part by the repetition of gendered styles of bodily posture routinely reproduced in fashion magazines" (Entwistle, 2001: 39).

The relationship between dress and gender is not fixed; the appropriate dress not only varies from one culture to another but it undergoes various shifts within one cultural setting over a period of time. The change of the colour rule over the period of time is one example that establishes the dynamic relationship between gender and dress. Paoletti and Kregloh (1989) note the reverse in colour rule; in 1918 pink was interpreted as a "stronger and more assertive colour" hence associated with boys and blue as "more dainty and delicate" and attributed with girls whereas in present times blue is for boys and pink is for girls (in Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 131).

In addition to constructing gender, dress codes, also define relationships and status within a given cultural setting. For instance, it is considered appropriate for the married women in India to wear bangle bracelets on each wrist. "The type of bracelet (plastic, glass, conch shell, silver, ivory, or gold) is appropriate gendered dress as well as an indication of the woman's place in the social hierarchy" (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 131). Certain aspects of dress mark the gender of an individual more than the others, for example, the corsets are associated with female morality; a right-laced corset reflects moral and chaste woman while the unlaced woman is considered as "loose" and immoral (Michelman and Miller-Spillman, 2005: 132).

Close to the notion of gendered dress is the concept of embodiment. Entwistle argues that "dress is always located spatially and temporally" (Entwistle, 2001: 45); the act of dressing is then a situated bodily practice. The body moves through time and space with a sense of itself as gendered. This experience of embodiment is depicted by the differential use and experience of the spaces in the public sphere by both, men and women. An example can be the "spaces of work, which are experienced differently by women and men and impacts upon the ways in which the body is dressed and presented" (ibid: 46). Entwistle quotes various theorists to develop the argument that "women are more likely to be identified with the body than men and this may generate differential experiences of embodiment. It could be argued that women are more likely to develop greater body consciousness and greater awareness of themselves as embodied than men whose identity is less situated in the body" (ibid: 46).

2.2.3 Religious Dress:

Dress plays a significant role in communicating affiliation to a particular religion. Arthur's detailed discussion on the relationship between religion and dress is particularly significant with reference to the present study (Arthur, 1999 and 2005). According to her organized religions use dress in two ways: "to maintain the customs and traditions of the organization, thereby establishing a visual identity for the religion, and to simultaneously control the individual identities of its members by symbolically denoting dress as in-need of control" (Arthur, 2005: 96). In preserving the traditions and rendering a religion-based identity, the dress reflects religious ideology. Arthur argues that conformity to religious ideology is a sign of; one a "person's commitment to the group and the religious value system" (Arthur, 2005: 98) and second "religiosity". Since conformity is equated with religiosity "compliance to strict codes of behavior is demanded" (Arthur, 1999: 1 and 2005: 98). And as religiosity cannot be "objectively perceived" therefore visual symbols such as dress are an expression of a person being on the "right and true path". In doing so religious dress codes enable "the most conservative of the religious social bodies to exert control over their members' physical bodies". Body is socially controlled both internally as well as externally, through constraints on emotions (voices and laughters are muffled and appetite for food, knowledge and sex are constrained) and visible features (dress) respectively (ibid).

An important feature of this social control is that it often rejects fashion which is dynamic, on the basis that fashion emphasizes individuality rather than salvation (Arthur, 2005: 96). Religious dress codes seem static and an example of fossilized fashion. Fossilized fashion has been explained as a "sudden freezing of fashion whereby a group continues to wear a style long after it has become outmoded for the general public". The relationship between fossilized fashion and ethnicity of religious group seems apparent (Arthur, 1999: 5) as it represents "dignity and high social status" and/or the group's "religious, old-fashioned, sectarian identity" (Arthur, 1999: 5 and 2005: 98). Among the most conservative ethno-religious groups who follow fossilized fashion, the members wear the dress that was generally prevalent at the time their sect originated (Arthur, 2005: 98). Some studies show that fossilized fashion in contemporary times is a visual symbol emphasizing traditional gender roles for women (Graybill and Arthrur 1999, Hamilton and Hawley 1999 and Carrel, 1999).

Religious dress codes influence the gendered dress as well as the social roles and norms that it entails. Eicher and Roach-Higgins establish that dress plays an important role in the creation of gender identity (1992). The "gendered dress encourages each individual to internalize as gendered roles a complex set of social expectations for behavior" (1992b: 19). Arthur notes that "gender issues are paramount in the dress codes of conservative religious groups since the control of female sexuality is often of great importance in patriarchal religious groups". The relationship between gender-dress-religion is complex and is conflated with power issues. The control over the female sexuality among some religious groups is a requirement for maintaining social order (ibid).

One of the key considerations of various conservative religions is to ensure women's modesty by defining dress codes. Arthur notes that "modesty" in women's dress and behavior is demanded by all the major religions and is considered as a "gendered norm" (2005: 98). She argues that the notion of modesty does not only include covering of the body but also hiding of the female body curves and secondary sexual characteristics. An important corollary to the notion of modesty among the conservative members of the major religious groups is the covering of women's hair because of its association with female sexuality (Scott in Arthur, 2005: 98). The veil is one such form of

gendered dress which requires covering of the head and is often explained in terms of female modesty.

2.3 The Veil

The veil is a form of dressing that requires covering of the body as well as hiding the hair. Daly describes it as "a piece of fabric draped as a head and upper or full body covering that functions as an item of dress" (Daly, 2005a: 391). She explains that the related English terms veil (noun), veiling (verb) and veiled (adjective) have two-fold meaning and function to perform, regardless of their use as an item of clothing or adornment; "veils are physically used to cover and conceal, yet simultaneously draw attention to some visual aspect of the wearer". The act of veiling she argues is to conceal some visual and social aspect of the wearer yet by doing so the veil inadvertently, marks their identity (Daly, 2005a: 391).

Recent scholarship on veil associates it specifically to Muslim women's head and body covering but such a narrow perspective would not do justice to a form of dress that has a long history and is rich in cultural variations. Few studies establish the universality of veil and its presence across history, cultures and religions (Elguindi, 1999, Daly, 2005a, Abid, 2009). These studies also establish that the use of veil cannot be strictly regarded as a feminine attribute; the wearing of veil among Tuareg men is one instance of covering of hair and face of men in public. However, it is by no chance that veil has come to be associated with Muslim women, the fact that its observance among men is significantly low compared to that among the women and that veil is most commonly visible within Muslim cultural settings led to the development of this widespread conception.

In Academia, the veil has been studied and interpreted as a form of dress that connotes diverse meanings. This is because as Daly notes that "an understanding and meaning of head coverings worn as veils is highly dependent on personal, social and cultural perspectives" (Daly, 2005(a): 392). An important aspect of the recent works on veil is its symbolic significance and contradictory meanings for the Western observer and the Eastern wearer. The veil has been recognized as a "powerful" (Hoodfar, 2001: 421), "complex" and "dramatic visual symbol" (Fernea, 2002: 154). Hoodfar notes that the "static" and "old colonial image" of the veiled women as "passive", "oppressed" and

"ignorant" is in sharp contrast to the practice of veiling "as a lived experience full of contradictions and multiple meanings" (Hoodfar, 2001: 421). Equally interesting is the fact that veil is experienced in a variety of ways in different social settings. The next section presents a brief overview of Purdah, a South Asian regional appellation of veil which is most closely related to the content and context of the present research.

2.4 Purdah:

This part of the chapter provides a brief overview of purdah operating as a system to seclude women in South Asia. It elucidates two theoretical frameworks concerning purdah: purdah as women's seclusion and men's honor (Mandelbaum, 1988) and purdah as separate worlds and symbolic shelter (Hanna Papnek 1973). Notwithstanding the common features and arguments presented by both models, the way the topic has been approached by the two varies significantly. While Mandelbaum views the purdah system with the reference to the notions of honour and shame, Papanek approaches the topic primarily as division of labour between the segregated sexes. What follows is a definition of purdah, an introduction to both the models with a detailed commentary on the various features of purdah as outlined in these models as well as supporting arguments from other works on Purdah in South Asia.

2.4.1 Definition of Purdah:

Derived from Persian, the term Purdah literally means curtain. In the field of social sciences it has been invariably defined; primarily identified as a social-cultural institute and an institutionalized system: a system that segregates sexes by secluding women. In order to grasp the basic features of purdah as a system it would be worthwhile to note some of the ways in which it has been defined:

> Ring identifies it as a "social-cultural institute" that demarcates men's space from the women's. She states that purdah is "a system of veiling and the segregation of women in zenana, or women's space. (Ring, 2006: 139).
>
> White explains that the system segregates unrelated men and women; the practice of secluding women prevents them from contact with men outside of the immediate family (White, 1977: 31). Like Ring, she also

> considers the demarcation of space as an essential feature of the purdah system. The space is separated in both spheres; the public and the private; as "virtual imprisonment in separate quarters in the home, veiling in public, and the provision of segregated public facilities" (White, 1977: 31).
>
> Papnek notes the two basic instruments of purdah as secluding system; "the covering of the female face and body" and the "segregation of the female space" (Papanek, 1973: 294).
>
> Marker elucidates it as an institutionalized system operating at three levels: "the physical segregation of women's living space which is the secluded world of the zenana (women's quarters); social segregation, which allows women interaction only with the immediate kinship circle; and the covering of the female face and body" (Marker, 1989: 98).

In all these definitions and other similar ones (Shah and Bulatoa, 1981: 32; Daly(b), 2005: 503) it is clear that: purdah is a social-cultural institute; it is a system of gender segregation; it segregates unrelated men and women; demarcates men's space as separate from the women's in both public and private spheres; and suggests female body covering.

2.4.2 The purdah zone:

Mandelbaum in his detailed study of purdah in India introduces the term "purdah zone", which refers to those parts of the sub-continent that practice purdah extensively (Mandebaum: 1988). These include mostly the northern parts of the sub-continent where "purdah practices are taken to be central elements of social life" (1988: 2). Observance of purdah in the "purdah regions" is "so frequent, commonplace, and reflexive an action" that often it is taken-for-granted and "scarcely noticed" by those who observe it (Mandelbaum, 1988: 3). The purdah zone comprises of "all of Pakistan and Bangladesh plus the Indian states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, together with adjoining parts of Madhya Pradesh, Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh (Mandelbaum, 1988: 27). "There is no abrupt shifting from a purdah to a non-purdah region, but rather a gradual transition through the intervening regions to the quite different gender relations of South India" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 3).

Jai, on the other hand, enumerates various terms that refer either, metaphorically or synonymously to the purdah system in South Asia. These include, *ghunghat* (a veil pulled over the face), *odhni* (a head scarf that is used for the ghunghat), *chunri*, and *chadri* (sheet, mantle, cloak) to name a few (Jain, 2008: 231). Papanek, however, notes that in South Asia purdah is the most commonly used term to denote "the system of secluding women and enforcing high standards of female modesty" (Papanek, 1973: 289).

The two-fold context of Purdah: "Purdah exists among both Muslims and Hindus in South Asia but operates entirely differently among them" (van der Veer, 1994: 99). Papanek notes that the purdah system exists within a two-fold context: "on the one hand, a social structure based on highly differentiated, hierarchically ordered, ascriptive units called castes, which are closely related to the great religious tradition of Hinduism, and on the other hand, the great religious tradition of Islam which stresses the equality of all believers before God but clearly puts men a step above women" (1971: 518). The purdah system she argues cannot be studied in isolation from its wider social context (Papanek, 1971: 518).

In each of the two contexts, the secluded system of purdah affects the ideologies of the family. It is differentiated on the basis of the time the practice starts and the relations from which it has to be observed. Papanek notes that for Hindu women purdah rules start at marriage and the seclusion is based on "a set of avoidance rules between a woman and her male affines" (Papanek, 1973: 289). It is "related to relations of respect between affines" (van der Veer, 1994: 99). It exercises "patriarchal control" which is "native to the Hindu" (Jain, 2008: 23) and "articulates women's marginal and ambivalent position in the marital household" (Ring, 2006: 141). Among Muslims, it starts at puberty and the "immediate kin unit" (*mahram*) is excluded from the purdah rules (Papanek, 1973: 289). It is "related to the unity of the kindred vis-à-vis the outside, nonkindred world" (van der Veer, 1994: 99). It involves "seclusion from the public sphere" which associates it with the status of the family (van der Veer, 1994: 99).

Mandelbaum studies the distinct functions that purdah performs within the differentiated contexts: among Hindus purdah is observed to avoid the danger to family's "unity and honour" from within, from the younger wives who come as aliens

to the family and who may alienate their husbands from it". Among Muslims it is to protect family's honour from the "without", that is, the "encircling world of mistrustable strangers" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 82). In so doing, Hindu purdah separates the "consanguines of one lineage and their affines from other lineages while the Muslim purdah lays "emphasis on the individual's network of kinship ties, traced through both mother and father, with the more intimate kinship affiliations formed at a family's discretion" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 92).

An important difference among Muslims and Hindus regarding the rationale for purdah is that while among Muslims the popular belief associates purdah as a "fundamental precept of Islam, ordained in the Koran" and "a hallmark of the true Muslim way of life" while for Hindus it is not an integral part of the religion it is rather a "matter of social concern for family and caste-group" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 87). This is because in South Asia "Muslims cultures are more closely knit around holy writ" whereas the "Hindu societies more centrally concerned with social bonds and obligations" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 127).

Jacobson elucidates the distinguishing underlying principles for the differentiated observance of purdah among Hindus and Muslims and states that the differences "are not related to a Hindu inability to accurately copy Muslim purdah, but to differences in rules of kinship, marriage, inheritance, and religion between the two groups. The suggestion here is that the seclusion of women cannot be understood by viewing it as a single institution but only by examining it in its several varieties in relation to all of the cultural contexts in which it is found" (Jacobson in Papanek, 1973: 304).

2.4.3 Influences on purdah observance among South Asian Muslims:

Weiss notes that "the legal position of Muslim women is guaranteed in the Qur'an which acknowledges such practices as female inheritance (albeit at half the share that a man inherits), female consent to marriage, and remarriage by widows and divorcees. However, Muslim women's options have traditionally been limited in the northern India more by customs and attitudes than by religious law, so that these legal rights have not always been exercised" (Weiss, 1986: 98). Daly notes that though "Muslim women living in Bangladesh, India, Kashmir, and Pakistan share a similar regional socioeconomic and geopolitical history their "Muslimness" is often juxtaposed with the

Hindu religion, the predominant religion of India (Daly (b), 2005: 503). Papanek argues that although Muslims do not believe in the caste system yet it has considerable influence over the social organization of the Muslims (Papanek, 1971: 518).

It is not only the close interaction with Hindus that has influenced the purdah system of the Muslims of South Asia, writers like Daly notice similarity regarding the notion modesty of South Asian Muslim women and Muslim women around the world, and states that modesty among them "can be understood and socially constructed through the concepts of hijab [veil], haya [shame], and purdah". Notwithstanding the cultural variations, the local customs defer to the Islamic Middle East (Elguindi, 1999 in Daly, 2005 b: 503). Writing about purdah, Leaman and Ali argue that "although the term purdah has been mostly used in a South Asian context, it describes a cluster of practices, designed to keep women secluded from unrelated men, that have resonance across the Muslim world" (2008: 104).

2.4.4 Purdah in retrospective: on confrontation with the colonial rule:

The association of the purdah system with religion made it particularly hard for Muslims to leave the practice during the British colonial rule in the region. Purdah became a central feature of local tradition and culture and a symbol of ethnic identity during the colonial times. Ring notes that it acquired a fundamental position in the nineteenth century "anticolonial Islamic reform movements" (Ring, 2006: 139). A common feature of cultural encounters entail that in case of a threat to traditions cultural survival often leads to "the hardening of attitudes", and the members of the threatened culture take up a "revivalist, protectionist approach". This happened during the colonization of India, the "colonial India rushed into restrictive practices where purdah was concerned in order to protect its cultural identity and prevent British intrusions into the personal sphere" (Jain, 2008: 233). Purdah was reinforced for the "nationalists' defense of women as custodians of culture". This resulted in spatial division of public and private, the public being "the outside world of political life" while the private referred to "domesticity and women". Purdah in the colonial times, with its essential feature of "segregation began to appear as the last bastion of culture against both modernization and Westernization" (Jain, 2008: 237).

It was not only the local movements that reiterated the purdah system; Jain argues that the colonial powers also helped reinforce purdah through "legislation and codification of half-forgotten cultural memories and beliefs". The British introduced Manusmriti "for the purpose of defining Hindu "personal law" as "supplementary to the general law. Manusmriti she argues, prescribes "a strict code of control over women and evoked outdated gender behaviour" (Jain, 2008: 237).

Minault depicts the position of women in the writings of the Hindu and Muslim reformers in the colonial India; "women appear as beneficiaries of men's activities and concerns, as auxiliaries to movements led by men. Patriarchal authority was reinforced by Indian movements for social reform, even when the beneficiaries of the reform were women" (Minault, 1986: 2). He also argues that it was more difficult for the Muslim reformers to cast away the purdah system compared to the Hindu ones as an "artifact of Muslim rule". The Muslim reformers found it problematic for two main reasons; it had "religious sanctions" and it symbolized their cultural distinctiveness. Though the reformers criticized the effects of purdah: "women's isolation, ignorance and detachment from externally-imposed standards of behaviour" but they did not disapprove the custom itself (Minault, 1994: 118). There existed two trends among the reformist movement of Muslims, one led by the "western-educated, urban, service and professional classes" the other by "traditionally-educated, or ulama", both promoted different vision of ideal Muslim women, the former emphasized "marital companionship and enlightened nurturing" while the latter "scriptural piety" (Minault, 1994: 119).

The two trends have developed parallel to each other over a period of time as Papanek notes that in response to social change in South Asia the tendency is either "growth of westernization" or "the increased stress on traditional values, sometimes in a 'purified' form" (Papanek, 1973: 299). Pastner notes in her case study of purdah in Panjgur an interesting trend in social change that while men in many respects become "more "modernized" due to their continuing exposure to a wider society, women at the same time become more "traditional" as they are increasingly isolated from non-Baluch culture" (Pastner, 1972: 255). The purdah system has survived over a period of time and varying influences; in the past through the colonial pressures to abandon the

practice and at present through growing trends of modernity in social life. Covering of the body is the most conspicuous feature of purdah and is discussed in the following:

2.4.5 Purdah: The body concealment

Purdah is closely linked to the covering of the body. Marker notes that purdah finds its strongest expression in dress and explains the different forms of dress that are used to cover the women's body in Pakistan. She explains "burga", (most commonly transliterated as burqa), as a "material attached to a skullcap, covers the wearer from head to foot, the only opening being a netted section for the eyes", the chadar "an ankle-length shawl, also covers the wearer completely, though the face and eyes can be left exposed", the dupatta "a two-meter-square scarf, drapes over the shoulder and usually covers the head" (Marker, 1989: 99). Papanek observes the dynamic feature of dupatta as a scarf or veil, "worn with several different dress styles". It "can be draped in various ways over the head and face, and can obscure-or emphasize- the outline of the breasts" (Papanek, 1973: 295). She notes that purdah in dress, particularly manifested through the all concealing burqa, symbolizes the status of the wearer as a "secluded female" (Papanek, 1973: 295). Burqa as a socially inscribed dress code functions as a controlling mechanism as explained below:

2.4.6 The embodied purdah: a mechanism to control:

Purdah as a means of social control operates in a complex manner simultaneously signifying diverse aspects of the society: "evaluation of status, the ownership and inheritance of property, the arrangement of marriages, the division of labor, and impulse control" (Papanek, 1973: 290). It also signifies "[I]nterpersonal dependency, social distance, and the maintenance of moral and standards as specified by the society" (Papanek, 1973: 292). Jain views purdah as an institution with a variety of implied meanings which goes much beyond the covered face and the hidden body to encompass notions of respectability and virtue, class and caste, protection and exposure" (Jain, 2008: 232).

Body concealment through purdah embodies modesty which in turn communicates the honour of the family. Pastner notes that in various studies on the notion of honour and shame the concepts are related to the "concepts of correct conduct, especially the sexual conduct of women which is seen to reflect upon the status of male relatives. The

ideology has much to do with the overall functioning of society and not just the nature of relationships between men and women (Pastner, 1972: 250, 251). The "minimum requirement" of modesty in dress is "baggy trousers" and "loose dresses, worn with a shawl (dupatta) that covers the head and the top half of the body". Outside home "a long cape with cap and veil (burqa)" is considered as the appropriate dress to observe purdah (Veer, 1994: 100). Burqa however, as a form of dress is "exclusive for Muslim women". (Veer, 1994: 100, Mandelbaum, 1988: 125). "Sari" a typical Indian dress with short sleeves and exposed midriff is considered as "shameless". Burqa has become a crucial sign of Islamic strictness in South Asia" (Veer , 1994: 100).

Observance of modesty involves not only wearing appropriate dress but it also guides "whole repertoire of behavior" and bodily movement (Veer, 1994: 100). Mandelbaum notes that modesty requires women to be "restrained in speech, restricted in movement" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 4). These restrictions are influenced by a number of variables, space, relationship and presence of other people. He explains the influence of these variables on the observance of purdah, for instance in the case of young married couple modesty of the wife requires that she "must appear completely uninterested toward her husband when they are in the presence of others". The embodied purdah, he argues also reflects respect for elders (ibid). However, with the seniority in age the purdah rules get lenient (ibid: 5).

In ensuring modesty, purdah acts as a mechanism to control women; their "mobility", "morality", "sexuality" and "intellectual freedom" (Jain, 2008: 233). The perpetuity of the patriarchal system and protection of the male patriline is central to this controlling feature of purdah. Ring argues that purdah is about protection of the female sexuality which in turn protects male patriline as well as the inner self (Ring, 2006). Shaw in her study about purdah among Punjabi Muslims notes that women are required to be "virgins" at the time of their marriage (Shaw, 2000: 74).

Avoiding visibility is the first step to the protection of the female sexuality. Talking with reference to Pakistani society, Ring states that in a "cosmos where human senses are not passive receivers of information but materialities, forces which take effect in the world, the gestural elements of purdah- keeping one's eyes down- take on specific meaning" (Ring, 2006: 147, 148). She identifies the hiding of visibility as one of the "central objectives" of purdah. The concealing of a "woman's "ornaments" from the

illicit or unintentional gaze of potential lovers is a Quranic injunction" (ibid: 147). Visibility is considered problematic, on one hand it enables vision of the other gender which is prohibited by the religion while on the other, visibility attacks the vulnerability of the self.

Purdah for protection suggests that the self is weak. It is considered as "vulnerable to invasion by alien agencies- supernatural, divine, human, and/ or fated". Purdah marks "rigid boundaries" around the self. It controls not only vision and visibility but also guides gestures, Shaw argues that purdah is not only about secluding women, it is a "moral code" that guides the relationships between men and women that exists "even where strict observance of purdah is not apparent" (Shaw, 2000: 163). The purdah system promotes "reticence", "silence" "downcast eyes" and "closed mouth" to avoid the inherent possibility to "recognize a destined beloved". In the absence of the gestural elements of the purdah, Ring shows that the self is replaced by the "external agency" of *ishq* (love). "[F]ated lovers and beloveds are seen to roam the earth" (Ring, 2006: 148). She finds the "erasure of the self" and loss of sanity that inheres *ishq* as problematic in Pakistani society for it negates the "culturally valued faculties" of "reason, will, [and] agency". The function of the purdah is not to unite these "fated lovers" but to uphold the cultural values of reason which she finds in contrast to the Western romantic tenet" (ibid: 148). Shaw on the other hand notices that in Pakistan the segregation through purdah is to avoid the inevitable sexual activity that follows when a man and woman are left alone together. This, she argues, connotes a "battle within a person between animal nature ruled by the devil and the spiritual self ruled by God". The Islamic purdah system when viewed as such is a system that controls 'nature' and "prevents sexual anarchy" (Shaw, 2000: 164). "[B]oth women and men, especially when young, are considered to have uncertain control of their sex drives" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 10).

It is actually the female sexuality which poses the threat and which needs to be controlled through the purdah mechanism. There are "dangers *to* a woman outside her home" and "dangers *from* women inside their households" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 9). Outside the home the danger is from "male strangers" who are considered as "sexually predatory" and likely to take "advantage of an unescorted women" (ibid). Inside the home purdah signifies "respect" and ensures "solidarity" (ibid: 11). In this case it is not the "extra-marital sex" that requires purdah rather the concepts of domestic power and

politics that require its observance (ibid: 11). However, again it is the women's sexuality due to which they are perceived either as "disruptors" or as "guarantors" of the patrilineage. Their fertility is significant for the continuity of the patrilineage while their sexuality may entice their husband "away from unswerving allegiance to parents and brothers" (ibid: 18). Within the joint family system "family discords" and "difficulties to disruptive pressures" are attributed with wives of the sons. Purdah is to keep "social distance" of the woman from her husband and children in the "presence of others". It is to avoid such "separatist tendencies" within the family (ibid: 14).

The purdah system reflects the vulnerability of both the genders; with varying degrees and in differentiated ways. Mandelbaum explains that women within the system are considered as "physically weak, perhaps sensually willing, certainly exceedingly vulnerable". It is quite probable that women give in quickly to sexual assault because of their weakness as well as because of the "stringent training" of being submissive (ibid: 10). The purdah-providing-protection involves the concepts of honor (*izzat*) and shame or modesty (*sharam*) (van der Veer, 1994: 100). Honour and shame of men seem to emanate from women. Although, women bear more restraints from the purdah system the honour of both men and women are protected by its observance. Mandelbaum notes that "man too is socially vulnerable" and a degradation of a woman of his family damages/ harms his "honor" (ibid: 19). He observes that in case of illicit sexual encounter, "whether by force or consent" it is the woman's reputation that suffers the most and consequently the whole family suffers "grave dishonor" (ibid: 10-11). Marker too observes a close link between the behaviour of the women of a family and its respect; "to deviate from the prescription of purdah is to dishonour and shame the entire clan" (Marker, 1989: 99).

Within the purdah system, the notions of masculinity and femininity are created as such to sustain patriarchy (Jain, 2008: 232). Gender-relationships are asymmetrical with "the male being self-reliant and aggressive, the female weak, irresponsible and in need of protection" (White, 1977: 31). Woman's sexuality is perceived as a "threat to masculine supremacy" (Jain, 2008: 241). The "male ownership offers protection and respectability: public women, like courtesans, mistresses, or devadasis (prostitutes) fall outside the notion of this social respectability and send the message that a woman without a man is available to be sexually exploited" (Jain, 2008: 241). The controlling

feature of purdah is deeply linked to the "social concern with a woman's purity". Purdah in its attempt to safeguard woman's purity requires "nonviolation of the body, moral decency, and sexual abstinence". To summarize, purdah as a controlling mechanism is concerned with the protection of women's body and her sexuality because "[T]he idea of family honor, more particularly male honour, and that of purity of lineage are linked with the bodies of women" (ibid: 235).

The seclusion through purdah and the asymmetry of relationship does not necessarily imply that women are deprived of their agency. Jeffery in her ethnographic study of the pirzada in India suggests that the secluded women are active agents within the domestic sphere. They render considerable influence and power within their homes (Jeffery, 1979: 171). She also notes that this influence and power is subject to marriage and motherhood, an "aged spinster….has no place, nor the barren woman nor the woman with no sons". Seniority through age and marital status are also factors influencing their power (1979: 171-172).

2.4.7 Purdah and Status:

It is important to note that purdah as seclusion cannot be easily afforded. Traditionally, it has often been associated with the economic prosperity. Women belonging to the families that fall in the lower social ranking in the society are more visible publicly. Mandelbaum notes a close link between purdah and prosperity and argues that only those families who can "afford" to seclude their women follow the purdah rules while the ones who have to worry about the "daily food", their women often do not observe purdah (Mandelbaum, 1988: 3). He also notes that prosperity once attained leads to adoption of purdah, most often a "stringent seclusion" (ibid). The differential levels in purdah have a close link to the social stratification and mobility within the stratified groups in a society.

Jeffery argues that although purdah may be an ideal practice for the people in this geographical region but not all people can afford to seclude their women. "Keeping women in seclusion is something which most people desire, but it can entail expenses which the very poor cannot meet". She further states that "the seclusion of women has to be seen as a 'luxury', a status symbol in which only the relatively wealthy can afford to indulge themselves" (Jeffery, 1979: 24). In South Asia, historically "veiling" is

considered as "a claim to bourgeois status" (Ring, 2006: 141). Higher status is to mark one's ethnic status symbolized by purdah the "*other* groups are labeled inferior, effete, and immoral because their women don't do purdah" (Pastner in Ring, 2006: 141).

2.4.8 Papanek's Model: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter:

Papanek finds two complementary concepts of "separate worlds" and "symbolic shelter" as valuable for the analysis of the purdah (Papanek, 1973: 290). The two concepts function "parallel to each other within a purdah system (ibid: 292). Separate worlds refer to the "division of labor in terms of actual work allocated to different categories of people. The two worlds are sharply segregated, yet the separation is accompanied by a high degree of mutual dependency between men and women" (ibid: 293). The separation is based upon the beliefs regarding human nature, and is guided by the rules about utilization of the living space; the public spaces allocated to the men while the private sphere of home to women. Interdependency between the two is "a direct reflection of the specificity of the division of labor, but such feelings of dependency are likely to be incompatible with standards of male pride in the world outside the home, and are therefore usually confined to the private family unit and not otherwise acknowledged" (ibid: 293).

Purdah as symbolic shelter suggests the complementary and asymmetrical relations between the sexes; embedded in the "basic conception of a strongly felt tension between the private domain of the immediate kin unit, which includes the women and the outside world" (ibid). The segregation of the sexes as per symbolic shelter characterizes it with asymmetry, dominance and dependency (ibid). It implies that women, who are vulnerable, need to be protected from the "real dangers for the segregated world" and against "the strong impulses such as sexual desire and aggression" (ibid: 316). Purdah acts as a social control mechanism (Papanek, 1971: 518-19). Individuals, according to this model, are not viewed as independent single individuals rather with reference to their social context and "women who are sheltered become important demonstrators of the status of their protectors, and their behaviour becomes important in terms of honor and family pride for an entire kin group" (Papanek, 1973: 293). In making women honour of the family the purdah system fundamentally uses the "shame" mechanism to control the human impulse (ibid: 316).

"Unsheltered women" in the purdah observing social settings are assumed to be lacking in modesty and shame (ibid: 323-25).

2.4.9 Mandelbaum's Model: Women's Seclusion and Men's Honour

For Mandelbaum the gender systems manifest as *purdah-izzat* duo; *purdah* which is observed as seclusion with the basic features mentioned above is deeply inter-connected with men's honour or *izzat*. His study on purdah establishes that there exists a "reciprocal relationship between purdah and izzat, between women's seclusion and men's honour" (1988: 96). As men assume the public positions they are the "primary referrants of izzat" (ibid: 20). The purdah system controls and guides the behaviour of the women since their behaviour is of "cardinal consideration" to the honor of their family (ibid).

The purdah-izzat duo requires women to remain sub-ordinate to men. She is secluded from the public space and "easy personal interactions" outside her home, the only exceptions are women who attain "prestigious office" in the public space; a matter of *izzat* for the family. Within the private domestic space a woman should submit to the hierarchy and express it through "frequent flashing signs of respect". For men it is important to reiterate their "*izzat*"; to show a "constant concern" and remain "especially vigilant" about the conduct of the women within his family lest they do not "impugn his honour" (ibid: 125). Much has already been said about purdah but the concept of *izzat* needs elaboration; following is a brief overview of this concept as existing in the purdah zone.

Izzat is the local term used for honor. It has various "overlapping meanings" with a frequent referent for carrying out group's values that are reflected in a person's actual behaviour (ibid: 20). Such qualities as "prestige and status, rank and esteem, respect and self-respect" are included as essential features of *izzat* (ibid: 21). Although *izzat* can be both, "corporate" or "personal" quality, but since the behaviour of a person is often associated with the group behaviour, izzat is regarded as a "group quality" and more than that a "family" quality (ibid).

There are several determinants of *izzat* that simultaneously promote it, including "desirable achievements, such as tangible wealth, unimpeachable piety, success in competition, the besting of one's enemies, the retention of followers and dependents,

the skillful managing of allies, the tactful distribution of gifts and, critically, the conduct of the women of the family" (ibid: 22). *Izzat* reflects a person's success in life. It is also closely related to power, the more *izzatdar* (respectable) a person is the more power he may enjoy. In the words of Mandelbaum, *izzat* is "a symbolic summary of past achievements and a main element in present power" which when "properly deployed, enhances *izzat*: *izzat* legitimates power" (ibid).

Izzat has "individual" and "internal" aspect too. An individual aspires to live a life so that his name lives even after his death. In such a case izzat helps to overcome "oblivion, of defeating death" (ibid: 23). In the patriarchal society, having heirs bears immense significance for carrying on one's name. Women's sexuality is protected and controlled through the purdah system for the purity of the lineage. In such system women are relegated to the private sphere of home and their *izzat* for the most part lies in "raising set of vigorous, united, dutiful, children" (ibid). Tangible and material things also enhance woman's *izzat*, as Mandelbaum suggests that a married woman's izzat is accrued by gifts "generously, judiciously, and publicly" presented by her natal family (ibid: 24).

Be it a man's or a woman's, *izzat* is not a static concept, it is a process which "has to be continually reaffirmed in practice, reinforced in action, defended against challenge, and rewon and advanced in competition" (ibid: 23). "Shame" argues Mandelbaum, is the antithesis of honor and as much as "honor is sought" shame (*sharam*) is "diligently avoided" (ibid: 21). Shame also has positive connotation; when sense of shame makes one avoid breaking of the culturally accepted norms it is appreciated (ibid).

Mandelbaum argues that *izzat* and purdah carry both, positive as well as negative connotations respectively, izzat "embraces what a man should do if he can" while purdah "covers what a woman might do but should not" (ibid: 24). They are interdependent and for the enhancement of izzat "unfailing observance of purdah is required (ibid: 24).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although an ethnographic process of investigation cannot be predicted before plunging into the actual field, nevertheless, this unpredictability does not rule out the essentiality of well-worked upon research plan. Planning the research and appropriating the right methodological tools is as important as finding the right locale, setting the research objectives and formulating the research question. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that "even less than other forms of social research, the course of ethnographic work cannot be predetermined, all problems anticipated and ready-made strategies made available for dealing with them. However this neither eliminates the need for pre-fieldwork preparation nor means that the researcher's behaviour, in the field can be haphazard, merely adjusting to events by taking the "line of least resistance". They rather, regard research design as "crucial to ethnography" and as a "reflexive process that operates throughout every stage of a project" (2007: 20-21).

Considering these crucial aspects of ethnography, I designed a research plan that involved a careful selection of several methodological tools of qualitative research to optimize the realization of research objectives. Each of the various individual methodological technique is contained in limitation; [I]nterviews, questionnaires, tests and many other instruments involve confronting individuals with somewhat artificial stimuli" and "the awareness of being studied which are likely to produce "distortions in people's responses" (Pelto & Pelto, 1978: 121). To overcome the limitations of individual techniques, a multi-instrumental approach was employed to "enhance the credibility of research results" (ibid, 1978: 121). The conventional anthropological methods of fieldwork and participant observation lie at the core of this ethnographical account of dress in an Islamic school for women. The fieldwork spans over five months from November 2006 - March 2007 spent in madrassah Jamia Hafsa located in Islamabad. The original plan of carrying out research in two parts of five months each with an interval of six months was impeded by the growing tensions between the government and the madrassah, consequently resulting in the demolition of the seminary in July 2007. The second phase of the research could never take place. Due to the severity of the matter, I also lost the telephonic contact with the few girls whom I managed to develop a deeper rapport. The cell phones were off during the operation and never switched on since then. The only exception was a young mu'alima who was

using her father's mobile phone. In case of ethnographic studies, the second phase of the research often helps tremendously in reiterating the findings of the first phase and filling in the lacunae; however, in the present case the failure to carry out the second phase was overcome by the intensive research of the first one. The latter proved to be quite satisfactory and provided with sufficient data desired of the research. The process of data analysis started right after the collection and helped to locate any missing information which was then pursued through the telephonic interviews. The inclusion of telephonic interviews in the original research plan considering the long distance, proved to be particularly rewarding in ways not anticipated before.

Given the fact that "people understand most clearly the significance and meaning of clothing, costume, and dress when the wearers and observers share the same cultural background." (Eicher: 2005, 270), I chose to conduct research in my own country, Pakistan. The field research carried out at home presents an interesting case of native anthropology[6] depicting experiences similar to those shared by some other native anthropologists (Jones, 1970; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984; Narayan, 1993; Pardhan, 2007). In giving this account I will explain that although belonging to the same society, there exists a marked difference in beliefs and practices regarding purdah observances between me and my interlocutors. These and several other differences in social and educational experiences made the madrassah a relatively alien space for me. At the same time the prior knowledge of such institutes existing in the same society where I come from, helped in quick and better understanding of the ideology of madrassah as an educational institute and the purdah practices therein. I will also discuss the multifaceted identity of an anthropologist while conducting anthropology at home; the pros and cons of such a research and the strategizing of the research design.

[6] Without going into the complexities of the term "native anthropologist". I present here the experience of an anthropologist conducting research in one's own society. Factors of differentiation between me and my interlocutors as well as the similarities have been discussed in detail. In giving this account the possibility that people from the same societies can be simultaneously both insiders as well as outsiders has not been underplayed (Narayn, 1993: 678).

3.1 Reflections of a Native Anthropologist

The in-depth knowledge about the culture, the background information about the madrassah and the easy acceptance of my research perceived as having a cause by my interlocutors; all facilitated the data collection process. Gwaltney points to shared views and effortless rapport-building process as privileges enjoyed by a native anthropologist (1976: 237). I realized the same while conducting my field work. It is important to note here that during the process of rapport establishment a researcher often makes pragmatic negotiations considering a given context, highlighting the shared factors that convene rapport establishment and vice versa. In the present case the shared views regarding the widespread misconceptions about Muslims and my primary identity perceived as a Pakistani Muslim convened the rapport building process; my topic was perceived as the most appropriate one in the present times. Believing that purdah or veil is a much problematized and stereotyped form of dress, one of the main objective of the research is to present it from an emic perspective; the perspective of those who don it. This objective caught interest of my interlocutors who also want *the world to know why they observe purdah*[7]. Although apparently they may seem shared objectives; the two have absolutely different underlying concerns. My concerns are purely academic with an aim to make a significant contribution to the anthropology of dress; theirs is religious to promote purdah as a religious obligation and a female virtue. Although I made it sure to explicitly outline my research purpose but the fact that it was never considered an educational endeavour by my interlocutors in the real sense illustrates that a native anthropologist is not considered as "a professional who will conduct research and develop theories and generalizations, but as a person who is in a position to collect information in his own culture to which an outsider does not have access" (Jones, 1970: 252). They presumed that my choice to study purdah in madrassah owes to the fact that I being part of the same culture am aware of purdah system in the

[7] A frequent response from my interlocutors to my research objective.

madrassah and rightly chose it as a research locale where one finds the *iconic representation of purdah-dar (purdah-observing) women*[8].

The empathy I received from my interlocutors is because of the presumed "nobility" of my research as having a cause. It did not take me long to realize that my easy entrance to an otherwise politically active and not-open-to-all space relied heavily on this presumption. During the course of the fieldwork, the research was often perceived not as an emic approach to study the dress but as a task involving collection of data on veiling and teaching/ preaching the "modern" "unveiled" women of the West the benefits of veiling. This attitude towards my research pointed to a very important finding of the study, that is, the negative and stereotyped conceptualization of modernization and westernization discussed in detail in Chapter six.

Although the empathy was genuine; the easy access was a mere illusion and was in fact an easy acceptance of my research having a noble cause. I soon realized that my movement was restricted only to the first compound of the madrassah. This effected my communication too, my plan included interviews with all the strata of the madrassah which in the beginning seemed impossible; despite being a native anthropologist and that too with a cause. I was then a "privileged stranger" an experience that Freilich notes all anthropologists go through during the initial phase of their research and which "permits access only to public places and centers and a few private places" (Freilich in Moore, 1998: 57). When I wished to go to the other parts of the madrassah I had to be accompanied by a teacher or a senior student. However, later as the rapport establishment grew deeper the access to madrassah increased eventually leading to free admittance to all of the madrassah.

The easy overt acceptance of my research topic yet strict covert[9] control over the movement indicated my dual position, on one hand I was a trustworthy cultural fellow

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[8] It is an oft-repeated statement by my interlocutors. Purdah is observed in a variety of ways in Pakistan, the girls of the madrassah believe that theirs is the correct form of purdah; an aspect discussed in detail in Chapter six.

[9] I call it covert because, I was allowed by the administration to go about the madrasah and ask girls about purdah, but it was made sure that I was never alone especially while inside the second or the third compound of the madrasah.

who could play the role of "culture broker" as Narayan puts it. In her role as a culture broker she was assumed to have "dubious power to extend First World prestige to Third World realities"; in my case I was to extend the moral values and traditions of the Third world to rectify the negative impact of modernization in the First world. On the other hand, the probability that I could be a potential government spy or someone from the media who would report a negative image of the madrassah set me apart from the group. So when I wanted to interview the *mohtamim* of the madrassah, I was told that he is busy and his brother can instead give the interview, who later also refused saying that he *"no longer trusts journalists since they manipulate the interviews and project a negative image of the madrassah"*. Despite my several attempts to convince that I am only a student who is conducting a research on purdah, I was met with the same reply each time. I could then related to Narayan who was set apart and "lumped [instead] together with academics who made it their business to document and theorize about other people's lives", like her I was set apart and related with those people from the society who my interlocutors perceive to have a negative image of madrassah (Narayan 1989:59-62 in Narayan, 1993: 674).

This dual position did not affect the affability of the relationship given my status as a guest. And despite the skepticism I received the "red carpet treatment"[10] characteristic of the culture to accommodate the guests. Ohnuki-Tierney argues that the problem with information during such a phase is that people "perform for" the anthropologist and the information received is only the "negotiated reality" until the anthropologists existence becomes "less conspicuous" (1984: 585). The warning gazes exchanged between the girls indicating my presence emphasize this fact. In one instance when I accompanied a mu'alima to the rest room two girls sitting there were making pictures with their mobile phone. Upon our entry, the *mu'alima* through her eyes signaled to the girls who hid their mobile phone immediately, the whole event did not go unnoticed rather proved to be an important sign as to how much information could be filtered to an outsider. As photography of human beings is considered as forbidden by religion this event was a reflection of a contradiction to their claim that they practice what they believe. I as an

[10] Ohnuki-Tierney traces a similar treatment in Japan where non-native anthropologists receive the "red carpet treatment" from the local people in their pursuit to accommodate their guests (1984: 585)

outsider should not be exposed to any such contradictions happening in the madrassah. Later on, I noticed that the girls are reprimanded if they do not observe religious beliefs properly but this does not happen infront of outsiders.

This "red-carpet" treatment although intended to accommodate the guest, might create uneasiness for the latter in some ways. For example, one of the essential aspects of this treatment is partaking of food. In the beginning while taking interviews, I was also offered tea, fruit, and meal depending on what time of the day the interview is taking place. I knew that most of the girls did not come from a sound financial background and felt somehow discomfortable when they spent money to buy something for me. I did not want to openly show my reluctance because I realized that partaking of food "was very important in building a relationship of openness and trust" (Pardhan, 2007: 249). It would show my acceptance of them and avoiding it might hurt and offend them I tried to strategize ways so that there is as less a financial burden on the girls as possible. Belonging to a culture where a senior in age or rank, is expected to pay for the junior, I used this as justification and attempted to pay for both; myself and my interviewee sometimes it worked often it did not given my guest status. Another strategy that proved more successful was that I would just tell them I was not hungry and would eat an apple or take a cup of tea instead of a whole meal that costs more.

The transcendence from the phase of "privileged stranger" to that of an insider did not take long. Several pragmatic negotiations were made and strategies adopted to facilitate and expedite the rapport building process. Rapport is crucial to anthropological research; "pure and simple, consists of establishing lines of communication between the anthropologist and his informants in order for the former to collect data that then allows him to understand the culture under study". It also refers to the "ability to cope with a field situation in such a way that work is possible" (Nader, 1986: 113). The original plan included formal interviews considerably later in the programme succeeding the collection and reading of the relevant available literature and developing a relationship of mutual trust. However, my permanent presence without any visible efforts (conducting interviews) concerning my research and my informal conversations with the girls increased skepticism among many of them, rather than building the anticipated trust. The frequent queries like "if you are here for research on purdah why don't you do it?" or "who was it that you interviewed today?" or "how long was the interview,

show me the pages?" and also their inquisitiveness about "who's interview was better" led me conduct the formal interviews first. Once they were sure that I was doing as I said, nobody asked me these questions.

Avoiding certain topics during the interview contributed significantly to the rapport building process. Once I knew that outsiders for them are potential government spies I deliberately avoided initiating a discussion of the madrassah's involvement in political activities. My apparent disinterest furthered strengthening of the relationship between the girls and myself. The final stage of transition in the rapport building process whereby I became more or less an insider was marked by the presentation of a card that said "worker Jamia Sayeda Hafsa/ Jamia Faridia" (Fig. 1). Once during an informal conversation with the principal I complained about the distrust the girls showed when they found me in the second or the third compound of the madrassah. The madrassah is a huge building with the number of students in thousands. Quite often it happened that when I was moving alone in the second or the third compound (the insider's area), a girl or a group of girls would come and ask for my identity as well as the purpose of my presence there. Often I would be taken back to the first compound to confirm if I was telling the truth. The principal who was by then convinced of my research understood my disappointment and asked a girl to give me my "permit card" (Fig. 1). The permit card was a sign that I belong to the group, after acquiring that I was never taken back to the compound to cross-check my identity and purpose of presence. Rather, on showing that card I always received maximum co-operation and that too with a warm smile.

Figure 1: Card for Members of Jamia Sayyeda Hafsah and Jamia Faridia

Positioning Myself: Here it would be interesting to discuss my position within the cultural setting of the madrassah in relation to the wider societal structure. Narayan argues that "the loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux. Factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may at different times overweigh the cultural

identity we associate with insider or outsider status" (Narayan, 1993: 671-672) or as Rosaldo terms it "multiplex subjectivity" with many cross-cutting identifications (Rosaldo, 1989: 168-195). What aspect of our identity we wish to highlight depends on the context and the anticipation of the respondents. I was perceived by my respondents as a person belonging to an urban upper class who invests money and energy to acquire worldly education in order to achieve worldly gains; the kind of people strongly criticized by them. As I have explained before that my research endeavour was never fully conceptualized as an educational one but as an interest in the religion. This helped to balance out the criticism on the group that I belong to with appreciation for my interest in religion; hence a friendly relationship.

The fact that my father was ex-military personnel was of particular interest to my respondents. The interest and seriousness with which my respondents asked for my father's opinion about the then president, a military dictator, was rather amusing. And when I would tell them that he is not in favour of the military ruler it somehow pleased them, not realizing that it does not necessarily imply that he favours madrassah. Equally interesting was the fact that while they considered it important to know the opinion about the military ruler, never was there an attempt to know the opinion about madrassah. Such an interest tells a lot about who is taken as a friend and who a foe. Similarity of opinion about the political leadership was an important factor bringing affinity and closeness in relationship.

While this aspect of similarity emerged during the fieldwork, several other measures were kept under consideration before going to the field to emphasize similarity, reduce difference and hence negotiate self identity inorder to gain quicker and better acceptance from the respondents. Two important negotiations include the choice of appropriate dress and the use of national language. Given that "in every human society styles of clothing are important signals of social status and role, it follows that fieldworkers can always influence local attitudes by adopting particular habits of costume" (Pelto & Pelto, 1978: 190). My negotiations of dress had two important dimensions: one that my dress should not be as such to offend them or carry any element that "symbolize locally disliked types of persons" (ibid: 191) and secondly non-adoption of burqa to indicate my ignorance about burqa as a form of purdah and leave ample space for the learning of this type of dress. My personal dress thus, was

altered but not completely. I chose to wear a dress devoid of any signs of prevalent fashion[11], in dull and pastel colours and covered my head all the time. Both these elements of negotiations proved to be beneficial in their own way. The conservative aspect of my dress helped to reduce the contempt held in general for the urbanite, educated women with whom I was identified by my interlocutors. Theoretically the simplicity[12] of my dress should have eliminated all the differences between me and "them" but practically it did not. Being part of the same cultural setting I anticipated this to happen and considered it as an advantageous strategy to proceed with the research. I was immediately recognized as someone from a different social background. I was immediately recognized as an outsider and every encounter with a girl I was met with queries regarding the purpose of my visit to the madrassah. On being told, even a girl of age 5 would ask me why I do not observe purdah when I am a Muslim. Similar remarks paved way to investigate the topic without any delay; the girls started to provide me with the knowledge of purdah as known to them.

Like dress, language was also given considerable attention before going into the field. Just as western values and traditions are looked down upon by the pupil of the madrassah, so is English as the language of the West. In Pakistan although Urdu is the national language, learning of English is considered as important for its "instrumental" benefits (Mansoor *et. al.*, 2007) and "all stakeholders (student, parents, and teachers) from both public and private sector" reveal a positive attitude towards learning the language (Mansoor *et.al.*, 2007: 165). Rehman argues that it is "the language of the elite of Pakistan both, formally and in official interaction, employment, and education, and informally, in for example, private conversation, entertainment, reading, and travel….it is spoken as an additional language by the Westernized, urban elite" (Rehman, 2007: 220). His study shows that the students from the English-medium schools "look down on their fellow citizens from vernacular-medium schools and madrassas" (Rehman, 2007: 224). Also that many English words have come to replace

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[11] At that time short shirts were in fashion, knowing religious-minded and conservative traditional strata's aversion to this current trend I wore a length that would be considered as "decent" by the girls of madrasah.

[12] In chapter 6 it is explained that simplicity of the dress is the basic code for an approved dress but practically it is burqa which is the only authentic dress fulfilling the requirements of purdah.

Urdu ones, so much so that during conversations in Urdu frequent insertion of English words is a common practice. Given the association of English language with urban elites and westernization; a constant effort was made throughout the research period. For example, it is common for a graduate from the English medium educational institute to use the word "research" instead of its Urdu translation *tahqeeq*. But whenever I had to explain the purpose of my presence in the madrassah I deliberately used the Urdu translation which I would not while communicating in Urdu with my friends, fellows and family. Such negotiations may seem trivial but their significance in developing rapport makes them worth-mentioning here.

An important aspect of this relationship was asymmetry with shifting fields of balance. This asymmetry was based upon the difference in the social and educational status. The worldly education I had was balanced with the religious education they had. I was perceived as the urban "elite" and educated equipped with "worldly power" while their superiority relied on their extensive knowledge of the religion. This became clearer after spending sometime in the field and having developed the rapport. I was consulted when the girls had to appear in some exam for the worldly education degree or questions regarding the English language or about gadgetries like my camera that I was always carrying along. Some teachers at the madrassah even proposed that after finishing my studies I join them as a volunteer to teach the students English, Computer and Science. At the same time my actions concerning religion were scrutinized; and often I was told the correct way of offering prayers. Any view about religion that differed from theirs was nullified on the basis that I was not trained well-enough in religious education to present any personal interpretations of any religious belief, decree, practice or ritual.

My experience confirms that even for a native anthropologist identity was sometimes aligned and sometimes set apart[13]. I experienced the transition from skepticism to respect and trust; the government's spy to respected guest. Their perception about me oscillated between otherness and relatedness. On one hand I was criticized for choosing to live alone in a foreign western country; a society which is morally corrupt and where

[13] Narayan notes in M.N.Srinivas's narrative ethnography " The Remembered Village" (1993: 675)

women are mere objects often scantily dressed and therefore not respected. The despised aspects of my otherness were compensated by my regularity in prayers (though, according to them, the bodily movements during the prayers needed improvisation) and my dress which was regarded as considerably modest as compared to many others in the society. I realized that these two aspects of my personality were particularly highlighted and considered as an inclination towards the "righteous path" (which meant following their worldview). Also the girls often told me how deeply they desire that I start wearing the burqa or inquire when I would begin to wear it. Over the period of time I learnt that just a friendly smile in response would suffice their queries and satisfy them. It saved me from making excuses and giving explanations

My experience of being a native anthropologist confirms the advantages enumerated by Ohnuki-Tierney that the "native anthropologist are in a far more advantageous position in understanding the emotive dimensions of the behavior- psychological dimensions of behavior are hard for outsiders to understand….have intimate knowledge of daily routines that are exceedingly difficult for outsiders to observe….native anthropologist have easy access to not only the intellectual dimension but also to the emotive and the sensory dimensions of these behaviors" (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984: 584-85). This, however, at the same time brings to light one of the major problems encountered, that is, sometimes even useful information can be taken as a matter of routine and for granted; hence missed/ ignored. To overcome this drawback reflexivity was employed to ensure "distancing" required for proper and detailed documentation of patterns of purdah. Ohnuki-Tierney argues that the "Distancing is required not only in our endeavor for abstraction of models and patterns of and for behaviour, which relies on our intellectual capacity; it is also required in abstracting the patterns of and for emotions" (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984: 584). Certain aspects of purdah did not seem pronounced, being part of the same culture and in habit of practicing them myself there was a strong possibility of such aspects getting ignored. Reflexivity helped to minimize this risk.

3.2 The Interview Process:

The process of conducting interviews also involved specific methodological tools explained briefly in the following:

3.2.1 Sampling

The choice to study purdah in madrassah was made using purposive sampling: a sampling type "based on the particular research question" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: 70), which in the present case concerns the practice of veiling for women studying religion. Of all the various madrassahs MJH again is chosen purposefully for it presented an interesting case: purdah suggests seclusion and relegation of women to the private sphere of purdah yet the women associated with MJH participated actively in protests against policies concerning matters related to religion. Patton argues that "[F]ieldwork often involves on-the-spot decisions about sampling to take advantages of new opportunities during actual data collection" (Patton, 2002: 240). Sampling inside the madrassah was also based on the non-probability sampling method; the judgment or opportunistic sampling was used after acquiring the knowledge of the factors stratifying the madrassah population. The reliance on non-probability sampling is based on the perception that "a common culture is reflected in practically every person, event and artefact belonging to a common system" (Honigmann, 1982: 127). Also opportunistic/ judgmental sampling was not done haphazardly, the choice of interviewees attempted to include all the potent variables within the madrassah population (Honigmann, 1982: 129). The main variables include resident/day scholar; married/unmarried; student/teacher; and urban/rural. The age of respondents ranges from as young as 5 years[14] to 40 years old. Within the student population two elements of stratification were considered; their grade within the madrassah and their exposure to worldly education system. The students from all the different grades were interviewed. Included in the sample are both, the students who had an exposure of the worldly education institutions as well as those who did not. A total of 35 interviews were conducted out of the total population of 3500 approximately[15] in the madrassah; the small samples are characteristic of qualitative research because the "research is concerned with in-depth understanding" and "the goal is to look at a "process" or the "meanings" the individuals

[14] The girls who were aged between 5-10 years were not formally interviewed; rather information was gathered through informal conversations.

[15] As explained in the Chapter 4, the madrasah authority initially informed that a total of 3500 girls are enrolled in the madrash but later on deterioration of their relationship with the government I have been told that the total number is 6000.

attribute to their given social situation, not necessarily making generalizations" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: 70).

3.2.2 Informal and Semi-structured Interviews:

To enrich the data collection process, I used a combination of informal and unstructured interviews. A total of 35 girls have been interviewed using semi-structure interview technique. The semi-structured interviews proved very helpful in the rapport-building process as explained earlier. Directed by an interview guide with "a set of clear instructions" (Russell, 2006: 212), these semi-structured interviews covered four major topics: what is purdah, who should observe it, when is it required to obligatory to observe and why. Characterized by open-endedness, these semi-structured ethnographic interviews often include questions tailored "to the responses received from the informant, or interviewee" as well as the "observation" (Moore, 1998: 58). The data collected had two primary dimensions: purdah as learnt in the institution and their personal experience of adapting to this specific style.

The informal interviews on the other hand were particularly useful while talking to the girls as young as 5 or 6 years old. The informality and the candidness of the setting encouraged them to speak openly about their views regarding purdah. Besides this, the informal interviews were carried out throughout the "ethnographic fieldwork to build greater rapport and to uncover new topics of interest that might have been overlooked" (Russell, 2006: 211).

3.2.3 Focused Group Discussions (FGD)

FGDs are significant in the sense that they help gather large amounts of information in a short time. Given this quality, three rounds of FGDs were also conducted, with a group of 8-12 girls each, once with a group of students, once with teachers and once with both. FGD helps not only to improve data collection efficiency but "more important are the effects of the interaction of the participants being interviewed" (Willigen, 2002: 148). FGDs also help to counter check the data in a short time. In this case, they helped to reflect the lines of accord between the participants and the discords, which in turn assisted in identifying the aspects of purdah as learnt in the institution with affirmative nods and complementary remarks while the personal perception of purdah through debate within the group. One such example was the

question about women and leisure activities in the public space, there was a discord between the girls, some were in favour of it while others did not approve emphasizing that the leisure activities should be arranged within the house and with family. One of the senior teachers watching carefully the debate from a distance later remarked that *you have to keep into consideration that not everything the girls say is learnt here, their family values also affect their perception of purdah*.

The only technical problem encountered during the interview process was that I was not allowed to record any of the interviews because of "purdah of voice". According to the purdah ethics a woman's voice should not be heard by a *namahram*[16]. Despite my assurance that I will be the only one recording and listening to their interviews, I was only allowed to write what they say and what I observe. This proved not to be that grave a problem and all interviews and discussions were written down in shorthand note form. The context within which the interview was taken and the gestural responses were noted down as complementary data. There was a constant effort to record even the minutest of information and observation.

3.3 Data Analysis:

The data is analysed using the grounded theory approach introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory approach is used extensively in qualitative research analysis as it encompasses several "research method approaches, from analysis of the interviews and field observations to the analysis of the unobtrusive data" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: 349). Coding the data is an important aspect of this theory whereby data is carefully reviewed to segment into large chunks and related themes, categories and concepts are identified. In the present case a microanalysis of the data was done that is, "the detailed line-by-line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories (with their properties and dimensions) and to suggest relationships among categories; a combination of open and axial coding" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 57). The "Line-by-line" analysis is not used in the literal sense; it rather connotes careful scrutiny of the data which may include pictures, words, phrases,

[16] It includes all the men/ women who are not bound by incest and with whom marriage is possible.

sentences, paragraphs, and other segments of material which are taken apart for description and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 57-58). Grounded theory approach was particularly helpful in managing and streamlining the data right from the beginning of the research.

3.4 Photography

Photography of humans is otherwise prohibited in the madrassah due to religious beliefs but I was fortunate to be allowed to gather the visual data that enhanced the data collection. Due to the involvement of the madrassah pupil in political issues and their interest to promote their stance, they started to use all the available means of information dissemination, which also included allowing the media coverage of their protests. During these protests I was permitted to take still pictures as well as to film the event. Later I was also allowed to take photographs of the madrassah and the activities therein, for instance I was allowed to take pictures of classrooms during lectures. Only, that I did not have permission to capture the face. Photography in anthropology is an age old concept, used as earlier as Malinowski's documentation of the Trobriand Islands (Taylor, 2002: 153). "Photographs are precise records of material reality" (Collier & Collier, 1992: 10). Goin explains its role in anthropological and ethnographical studies as an "attempt to describe visually a way of life – distinct people existing in a specific cultural landscape with specific material culture" (1997: 67). Photography compliments the data collection process in ways different to taking field notes. It is "an abstracting process of observation but very different from the fieldworker's inscribed notebook where information is preserved in literate code. Photography also gathers selective information, but the information is specific, with qualifying and contextual relationships that are usually missing from codified written ones" (Collier & Collier, 1992: 10). In this particular study the use of camera in the field was helpful in many ways: it illustrates the purdah embedded in the architecture, a glimpse of the material life in the madrassah and the attitude of the respondents towards camera and photography. The short video of the public demonstration by madrassah shows how in the public sphere purdah of the girls is strictly monitored.

4 LOCALE

MJH is one of the numerous schools established in the Islamabad with a purpose of disseminating religious knowledge among the female strata of the society. But before going into further details of the Madrassah it would be worthwhile to introduce the area within which it is located.

4.1 Islamabad: Area Profile

Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan, "the second largest Muslim country in the world and the only country established in the name of Islam (Pakistan, The Oxford Dictionary of Islam: 242), Islamabad, literally meaning "the abode of Islam", was declared as the capital of Pakistan in 1959, that is, after 12 years of the country's independence. The construction of the new capital, located in the Potohar Plateau in the North of the country, started in October 1961 and at the end of two years, in October 1963 the new city came to life. In the North of the city is the Haripur district of North Western Frontier Province while on all the other side it is encompassed by Rawalpindi district of the Punjab (1998 District Census Report of Islamabad, 1999: 1). The latter is considered as the "sister city" or the "twin city" due to its close proximity with the area.

Since it is a purpose-built city, almost half of the population (49.4) percent is life-time in migrants. These migrants come from all the four provinces of the country as well as Pakistanis repatriated from other countries, to settle down in the capital (1998 District Census Report of Islamabad, 1999: 44). Spread over an area of 906 square kilometer, the city is divided into three sections: Islamabad urban area proper; Islamabad park; and Islamabad rural area. Islamabad urban area proper, where MJH is located, has

Figure 2: Map of Pakistan

http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/ministries/planninganddevelopment-ministry/index.htm

six further sub-divisions. These include: the Administrative sector or the Nerve Centre; the Diplomatic Enclave; the Public Building Area; Residential Sector; Blue Area and Industrial Zones (1998 District Census Report of Islamabad, 1999: 25). Located in Sector G-6/2 of Islamabad, MJH shares close proximity with the Diplomatic Enclave, the Administrative sector and the Public Building Area, making its location even more important in an already significant city, the capital.

Covering an area of 287 square kilometers, the Islamabad urban area constitutes one of the big cities in the country with a population of 529180 persons. Within a period of last 25 years the population has increased 7 times, net migration is one of the major factors in the population growth (City Report: Islamabad city, 1998: 2 & 21). The population is predominantly Muslim constituting almost 94% of the total population and Christians the second largest. The population distribution of Islamabad city by religion is shown in the table below:

Religion	Population	
	Number	Percentage
Muslim	496528	93.83
Christian	30146	5.70
Hindu (Jati)	173	0.03
Qadiani/ Ahmadi	2133	0.40
Scheduled Castes	20	0.00*
Others	180	0.03

Table 1: Distribution of population according to religion

* Refers to a very small percentage
Source: City Report: Islamabad city, 1998: 23

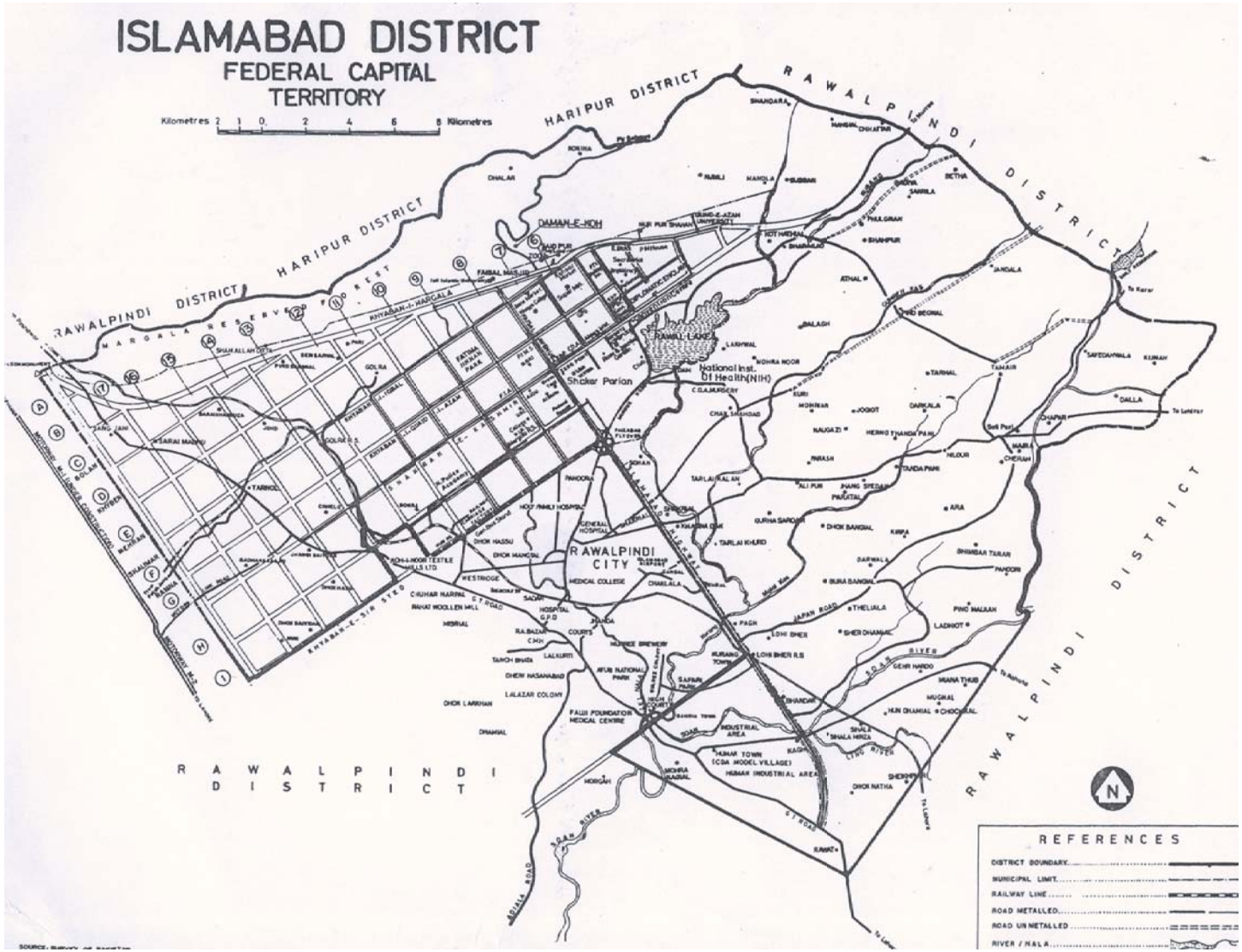


Figure 3: Map of Islamabad showing surrounding cities

The major language spoken in the city is Punjabi, a regional language spoken in the surrounding province of the capital with dialectical variations. The next in the list is Urdu, the national language spoken amongst 14.18 percent of the population followed by Pushto with 10.51 percent speaking the language. Other languages spoken include Siraiki (regional language), Sindhi (provincial language) and Balochi (provincial language). Figure 4 shows graphic presentation of the population in Islamabad with reference to their mother tongue (City Report: Islamabad city, 1998: 23).

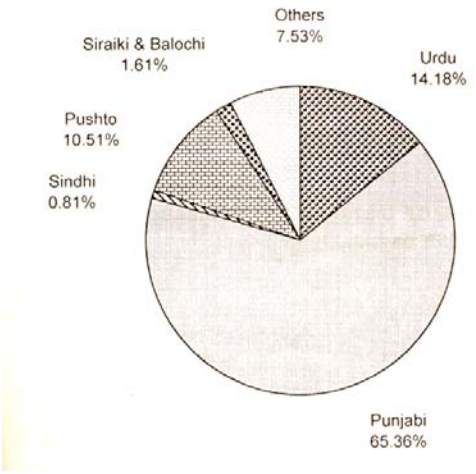


Figure 4: Distribution of population according to mother tongue in Islamabad city

The literacy[17] rate in the city is 77.25 percent with more literate men (83.2 percent) than women (69.68 percent). This is significantly high not only when compared to most of the other cities but as well as the overall literacy rate in the country which is only 49% (Shariff, 2003: 211). The comparatively high literacy rate owes to the network of public and private educational institutes[18] and madrassahs within the city. There are approximately 398 public sector educational institutes and 377 from the private sector[19] (Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2004-2005). The approximate number of madrassahs registered or unregistered totals to 76 according to Ministry of Education, Pakistan (source: Deeni Madaris ki Jamia Report).

The planning of the city, land sanctions and approval of public and private sector buildings be it a residential unit, an educational institute or a commercial construction, is the responsibility of Capital Development Authority. CDA is the executive authority established in June 1960 in accordance with the charter of Capital Development Authority Ordinance defining the

[17] According to 1998 Census, a literate person is one who can read newspaper and write a simple letter in any language.
[18] These include Primary, Middle, High, Higher Secondary, Inter Colleges, Degree Colleges and Post Graduate.
[19] These include Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary institutes.

powers duties, functions and responsibilities of this governing body. The primary function of CDA is to regulate building code; public safety and environment standards; to maintain the existing infrastructure and to plan and expand township of the city. The regulatory authority may hold and demolish any encroachments or unauthorized use of land (www.cda.gov.pk). Later in this chapter is discussed the conflict between CDA and MJH on the basis of land encroachment.

4.2 Jamia Hafsa: The Islamic Seminary

Madrassah Jamia Hafsa, the female Islamic seminary was established in 1992 as a sister branch of Jamiat ul Ulom al Islamia al Faridia (1984); both affiliated to the Jamia Mosque of G-6 popularly known as the *Lal Masjid* or the Red Mosque (1970) due to its red colour edifice (Fig. 9). The foundation stone of the seminary was laid down by Maulana Abdullah[20], the then *Khateeb* (a person who delivers the sermon) of the adjacent mosque. After his murder in 1998, his elder son Maulana Abdul Aziz took over his responsibilities and all the affiliated seminaries came under his supervision. He is assisted by his younger brother in various matters related to the mosque and madrassahs. According to the administration it was on the insistence of the wife of the founding Imam that the first female madrassah was established. According to the principal Maulana Abdullah, the founder of the madrassah was a politically influential religious scholar with a vision of popularizing Islamic teachings and establishing institutions to disseminate religious knowledge. The administration claims that with the growing popularity and increasing donations from the people they continued to build male and female madrassahs in different locations. Madrassah Jamia Hafsa is the most popular among all the branches. Owing to its popularity the administration says it had to renovate the building from time to time to accommodate the fast growing number of students.

[20] A Deobandi Muslim Scholar, who was appointed as the *imam* of the mosque by the then President General Ayub Khan. Maulan Abdullah had also close connection with the later army ruler President General Zia-ul-Haque. (Sipri Yearbook 2008: 68)

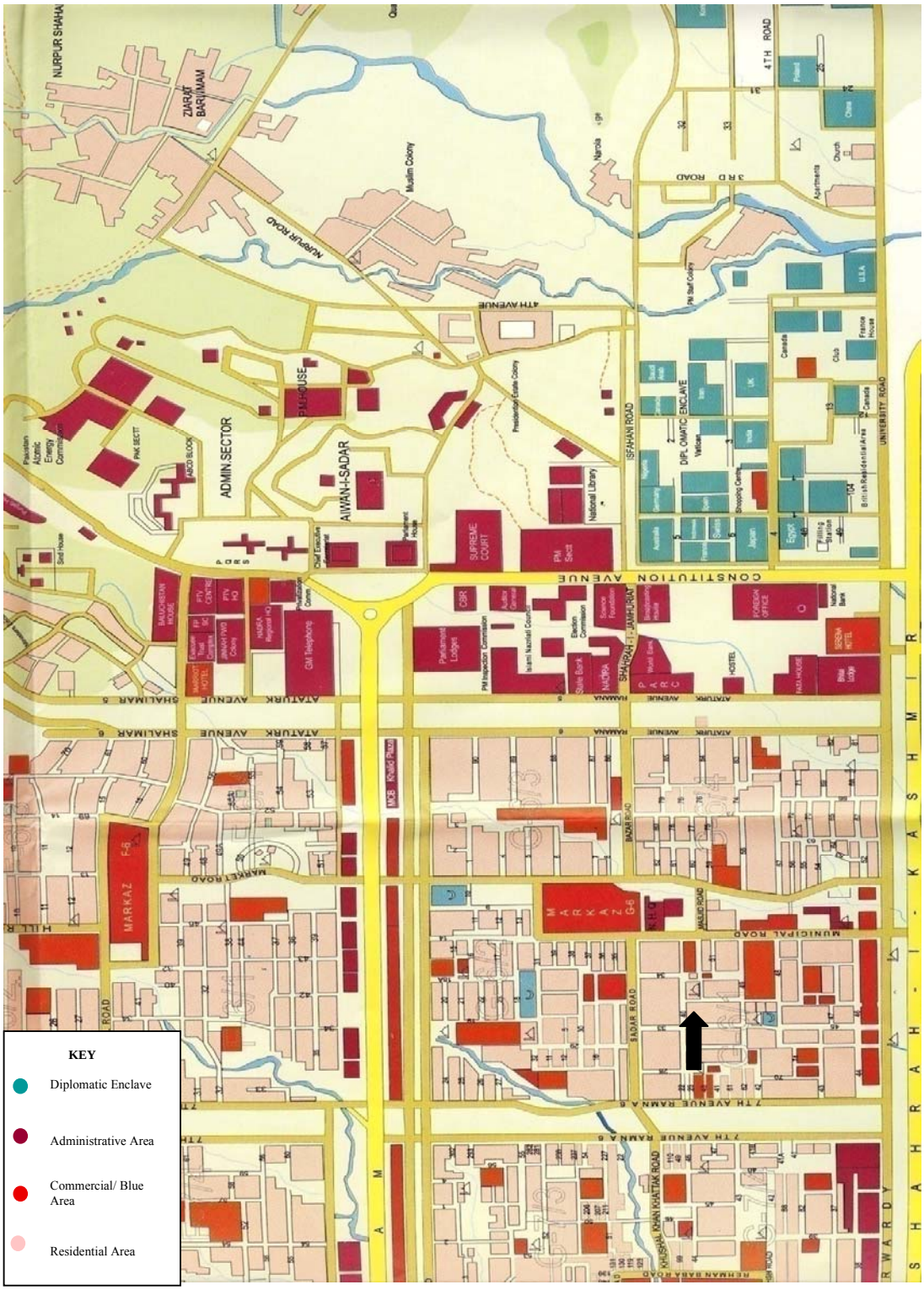
Although the Red Mosque has ten and twelve other female and male seminaries respectively[21], within or in the outskirts of the capital, Madrassah Jamia Faridia and Madrassah Jamia Hafsa are the most prominent for three reasons; one, the centrality of their location within the capital, secondly the very large number of students who have been accommodated there despite comparatively smaller space and lastly, a controversial public standing which is owed to strong, organized protests against such government policies which in some way are related to religion. Each of these factors is briefly discussed below before going into the details of MJH as a religious educational institution.

4.2.1 Centralized Location

The Red Mosque located on *Masjid* (mosque) Road is one of the oldest mosques within the capital. Before the construction of Faisal Mosque, the largest in the capital as well as the country, it was in the Red Mosque that presidents and other high public dignitaries came to offer ceremonial prayers[22]. Located at a very centralized position, it lies in close proximity to the two busiest commercial centres of the city, Aabparah market in the east and Melody market in the north. Various government offices including ISI (Inter-services Intelligence) and CDA (Capital Development Authority) are situated in the same vicinity. Figure 5 shows that Diplomatic Enclave: the residential and official area reserved for foreign missions; the Administrative Area: reserved for Presidency, Parliament and Supreme Court of the country; and the Public Building Area with offices for autonomous and semi autonomous organizations and residential units for federal and provincial governments, also fall in not so far an area.

[21] Appendix 1: The pamphlet published by the Red Mosque listing all the male and female seminaries associated with the mosque.

[22]http://chaikhanah.wordpress.com/2007/04/09/pakistans-blood-red-temple-of-doom-lal-masjid/


KEY
Diplomatic Enclave
Administrative Area
Commercial/ Blue Area
Residential Area
ADMIN.SECTOR
AIWAN-I-SADAR
P.M HOUSE
SUPREME COURT
CONSTITUTION AVENUE
ISFAHANI ROAD
DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE
MARKAZ
MARKAZ G-6
ATATURK AVENUE
SHAHRAH-E-KASHMIR
SHAHRAH-E-RAWADY
MUNICIPAL ROAD
BADAR ROAD
7TH AVENUE RAWNA 6
KHAYABAN-E-KHATAK ROAD
NURPUR ROAD
3RD ROAD
4TH ROAD
7TH AVENUE
Muslim Colony
Presidential Estate Colony
National Library
Parliament House
Parliament Lodges
Pak Secretariat
Aabpara Market
Aabpara Mosque
Pak Sect
Aabpara Block
Aabpara Block
Aabpara Block

4.2.2 The Very Large Number of Students

MJH is one of the largest religious educational institutions for women in the Islamic world. It has an enrollment of more than 6000 female students and provides boarding and lodging to almost 90% of the students (http://jamiahafsa.multiply.com/reviews 20-06-08). According to the *naib mohtamim*, Ghazi Abdur Rashid the large number of students residing within the seminary can also be gauged by the fact that daily 11000 *roti* (bread) are prepared in the kitchen at the main campus of the Jamia for the free mess. An interesting point in this reference is that in November 2007 when I started my research and when the relationship of MJH's administration with the government was not so tense the former informed that the number of students enrolled approximates to 3500 but since the occupation of the children's library in January 2008, they announced the number as 6000 and stuck to it. As the record was not available to the public, it was rather hard to confirm the exact number of the students enrolled and I had to rely on the statistics given by the authorities.

4.2.3 A Controversial Public Standing

MJH has a controversial public standing mainly due to its affiliation with the Red Mosque famous for its religio-political activities and the involvement of MJH students in the political matters concerning religious policies. Also the land on which the building is constructed has been a matter of great concern because according to CDA the seminary authorities have been involved in land encroachment for the expansion of the madrassah.

MJH started as a two room seminary with the purpose of spreading religious knowledge to the girls residing in the nearby area. In an interview with one of the CDA personnel, he explained that initially a plot of 15'x 40' (66.66 sq. yards was allotted for education of day scholar girls living within the surrounding vicinity. Later, on the request of the *Khateeb* to accommodate the increasing number of students an area of 138 Sq. yards was approved. The total approved area allotted to the seminary was 205 Sq. yards. The management of the mosque gradually encroached upon a large piece of surrounding land, almost 7203 Sq. yards. As against this, the MJH authorities claim to have always informed CDA before including any piece of land adjacent to the seminary within it.

While MJH's administration promotes itself solely as an institution working to spread religious knowledge, their involvement in political activities is a well-known fact. MJH is

considered as an "anti-government" madrassah engaged in "vigilantism" (Fair, 2008: 12). Bensahel informs that the founder of the madrassah, Maulana Abdullah was appointed the imam of the "state run" and "state funded" Red Mosque by president Ayub Khan in 1965 (Pardesi, 2008: 97). It is also believed that he was very close to the Pakistan's longest ruling dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq (BBC: 2007; Bensahel, 2008: 201). Maulana Abdullah was famous for his speeches on jihad (holy wars) (BBC: 2007). General Zia-ul-Haq rewarded him for his support for mujahedeen in Afghanistan in 1980s by allotting him a plot to establish Jamia Faridia. In 1992 under the patronage of ISI, Maulana Abdullah established a seminary for girls as well. Bensahel argues that the Red Mosque has a long standing association with militancy (Pardesi, 2008: 97)[23]. In the recent years, the relationship between the Red Mosque complex and government has deteriorated tremendously, especially with the continual protests of MJH's students against razing of the mosque by CDA. A chronological account[24] of MJH's involvement in organized protests against government policies concerning religion during the fieldwork period is briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

The major conflict between the seminary administration and the government started in January 2001 when CDA demolished two mosques, Mosque Ameer Hamza and another built by Police in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, respectively. CDA planned to demolish 84 mosques on the pretext that they are constructed on unauthorized land. The religious scholars however believed that government is demolishing them in the name of security risks. Believing that it is unlawful according to religion to demolish a mosque once constructed and to preserve the sanctity of mosques, students of various madrassah protested, students of Jamia Hafsa went a step further and occupied the state owned children's public library, the only library in the capital for children. The students of MJH raised several demands during their protest, the two most important among them include; building of the razed mosques; and to impose *Shari'a* law, the Islamic legal system, in the country. In February 2007 even after the government agreed to rebuild the mosques, the students of MJH

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[23] For details on the history of the Red Mosque's assoication with militancy consult "the Battle for the soul of Pakistan" by Pardesi: 2007.

[24] The chornological account is based on personal observations and newspapers articles published between January and July 2007. Three leading English newspapers, The News, Dawn and The Post are consulted in particular.

decided to continue the occupation of the library till all of their demands were met. They changed the name of the library from "Model Children Library" to "Islamic Model Children Library". Believing that the society has to be eradicated of all the vices, MJH students started anti-vice patrols in Islamabad they envisioned as a campaign against vulgarity and secularism. This movement was initiated in March 2007. The main focus of the movement was to close down music and video shops and brothels in Islamabad, especially those lying in close proximity of the madrassah. The students kidnapped a woman, called "auntie Shamim" alongwith three others, on allegations that she ran a brothel. After holding them captive for a few days they were released on assurance that they would not indulge in such evil acts again. They launched a complaint center in the Red Mosque and a separate one for women in MJH "to purge Islamabad of evil deeds". On detention of four of their supporters including two teachers from MJH, by the police for threatening music and video shopkeepers, the students made hostage two police personnel and released only after the release of their supporters.

4.3 The MJH Setup

4.3.1 Physical layout:

The building of MJH comprises of three compounds. The first compound is reserved for reception, main administrative office and *Dar ul Ifta*[25]. *Dar ul Ifta* is run by the *muftias*[26] (female Muslim scholar who interprets *shari'a*, the Islamic legal system) who have graduated with excellence from the school to provide services to the women seeking religious solutions for their day-to-day social, economic and personal problems. *Dar ul Ifta* is open each day from 8 am till 10 pm, with 8 *muftias* providing the service on rotation. The next two compounds are double-storey buildings, each with a central courtyard. At the time of research the building was being renovated with construction going on the second compound for the third storey. Each storey is named after the women from the family of Prophet Mohammad, with a prefix *dar*, literally meaning territory. These *dar* comprise of rooms being utilized as both the lecture rooms and *iqamati* (residential) units. Due to a very large number of students and comparatively limited space, foldable mattresses are used to rest during the night which

[25] Darul Ifta issues fatwa; an Islamic religious ruling.
[26] Female scholars who prepare fatwa. At MJH the fatwa prepared by a female scholar is signed and stamped by a male scholar for authentication.

are unfolded in the morning by the students so that the same rooms are used as lecture halls. Often the students also have to sleep in the verandah due to the lack of space. Both the compounds have an administrative office, a rest room for the teachers, kitchen, common toilets, *wu'zu* (Arabic: *wu'du* ablution) area and a central courtyard. The first compound has a courtyard with a small lawn in the center slightly above ground level known as *chamman* (literally meaning garden). The second compound has four equal-sized distantly placed *musalla* (raised platforms); each is used as an open lecture place during the day. The various rooms reserved for particular services mostly have Arabic names; a few have names in Urdu too, for example, the dispensary is named *mustashifa* and the canteen *fundaq*, both Arabic terms.

One of the striking features of the madrassah is the conspicuous lack of furniture. A few low-level wooden desks are the only furniture available for the study purposes. They justify this as being in line with the *sunnah* (normative practices of the prophet Mohammad) and traditions of the *Sahaba* (companions of prophet Mohammad), who used to sit on the floor while performing most of the activities. Kanafani-Zahar in her extensive study of the traditions and rituals in United Arab Emirates noticed a similar tradition among Muslims with the same justification, that is, "sitting on the floor is *sunnah* because the Prophet Muhammad sat on the floor for most activities" (1983:14).

Another notable feature is the inscription of the Quranic verses and *hadith-s* (sayings of the prophet) on the outer walls of the madrassah. While inside the *madrassah*, the walls have verses invoking religiosity. These verses are written by the *imam* of the mosque. The students proudly show them to the visitors as an expression of their *sincerity and earnestness towards the religion*.

4.3.2 Demographic Features:

The students at Jamia mainly come from Punjab, the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and Kashmir. A majority of them are from the impoverished areas of Kashmir and NWFP, particularly the Swat Valley and Hazara. Due to the deteriorating relationship with the government the madrassah administration kept the enrolment record private. However, a general overview of the number of students, their hometown and background is presented to everybody who is not officially associated with the madrassah. The age of the pupils at the *jamia* varies from as young as 5 years to 30 years.

4.3.3 Madrassah as a welfare organization:

MJH provides free education and boarding to its students charging them only the annual examination fee of Wafaq ul Madaris. Though the main aim of the madrassah is to provide religious education it simultaneously acts as a welfare organization providing free mess to all students as well as a monthly stipend to the ones from poor families. It provides the services of a marriage bureau; on the request of the parents it arranges for a suitable match for its pupils who are of marriageable age, in both the male and the female seminaries. The madrassah administration also provides financial assistance for the ceremony in case the family cannot afford the huge expenses that weddings entail. The madrassah authorities claim to have provided refuge to women who face social injustice and tried to practically help them resolve their case through legal assistance. The management takes care of the needs of its students including provision of books, food, beddings, medicines and often burqas too.

4.3.4 Funding:

Although some studies suggest that madrassahs in Pakistan are funded by Saudi government (Grare, 2003: 83, Blij, 2005: 154, Hussain, 2005: 140) yet MJH management does not mention financial assistance by Saudi Arabia rather denies any such occurrence. The administration informs that it is the donations and alms by the people in the form of *zakat*, *khairat*, *sadqat, attiyat* (various forms of charities, alms and donations) that help meet the monetary expenses of the jamia. The management solely relies on these public endowments not even asking for help from the state. The madrassah administration proudly claims of being able to run an institution of such a multitude relying solely on private donations. The administration considers itself as *an exemplary institute for others to follow and for the government to learn from it.* The principal of the madrassah says:

> *Our system is one of the best, we are more than an educational institute; ours is like a welfare organization with the primary task of educating girls. Without any regular income we are running a system. People donate huge amounts of money only because they see that their money is being used in the right way. We assure them not by mere talking but by practically doing something.* (The Principal)

Donating religious schools in cash or kind is a common practice in Pakistan. The magnitude of this form of donation can be assessed by the report of International Crisis Group that states "madrassas receive more than 90 billion rupees every year through charitable donations, an amount almost equal to the government's annual direct income tax revenue" (Thomas 2006: 132).

The MJH administration claims that even when needed they did not ask for financial assistance from the government nor did they accept any when offered. The only demand the madrassah ever put to the government, the principal says, is the allotment of vacant land adjacent to the building for extension. Keeping in view the growing number of girls the madrassah authorities felt it necessary to expand the building. The surrounding land they requested for is owned by CDA and has not been used for a long time, says the principal. The administration of the madrassah argue that the reason for not taking any financial assistance from the government is that it does not come unconditionally, and if accepted it would lead to dependency on the donor. This avoidance of seeking government's help is typical of Deobandi [27] madrassahs and is characteristic of their policy since inception. Discussing the funding of the first Deobandi madrassah Malik states that "the madrassah has never compromised its independence by accepting any grant or subsidy from the government. The madrassah authorities, since its very beginning have recognised that government influence is not always beneficial." (2000: 52).

MJH administration claim to have once refused the offer by American Center to provide English books published by Oxford. The refusal is based on the commonly prevalent skepticism among religious factions about Foreign Aid. The administration justifies the refusal on the presumption that foreign aid in the form of books would most likely include books that promote westernization of the education system and propagation against Islam. The principal explains it by quoting a famous Urdu verse that reflects their skepticism "*saqi nai kuch milaya na dia ho sharab mai*" (literally meaning perhaps the cupbearer has mixed something in wine). This doubt is not typical for MJH only; it is a general characteristic of madrassahs in Pakistan. Thomas discusses it in detail with reference to the post 9/11 American philanthropic efforts concerning schooling in Pakistan in general and madrassahs

[27] Explained in detail in chapter 5

in particular. He argues that these efforts were directed to one, upgrade the economy and second, to achieve the "self-serving aim". He explains the latter as:

> " …changing public opinion from hatred for non-Islamic societies (particularly for those with Christian and Jewish traditions) to that of admiration for Western nations and their belief systems, including their capitalisms, representative democracy, gender equality, scientific progress, and "modern" life styles." Accomplishing those two educational goals would require radical changes in Pakistan's madrassas by (a) altering the madrassah curriculum to include substantial amounts of secular subjects……" (2006: 126)

Generally madrassahs in Pakistan are not in favour of secular system of education and are against modernism. They strongly refuted these reforms accepted by the government, the modernist Islamists and the United States government officials in Pakistan (Thomas quotes Hussain, 2006: 130). They have a unified opinion on the matter that these reforms are "not a sincere offer to help Islamic institutions" but "actually a part of a global conspiracy to deviate us from our basic purpose- to teach the Quran and Hadith" [statement of secretary general of the madrassah education board for the Deobandi school of thought] (ibid).

4.3.5 *Mata'm*: The Free Mess

Mat'am, an Arabic word for restaurant is used for the free mess provided to the residents; students as well as teachers. The free meal is offered thrice a day in the largest room of the building. Again, due to the large number of students and insufficient space, the meal is served in shifts. Several *dastarkhwan* (cloth spread on floor for dining) are spread on the floor; the girls sit on the floor and eat as per *sunnah* of the prophet. The free mess is offered to the residential students and not the day scholars.

4.3.6 *Maktaba*: The book shop

It is infact the book-cum-general store. In the books section, in addition to the religious books and magazines, CDs and audio cassettes of sermons by the Imam of the red mosque and other renowned religious scholars are also available. While in the general store section are sold burqas, small gift items and miscellaneous articles related to the daily usage for example, soap, toothpaste, etc.

4.3.7 Canteens

There are three types of canteen; each catering the different demands related to food. These canteens are open only during the day time. *Fundaq*. (Arabic word for hotel) the only room equipped with simple furniture, tables and benches, sells snacks and cold drinks during the school hours. Many girls during the break time go there for eating and chatting. For lunch, the madrassah has a contract with two ladies who come daily. The girls who do not wish to eat from the free mess can buy their meal from these ladies. Apart from these two, there are canteens, actually small windows opening outside the madrassah where street vendors sit regularly to sell fruits and vegetables. A few girls buy vegetables to cook food for themselves on gas stoves provided in the madrassah for the purpose.

4.3.8 Library

The library at MJH has a large collection of books in print. These include both: the syllabi books and others pre-dominantly related to various religious issues. Majority of them are in Urdu and Arabic. Books in Persian from renowned Muslim scholars as well as English translations of popular books are available in the library. The indigenous library was initiated to promote reading among students and consulting books other than the course ones to enhance knowledge in matters related to religion.

4.3.9 Computer Lab

A computer lab equipped with some 30 computers has been established for the students to learn to operate the new technology. Given the huge number of students and small number of computers, most of the students are still unfamiliar with the use. Also many girls hesitate to use computers due to lack of knowledge of the English language. The lab is especially designed for those who have never been to any worldly-educational institution and the madrassah being their only exposure to the world of learning.

4.4 Dress Pattern

Traditional Pakistani dress, comprising of *shalwar* (baggie pants), *kameez* (long lose shirt) and *dupatta* (long wide scarf measuring in between 2 and 2.5 meters), is the dress code of Jamia. During the school hours the headscarf is worn as part of the school uniform. To distinguish students of one grade from another each is designated with a particular colour of

headscarf. While going outside the women associated with the madrassah, in any way, wear burqa.

4.5 Language and the Communication Pattern

Urdu is the lingua franca of MJH. Students also learn Arabic to be able to read and understand the religious text which exists predominantly in Arabic language. Although everybody at the Jamia is able to read and write Arabic nobody speaks it except while referring to the Quranic verses and sometimes the *hadith-s*. The population of madrassah is comprised of different ethnic groups, each having its own language. Punjabi with its various dialects and Pushto are among the most common ethnic languages that can be heard during informal meetings.

As a sign of respect, teachers and women older in age are called Baji (the Urdu term of respect used for elder sisters). The teachers and the students alike called the principal Aapi jaan (while aapi is a term of respect for elder sisters, the suffix jaan is used for affection). The *Mohtamim* of the mosque who often delivers lectures to the students is addressed as Ustaad (teacher) ji (suffix used for respect)

4.6 Civic Amenities

4.6.1Transport Facility

The madrassah owns only one Hiace van to provide transport facilities to the administration. It is used for various purposes; to go for shopping of the necessary items required for residents of the madrassah; for inspection tours by the administration to other branches; and also to provide commutation facility to non-residential teachers.

4.6.2 Gas, Electricity, Telephone

In order to make living comfortable for the students the madrassah tries to provide all sorts of facilities to its students. It is important to note here that most of the students come from lower income groups or far off places, small towns and villages, where these facilities are not always readily available. The provision of hot water during winters and cold drinking water during the summer is considered as a major blessing by many students of the madrassah. Students can also use the telephone on specific days during specified hours to communicate with their families. During a focused group discussion the students told that they realize they

are being taken care of in a way that no public or even private school would do without charging a handsome amount of money. They feel that their *"madrassah is like a paradise where all their needs are met without being asked for"* (FGD- students)

4.6.3 Technological facilities

The madrassah is equipped with technological facilities albeit not very sophisticated and modern. It owns microphone system and several loud speakers. The loud speakers are most frequently used during Friday sermons delivered in the red mosque. It is also used to make daily announcements; calling names of the girl whose male relative has come to pick her up after the school hours. This is because men are prohibited to enter the madrassah. In case a man has to enter, an announcement is made cautioning the women inside so that they cover themselves up properly. For example, during the fieldwork the madrassah was being renovated and often the masons had to enter the madrassah to go to the roof. Before they enter an announcement was always made to inform the girls so that they conceal their faces. The microphone system is frequently used when a lecture is delivered by a male scholar who sits in an adjacent room as per rules of purdah. It is also used during the regularly organized extra-curricular activities.

4.7 Al Musta'shifa Syeda Umme Ammara: The Clinic

There is a small clinic and an allopathic lady doctor has been appointed to provide the medical care inside the vicinity. It is equipped with medicines and first aid equipment for emergencies. There are several beds inside the clinic to hospitalize patients who are in need of prolonged medical care.

4.8 The Website of MJH

The madrassah owns its own website claiming it to be one of the largest institutes for women in the Islamic world. The website was banned in early 2007 (see 4.2.3). However, later in the year another weblink was launched with greater vigour and activity; several articles are posted daily on the new website. Much of the activity is an attempt to justify their politico-religious ideology. There, one can also find a great deal of discussion on the government's siege and later destruction of the mosque and the affiliated madrassah. The website highlights the martyrs of the siege as great heroes and the political system as tyrannical and oppressive.

A large collection of photos illustrating the life of the madrassah are also available at the following link http://www.jamiahafsa.multiply.com/.

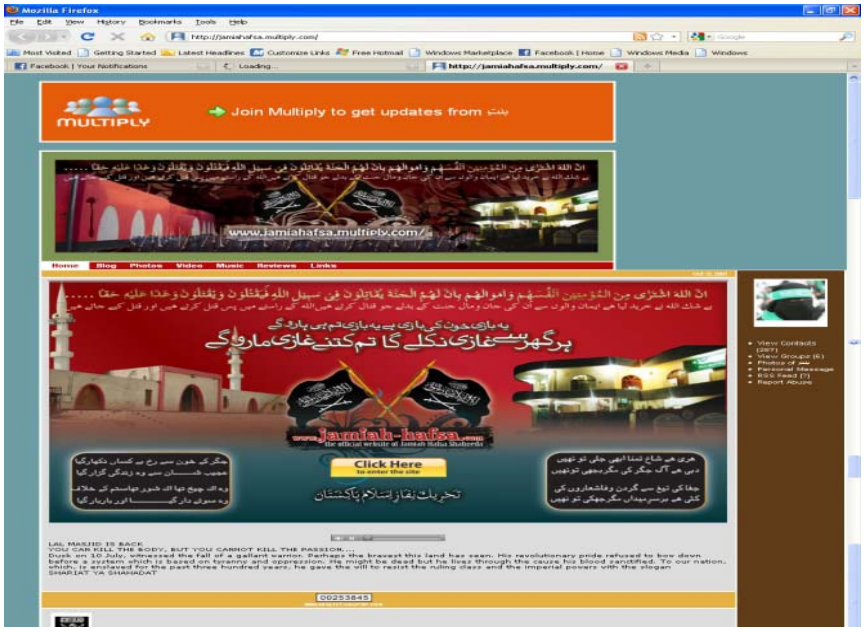

Figure 6: The New Website of MJH

4.9 A Visual Tour of MJH

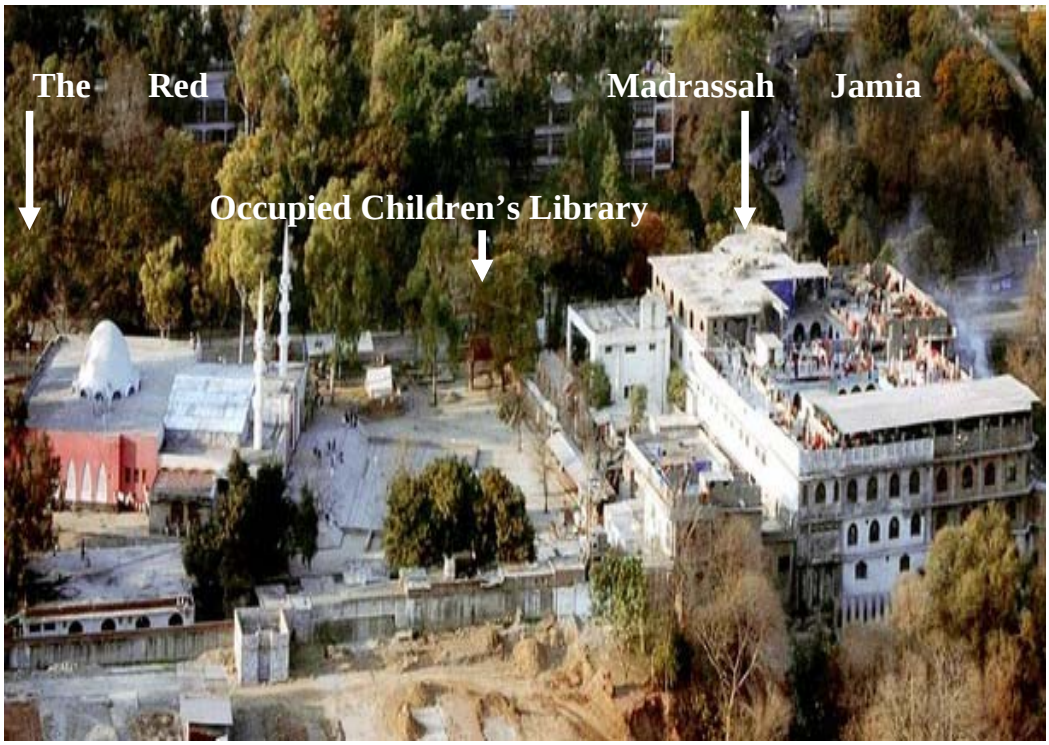

Figure 7: Aerial View of the Red Mosque and the adjacent MJH
source: http://www.daylife.com/photo/095874ofm269Z

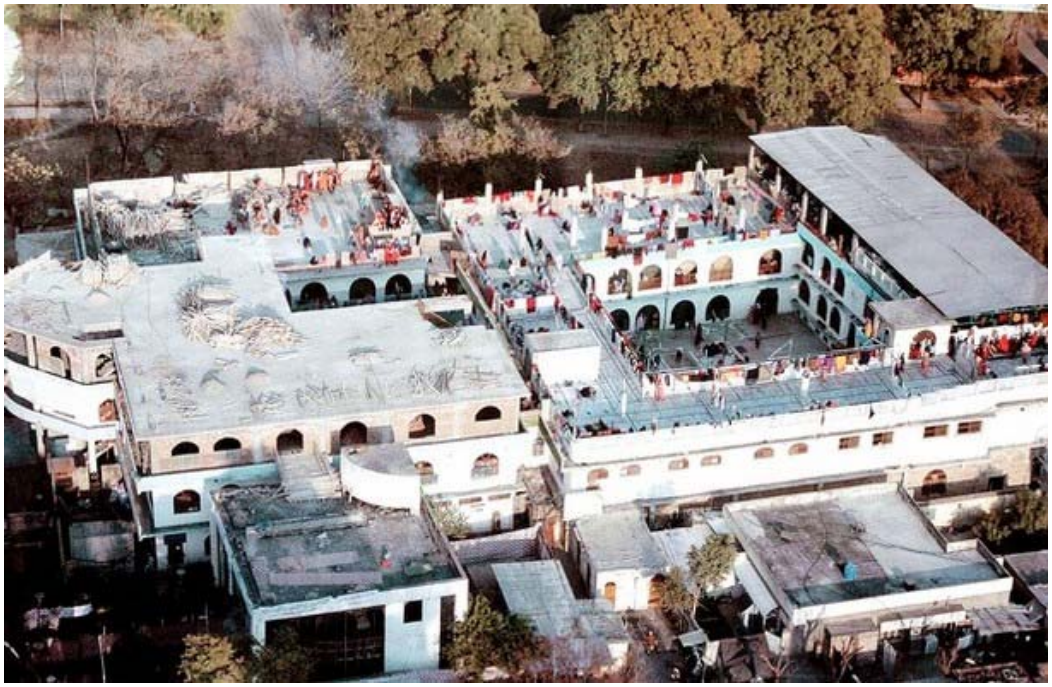

Figure 8: Aerial View of MJH
Source: http://cache.daylife.com/imageserve/00rTad73eLeB9/610x.jpg

Figure 9: The Red Mosque located on Masjid (mosque) Road

Figure 10: Madrassah Jamia Hafsa (MJH)

Figure 11: The Reception

Figure 12: Darul Ifta

Figure 13: Al *Musta'shifa* Syeda Umme Ammara - The Dispensary

Figure 14: The Meeting Rooms

Figure 15: Canteens with the Rotating Window

Figure 16: The Out-door Kitchen for the Students

Figure 17: *Chamman*:in the First Compound

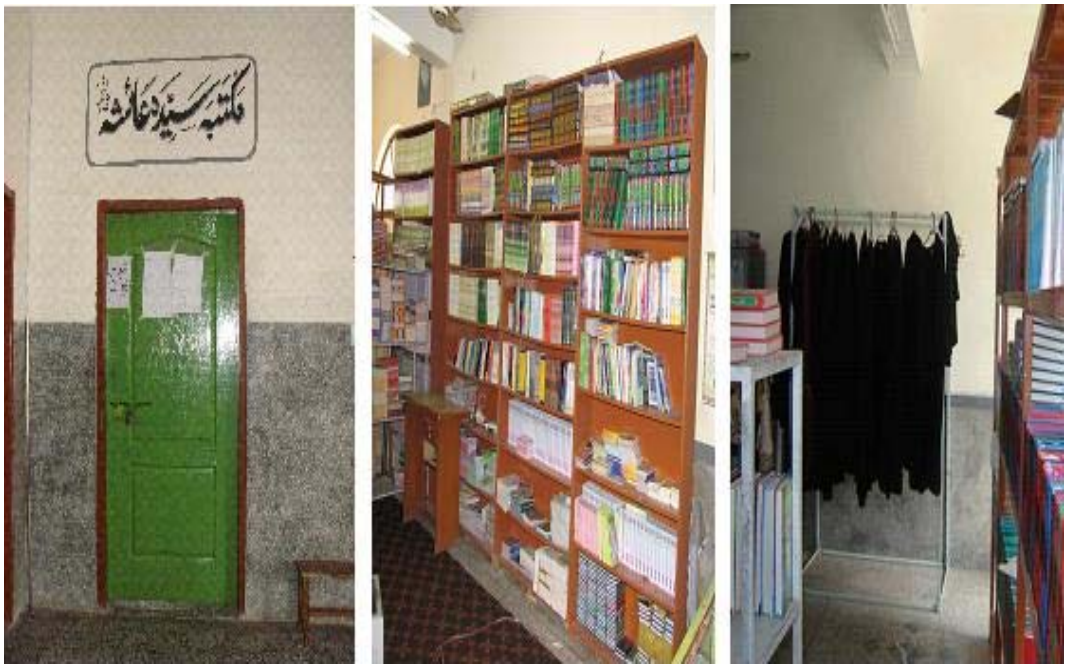

Figure 18:Maktaba Syeda Ayesha - The Book Store

Figure 19: *Fundaq*: The Hotel

Figure 20: The Library

Figure 21: Indoor and Outdoor Lectures

Figure 22: Hallways with Classrooms

5 SCHOOLING AT MJH

5.1 An Overview of the Education system in Pakistan

Pakistan has two main parallel systems of education the mainstream or the secular and the religious. The origin of both the systems can be attributed to the colonial times when the mainstream system was initiated by the British rulers to meet their requirements while the religious or madrassah system was established as a counter-system to endorse traditional education and reinforce religious identity. Fair points out that in Pakistan the terms "mainstream" and "worldly" are preferred as against "secular" for the reason that the Urdu translation for "secular" is *baymazhab* or *ladeenyaat* meaning "without religion" (Fair: 2008:15&119). I prefer to use the terms "mainstream" or "worldly" for the reason that in these institutes religion is taught from elementary till the graduate level as a compulsory course called Islamabad. Hence, it would be unfair to label them as secular or without religion despite of the fact that they primarily disseminate the worldly knowledge. The two systems of education are described in detail below:

5.1.1 The Mainstream Education System

This system originated during the British rule when the colonial rulers introduced "a new formal system, tailored to the British needs" (Malik, 1996: 122). These needs required to educate the local people to "staff[ing] the civil service and produce an educated elite that shared the values of and was loyal to the British (Sipri Year Book, 2004: 163). Once established this system was given more attention also by the succeeding governments as compared to the indigenous one[28] which was kept marginalized. Malik argues that even after the British rule the traditional system was neglected while the new formal system perpetuated as "the policy of modernization" and the so called "supporters of new nation of state of Pakistan" promoted it (Malik, 1996: 122). The mainstream education system attracts the masses because a degree or diploma from these institutions increases the eligibility for employment.

[28] It is important to note here that the indigenous system did not remain static and transformed radically during the colonial rule, as discussed in section 5.1.2 The Religious Education System

Varieties of mainstream institutions: The mainstream education system is highly complex and its detailed analysis would require a separate study[29]. In the following is a brief overview of the system. The various institutions are categorized using different variables.

Number of years and the Degree Awarded: The secondary education given in schools is a 10 years programme awarding a Secondary School Certificate (SSC) upon completion. SSC is the minimum requirement for many jobs as well as for admission to the colleges and universities (Fair, 2008: 20). These 10 years of school education is divided into three levels. First 5 years of primary schooling, three years of middle succeeded by another two years to attain the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), also known as matriculation. There are three types of schools in accordance with the year of the study, primary, middle and secondary. The most favourable among them are secondary schools as the student continues his/her ten years of study without any break. The post-secondary education is delivered in colleges and universities. To acquire a master's degree further six years of study is required, two years of higher secondary schooling, two for bachelors and two for the masters.

The administration: This variable divides the educational institutions into the state-influenced public institutions and the private ones. These systems run parallel and provide services from basic to the higher levels of education. The state influenced institutions include "top public schools, cadet colleges, the federal government model schools and the armed forces schools" (Rehman, 2005: 25). The top public schools and cadet colleges are few in number and quite expensive (Rehman, 2005: 29). Most of the government-run schools, however, are affordable offering services "almost free or [at] very affordable" prices (Rehman, 2002: 23). The state-influenced institutions also include those run by the armed forces and other state-controlled bodies such as the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), the Customs Department, the Pakistan Railways, the Telephone Foundation, and the Police. They are established with the purpose of providing education at an affordable cost to their employees and beneficiaries while charging higher fees from ordinary public (ibid: 23, 28).

[29] Tariq Rehman's book "Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization of Pakistan" is one of the most comprehensive studies on the education system in Pakistan.

The private schools can further be divided into elitist and non-elitist schools on the basis of the fee they charge. The elitist public schools demand exorbitant fee and are accessible to limited population (ibid: 31). The non-elitist private schools, although charge much lesser amount of fee than the elitist ones, nevertheless their costs are much higher than an average state school (ibid: 35).

The language: English and Urdu are the two main languages of instruction in the education sector. In public schools the language of instruction is predominantly Urdu or one of the provincial languages (Sindhi in Sindh, Baluchi in Baluchistan and Pashto in Northwest Frontier Province). The curriculum in these schools includes learning of the English language as well (Fair, 2008: 16). Some of the government-run schools in the urban centers also have English as the teaching language (Rehman, 2002: 25). Contrary to the vernacular public schools the private schools have English as the language of instruction (Fair, 2008: 16). In any case English as a language is taught in all the schools, given its importance in the job market.

Gender: The mainstream educational institutions can also be categorized on gender lines, there are both single-sex and co-educational institutes. However at the higher education level, both public and private institutions particularly the universities are co-educational with only a few exceptions.

5.1.2 The religious Education System

The religious education system also called the traditional system has a longer history compared to the mainstream one. It started to get marginalized only after colonization. These educational institutions are always single-sex since they teach religion which prohibits free mixing of girls and boys. It can be divided into two main categories: *maktab* (school) and madrassah: while the former provides elementary schooling of religion, reading and learning the Quran, the latter gives secondary and post-secondary education in religion. maktab-s and madrassahs also differ with reference to the provision of services. Fair identifies maktab-s or the mosque schools as “pre-primary” and “primary (*ibtedai*)” [(beginners)] religious school. These are day schools and the classes may be held “in a mosque, in a courtyard of houses, or even underneath a tree”. Maktab-s teach children between age five and nice (Fair, 2008: 25) while madrassahs provide boarding and lodging to their students. Majority of the madrassahs also provide mainstream education for students who have not been exposed to that system.

Madrassahs are mainly divided on the basis of the school of thought they adhere to. Since the institute under study is a madrassah a detail of the types and number of madrassah follows henceforth:

5.1.2.1 Madrassahs in Pakistan: types and number: At the time of independence there were only 245 (Khalid, 2002: 145) madrassahs in Pakistan, but with the growing years they continued to expand as a parallel system of education. A survey of Ministry of Education Statistics conducted in 2004-05 shows that 12,654 madrassahs are operating in the country. They belong to the two major sects of Islam, the Sunni and the Shia. Since Pakistan is predominantly a Sunni Islamic state the number of madrassahs belonging to this sect far exceeds that of the Shi'ites. However it is important to note that since the Sunni religious scholars do not exist as a monolithic group; likewise the madrassahs are divided on the basis of the school of thought (*maslak*) they adhere to. This sectarianism dates back to the eighteenth century with the 'collapse of the Mughal Empire and the domination of the British in the sub-continent of South Asia (Jaffrelot, 2004: 223). The Sunnis may chiefly be divided among three sub-sects: the Deobandis; the Barelwis; the Ahl-e-Hadith. Some Sunni madrassahs are also affiliated with the reformist Jamat-i-Islami political party. The various types of madrassahs as well as the different schools of thought they adhere to are briefly discussed below:

5.1.2a The Deobandis:

The name comes from the town of Deoband in India where the first madrassah of this *maslak* was established in 1867. The founders were renowned Muslim scholars of their time, Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-77) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905). The madrassah at Deoband was the first one of its kind in the sub-continent. It followed the British Bureaucratic pattern of education instead of the traditional informal familial style (Metcalf, 1978: 112). However, it did not include in the curriculum the study of English and Western Sciences and rather endorsed the study of the Quran, the *Hadith* and the Islamic Law and Science (Jaffrelot, 2004: 224). They also opposed folk Islam which focused on mysticism of shrines, intercession by saints and related customary celebrations. "The Deobandis, in contrast to the common practice of the pirs [(sufi/ saint/ spiritual guide)] of the shrines, emphasized as far more

effective the central responsibility of the disciple to adhere to the Law[30]." For them the most mysticism lies in following *Shari'a* and the most mystic is the one who successfully follows the exemplary life of the prophet (Metcalf, 1982: 182, 183).

5.1.2b The Barelwis:

They emerged as a reaction to the Deobandi school of thought. Followers of this *maslak* owe heavily to the teachings and writings of Ahmed Riza Khan (1856-1921). The first Barelwi madrassah was established in 1904 in Bareilly; the hometown of Ahmed Riza Khan. They are also known as the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at literally meaning, the "people of the [prophetic] way and the [majority] community" (Sanyal, 1998: 635-37). As against Deobandis they justify "mediational, custom-laden Islam, closely tied to the intercession of the pirs of the shrines that was characteristic of the area" (Metcalf, 1982: 296).

The Deobandis and the Barelwis both believe in *taqlid*, literally meaning "imitation", refers to the "unquestioning acceptance of established schools and authorities" (Bannerman, 1988: 12), the "ossified orthodoxy" (Vikor, 1988: 160) and ""blind imitation" of earlier authorities or hair-splitting casuistry" (Zaman, 2002: 17). These earlier authorities of the Sunni mazhab were established as early as the beginning of the Middle Period of the Islamic History (1000-1500 A.D). Those that have survived until the modern times include Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali and Shafa'i (Berkey, 2003: 216). In Islamic jurisprudence *taqlid* is considered as the opposite of *ijtihad*, a scholar's attempt to "arrive at a correct legal opinion" (Rauf, 2007: 213 en. 15) concerning matters that are not clearly "regulated by the fundamental texts" (Zaman, 2002: 18). Zaman, however, considers this conventional view of *taqlid* opposing *ijtihad* as only half true. He argues that although the "theoretical distinction" between a *muqallid* (one who indulges in taqlid) and a *mujtahid* (one who practices *ijtihad*) is sharp the practical picture reflects "shades of gray". He also argues that although the conventional scholarship establishes stagnation and rigidness of the Islamic legal tradition with no room for innovation (*ijtihad*) once the "fundamental principles and doctrines had been articulated" in the earlier centuries of Islam, however, the recent works on the history of pre-modern Islam are widely questioning its validity. Hallaq, for instance, depicts

[30] The Law here refers to *Shari'a* Law

that the closure of *ijtihad* is a debated issue among the religious scholars. He argues that the medieval scholars failed to reach a consensus on "inadmissibility of *ijtihad*". Infact the "major figures in the history of Islamic law continued to claim the ability of creative adaptation, re-thinking, and expansion of the legal tradition" (Hallaq in Zaman, 2002: 17)[31]. However, this claim does not undermine the significance of *taqlid* among jurists (Zaman, 2002: 17). Vikor elaborates on the complex functioning of *ijtihad* and *taqlid* and believes that the two are "closely linked" and are "parts of a dialectical unity in the development of the law" (Vikor, 1988: 160). *Taqlid* is practiced by both a lay man and a religious scholar; a *mujtahid* practices *ijtihad* only in those fields of which he has "extensive knowledge" and "competence" beyond that he relies on already established "recognized knowledge" and follows it (*taqlid*). For a layman or unlearned Muslim pure *taqlid* is the rule. *Taqlid* is based on the presumption that "[T]o properly understand God's intention with His message requires extensive knowledge". It is also believed that the "actual" meaning of the Text can only be understood if one has "the knowledge of the language; "the knowledge of the contexts of the Text and its relevance"; and "other sources of revelations that may affect our understanding" (Vikor, 1988: 160).

Given this background of *taqlid* Deobandis and Barelwis are considered as *muqallid-s* (the followers). Both are followers of the Sunni **Hanafi** *mazhab* (Arabic madhab, literally religion, here refers to the different schools of thought in Islam) and believe that an unlearned Muslim or a less knowledgeable one should not attempt to find out the meanings of the Divine and the sacred Text himself rather should follow the religious scholars. It is important to note here that although both, the Deobandis and the Barelwis, follow the Hanafi school of thought; however, their ideological differences regarding Prophet Mohammad and folk Islam are so intense that both have separate seminaries for the promotion of their *maslak*.

5.1.2c The Ahl–e-Hadith:

Ahl-e-hadith literally means 'the people of the prophetic narrations'. They 'reject any intermediation between man and God like the canonical law or the cult of saints'

[31] Hallaq's article "Was the gate of *Ijtihad* Close?" is a detailed effort to explain that *ijtihad* continued to be practiced throughout the Islamic History in theory as well as in practice. It refutes the conventional notion of "closing the gate of *Ijtihad*" established by the modern scholarship (Hallaq, 1984: 3-41).

(Malik, 1996: 124). Ahl-e-Hadith are "vociferous critics" of *taqlid* and strong proponents of laying the foundations of religious norms and practices "not on the prescriptions of the schools of law but only, and directly, on the Qur'an and the sunnah/ hadith" (Zaman, 2002: 24). Since they do not follow any of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, they are called *ghair-muqallid-s* (non-followers)

5.1.2d Jamat-i-Islami:

It is a reformist political party founded in 1941 by Maulana Abu Ala Maudoodi (1903-1979), an influential Muslim thinker. As against other Sunni madrassahs the seminaries affiliated with Jamat i Islami, emphasize the learning of 'politics, economics, and history' in addition to the traditional scriptural text. This is 'in keeping with their goal of producing *ulema* who can confront western ideas' (Fair, 2008:59).

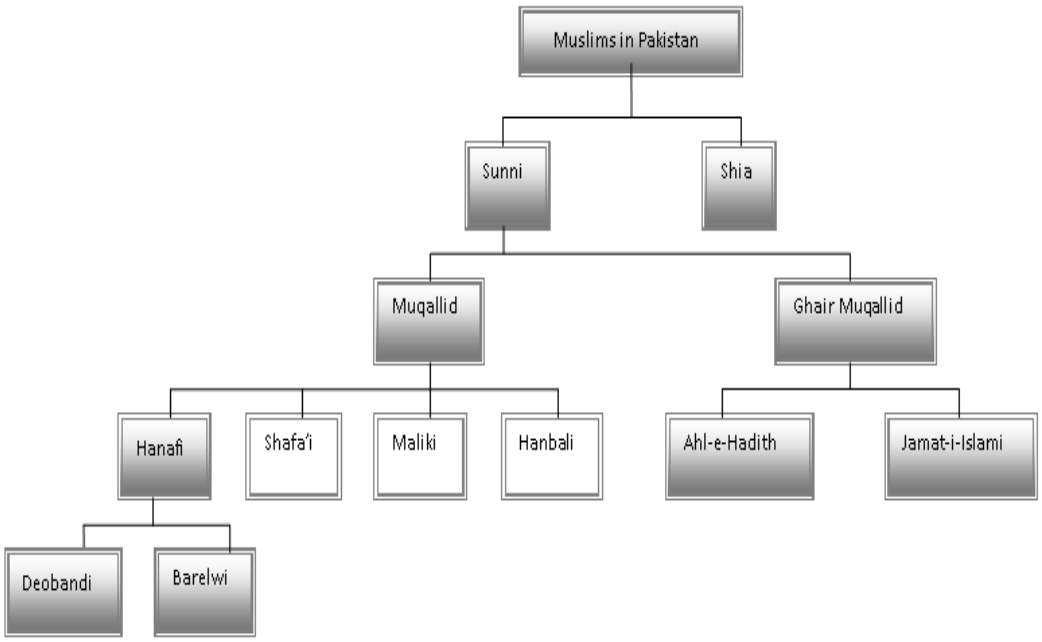

Figure 23: Types of madrassahs with reference to the different schools of thought

*Note: The shaded boxes depict types of madrassahs existent in Pakistan

5.1.2e The Shias:

They are different from the Sunnis in that they believe Ali Ibn i Talib as the rightful successor of the Prophet and refute the chain of succession of the four caliphs. They mourn the battle of Karbala[32] every year. The Shi'ites exist in minority and have comparatively fewer madrassahs in the country.

Though there exist a few unregistered madrassahs in the country but majority of them are affiliated with their respective umbrella organizations called *wafaq* or *tanzim*. These organizations were established with an aim to 'organize' the madrassahs, 'to reform their curricula' and to 'standardize the system of examinations' (Malik, 1996:124). Table 2 provides details of the types of madrassahs operating in the country, their respective central boards, the year of establishment of the board and its central location.

Name	Sect/ sub-sect	Head Office	Established in
Wafaq ul Madaris Al-Arabia Pakistan	Deobandi	Multan	1959
Tanzim ul Madaris Ahl-e-Sunnaht Pakistan	Barelwi	Lahore	1960
Wafaqul Madaris Al Salafia	Ahl-i-Hadith	Faisalabad	1955
Rabita-tul-Madaris Islamia	Jamat-i-Islami	Lahore	1983
Wafaq ul Madaris Al Shia	Shia	Lahore	1959

Table 2: Types of madrassahs and their affiliated boards
Source: Khalid, *Deeni Madaris Main Taleem*, 2002: pg.143

The following table reveals the number of madrassahs in the country as well as their enrolments and the number of teachers. It is evident from the statistics stated below, that the Deobandi Hanafi school of thought is the most popular in Pakistan. The largest number of madrassahs operating in the country belong to this mazhab.

[32] The battle of Karbala took place on the 10th of Moharram (the first month of Islamic calendar), 10th October 680 in Karbala, a city in present Iraq. Hussain, the grandson of prophet Mohammad was martyred in the battle. It is commemorated by both, the sunni'ites and the shi'ites, however the latter hold special mourning ceremonies.

Name of Wafaq/ Tanzim/ Rabita	Affiliated inst.	Enrolments	Teachers
Wafaq ul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan	9,398	1,350,000	48,500
Tanzim ul Madaris Ahl-e-Sunnaht Pakistan	2,064	82,806	8,500
Wafaqul Madaris Al Salafia	336	35,251	1,374
Rabita-tul-Madaris Islamia	454	52,774	2,749
Wafaq ul Madaris Al Shia	375	16,441	1,982
Independent Institutions	27	7,566	512
Total	**12,654**	**1,544,838**	**63,617**

Table 3: Number of madrassahs with reference to their enrolments and teachers
Source: Ministry of Education (2004)

5.2 MJH: A Deobandi Hanafi Madrassah

MJH follows the Deobandi Hanafi school of thought, the most popular in South Asia. It is a university (*jamia*) level institute which claims to provide the society with well-versed and qualified religious scholars.

5.2.1Their motto:

Like any other organization MJH has a motto revealing the goal towards which they work and motivate their pupils as well. Their motto aims to create awareness among the masses to live their lives in accordance with the rules of the religion. However, since January 2007, the madrassah took a rather radical stance, that is, "*Shari'a ya shahadat*" (Islamic legal system or martyrdom). The madrassah demanded of the government to implement *shari'a* law in the country. The new motto started to appear in all the public appearances of MJH. The madrassah after the demolishing of the mosques in the capital, formulated a charter demanding the government to make several reformations regarding religious policies. The implementation of *shari'a* in the country was of highest priority in their list of demands. The administration and the students of the madrassah not only became vocal about it but also started to work for its implementation themselves. In the absence of the government action, the madrassah pupil did not hesitate from taking law into their hands in their pursuit to implement *shari'a*. As devotees of Islam they considered it their rightful duty to purge an Islamic

state of all the evils that they perceive as a consequence of westernization and modernity.

Figure 24: Students of MJH wearing bandanas with their motto *shari'a ya shahadat*

The insistence on following *shari'a* is a characteristic of madrassahs in general and Deobandi madrassahs in particular. The first Deobandi madrassah was founded with a vision to spread awareness among the Muslim masses about the importance of following religious norms in all the fields of life. Bueheler records that "[I]n 1867 a group of ulama founded a Dar al-Ulum at Deoband to propagate a *shari'a* minded revivalist/ reformist Islam. (46) The Deobandi orientation emphasized adherence of individuals to Islamic behavioral norms …." (Bueheler, 1998: 180).

5.2.2 The Aim of Madrassah

MJH and its affiliated branches were initiated with the purpose of spreading literacy among the female strata of the society. It was a few years after the establishment of the male madrassahs that the administration realized a need for providing equal educational opportunities to the female. The political influence of Maulana Abdullah, the founder of the madrassah, helped him initiate this self-assigned project. The idea was inspired by one of the sayings of the prophet is interpreted as[33]: "It is obligatory for every Muslim to seek knowledge, men and women alike." Learning and acquiring knowledge

[33] The people at the madrassah always use "interpreted as" when referring to a *hadith*. They justify this on the basis that Arabic is a vast language and one word may have more than one meanings. To avoid mistakes it is better to say interpreted as it leaves room for variations. However, it is also important to note that any interpretation of a *hadith* or a Quranic verse that does not correspond to the interpretation by the *ulema* of their School of thought is not regarded as authentic

are considered as a life-long process; it is reflected by the oft-quoted saying of the prophet interpreted as "Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave". The administration believes that the low level of literacy in the country is because of the negligence of the government. It also believes that the dissemination of the religious knowledge is most important, the principal states:

> *"In this time when the government is not fulfilling its responsibility to spread equal opportunities for education and also the right kind of knowledge we feel obliged to do whatever best we can for the deprived children of the country, boys and girls alike. Our learning of religious knowledge goes waste if we do not transmit it to our younger generation. We hold these daughters of the nation dear and respectable, they are our future. We are trying our best to ensure that their birth into poor families does not deny them their right to knowledge. We provide them the right kind of knowledge in the right kind of environment, an environment that guarantees "purdah"."*

The madrassah inculcates a sense that both the genders are equally obligated by religion to acquire knowledge, however the kind of knowledge that is considered compulsory is not the worldly one rather the religious. The religious knowledge holds more importance in comparison to any other form of knowledge, explained in detail in the section 5.2.6: Their Ideology about Knowledge. This ideology forms an essential part of the madrassah's aims and objectives. The administration believes that the aim of the madrassah performs dual function: it caters to the need of those girls seeking religious knowledge while on the other hand it motivates people to opt for learning the religious knowledge.

> *The aim is to teach people about religion so that they are not worried about the material success and failure of this world. To acquaint them well with shari'a, its importance, and how to live according to it so that they are rewarded with eternal bliss. A Muslim is not supposed to develop his own worldview he lives in accordance with the worldview provided by the religion and the Islamic Shari'a. By establishing a madrassah we wanted to create an environment where people are not discriminated against on the*

basis of material things of life but their knowledge. To create in them a sense of pride through active participation required of a member of an Islamic society. All this is possible only in Madrassah. (based on the interview with the Principal and FGD with teachers)

5.2.3 The Target Groups

The establishment believes that it had a clear vision of the anticipated groups and their possible demands. They claim to provide for the needs of three interest groups: those women who seek religious knowledge themselves, those men who want their wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers to learn in a secluded environment, and those parents who cannot afford to send their girls to other schools because of the high expenses they would entail.

5.2.4 Admission Rules:

The administration does not have any specific rules for ~~the~~ recruiting the students. There is no age limit to join the madrassah. Unlike the mainstream institutes, girls as well as woman of all ages and educational background can join it. The only eligibility criterion is that she shows an aptitude for learning the religious knowledge and that she agrees to abide by the rules of the seminary. The madrassah was primarily established to disseminate advanced religious knowledge, a four-year *a'lima* course. To get admission in this course a girl should have a Secondary School Certificate (SSC). However, more than often the girls from impoverished backgrounds come to the madrassah. They being unable to bear the expenses of the mainstream education have either no or very little education. Therefore, the madrassah runs a parallel six-year programme that teaches the mainstream education to accommodate girls with different educational backgrounds. The madrassah authorities decide the eligibility of a girl to a particular grade in accordance to her previous educational experience.

5.2.5 Factors of inclination

In Pakistan, it is common for the parents to decide for the future of their children especially girls, not only the institute they will go to for education but also if they are allowed to go at all. This aspect of female education has also been highlighted by Farah and Shera in their review of female education in Pakistan (2007: 18-19). Keeping this general trend in mind I focused on the two important questions related to their decision

to study in the madrassah. One, whether they opted to study in the madrassah out of personal choice or was it their family's will. The second questions inquires the factors that inclined them to choose for the madrassah system. In the following paragraphs each of these questions is explained. [34]

The Figure 25 is a product of quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the data in response to the question: if it is by their personal choice that they joined madrassah or as per their family's will. On the quantitative level the answer can be categorized as personal choice, family's choice and both. But the in-depth interviews reveal that the various responses cannot be strictly organized along these three categories. The analysis reveals that the borders of these categories are somewhat blur. Those who claim to have joined the madrassah out of personal choice were already aware of their parent's approval of religious study. However, I prefer to keep them as a separate category than to merge them with the group that said "both". The reason being that in case of a personal choice for madrassah study the initiative is always taken by the child and not the parent. While the category "both" is actually a reflection of the mutual understanding between the parent and the child.

Secondly, the qualitative analysis suggests that the two sub-categories: "against family will" and "against personal will", emerge as the by-product of the categories personal will and family will respectively. Although the occurrence of these two instances is rare compared to the rest yet they are significantly important in revealing all the diversity of experiences while deciding for an educational institute. Out of a total of 18 respondents from the group "personal will" only 3 took a stand and joined madrassah despite the family's unwillingness. On the other hand, out of a total of 7 interviewees who joined madrassah following the desire of their family, only two were reluctant to join it in the beginning. I would like to briefly discuss these rare case studies before going into the details of the factors influencing the preference for madrassah education.

[34] Since all the teachers are qualified in madrassah education therefore the question was posed to both students and teachers.

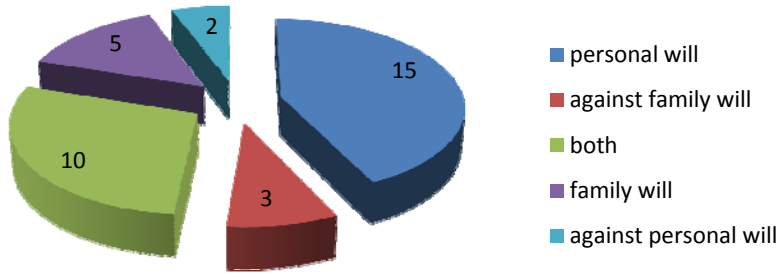

Figure 25: Joining the madrassah as per Personal will / Family's will

The cases of "against family will": Three girls claim to have joined the madrassah despite their family's resistance. These cases on one hand, reflect the high repute MJH among the madrassah-oriented sections while on the other hand they show society's opinion about madrassahs in general. In case of Binte Rehan- the family was not willing to send her to the madrassah because of the distance. She lives in the south of the country and it is a 22 hours journey between her city and Islamabad, where MJH is located. It is a general trend in Pakistan that parents very often do not like to send their daughters to study in an institute as a hostelite. Binte Rehan's parents eventually succumbed to her wishes due to a good reputation of the madrassah.

> *I had this strong desire to come to MJH for my muftia course. My family was against it, they did not want to send me this far and stay as a hostelite. But I took a stand. I told them that if I were to become a muftia I will not go to any other institute. My father himself a religious scholar always wanted his children, sons and daughters alike to become religious scholars too. He knows that MJH is the best institute for girls and so what else could he do but to agree (binte Rehan, 20-student, takhasus.)*

In the other two cases the stereotypical image of madrassah in general forms the basis of the family's disapproval. Although the girls came from different backgrounds with reference to religion, their families held fairly similar opinion about madrassahs. Binte Inaam comes from a modern family whereas, Binte Jamal identifies herself with a religious-minded family background. Their families believe that madrassah is a

backward and conservative system of education. They teach an extreme version of the religion and intolerance for other sects. Moreover, Post 9/11 situation has increased apprehensions about madrassah as breeding terrorists and therefore not a safe place for study. However, the two girls feel proud in taking a strong stand on their decision and convincing their families for letting them attend the seminary. This is how Binte Inaam narrates her story

> *The cousin of my neighbor studied in this madrassah. When I met her I became curious about the madrassah studies, I am very emotional so instantly I decided to join MJH myself. My parents did not agree to it they thought it is one of those emotional decisions that is not to be taken seriously. In the beginning they tried to stop me by telling all the usual stuff that you hear about madrassah, safe harbor for terrorists, backward, living in stone age etc. I lost my patience and stopped talking to them. When they saw that my mere desire has turned into an obsession, they gave me the permission. I see a change in myself as I practice that I learn. Now that I am here their opinion about madrassah has changed as well (Binte Inaam, 22-. Mu'alima)*

The cases of "against personal will": Out of a total of 35 only two girls report having joined the madrassah against their personal will. These cases are similar because in both them, the girls' father insisted them to attend madrassah after attending a *tablighi jama'at*[35] session and turning *tablighi* (preacher) himself. The girls themselves had different aspirations in life. While Binte Ali reveals that she *always wanted to become a doctor but due to her father's insistence joined the madrassah* Binte Dilawar a graduate from college believed that she had *learnt enough and never felt that there is something*

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[35] *Tablighi* literally means to convey or to transmit and *jama'at* means group. *Tablighi* jama'at is a term used for an Indian reform movement founded by Mawlana Ilyas in 1927 in Delhi. It focused on religious, rather than political, aspects of Islam. (The Oxford Dictionary of Islam: 309-310) It originated within the colonial context to meet the challenges of Hindu purification movements trying to "re-convert Muslim communities that had recognizable Hindu customs. *Tablighi jama'at* movements concentrated on refroming practices among Muslims, insisting on "simplest Islamic tasks, such as going regualarly to the mosque and reading the Qura'n". (Veer, 2002: 181). Its fundamental goal has been *tabligh*: "conveying" especially conveying *shari'a*-based guidance. Although this spiritual renewal movement originated in India it has now been spread all over the world (Metcalf, 1993: 584)

left to be learnt including religion. Both claim to have realized the importance of religious education only after coming to the madrassah and admitted that they had little/scarce religious knowledge before attending the madrassah. Binte Ali feels blessed to have come here. After coming to the madrassah she learnt that *God sends only those of His creation to madrassah whom He loves the most*. These cases are important because on one hand, they reveal that *tablighi jama'at* leave strong impressions on people attending them- often transforming their worldview to one that emphasizes strict following of the religion. They also reflect how a sense of superiority is created in madrassah pupil as special ones love and chosen by the God Himself.

Having discussed these five exceptional cases, I now move on to the general categorization of the inclination factors for opting madrassah. These factors are generalized on the basis of their repeated occurrence as reasons for joining madrassah. The students in the madrassah come from different social, economic, religious and educational backgrounds and their choice for madrassah is embedded in different reasons. Some join the madrassah for their quest of religious knowledge while others join to avail a free of cost education, yet others choose to study in madrassah due to their dissatisfaction with the mainstream education system. Often these factors overlap resulting in multiple reasons for joining the madrassah. The way various stimuli have affected the decision to join madrassah in explained in the following.

Religious Factors: MJH is a religious school so majority of the pupil come in quest of knowing the religion better. Although various factors contribute in stimulating such a quest however, *seeking Allah's happiness by discerning the true spirit of religion and propagating it* is often quoted as one of the leading and decisive factors. Quite often, the students claim to belong to a *mazhabi* or *deeni* (both mean religious) family background. In most cases, the male members of the family, either father or brother or both, are *tablighi* and actively involved in preaching and spiritual development activities.

Binte-Tariq, a day scholar studying in the *A'lmiya,* informs that it was on the suggestion of her father that she joined the madrassah. Her father, a *mubaligh* (preacher) himself, strongly recommended Binte-Tariq after the completion of her bachelor's degree, to go to the madrassah. Not only her, but all her siblings after completion of their mainstream education came to madrassah to learn about religion. She believes it is particularly important for a *mubaligh's* family to be well-versed in

religion and thinks that preaching starts at home. If the family of a *mubaligh* is not religious, he would lose impact on other people as it might weaken the effect of his teachings.

Binte-Bilal who has a specialization degree from the madrassah and now serving as a teacher in the same alma mater, takes pride in coming from a *deeni (*religious) family. Religion is given prime importance in her home. Like her, all her siblings aspire to become religious scholars. She decided to join the madrassah at an early age. After passing her 6th grade she left the mainstream school and took admission in the madrassah. Inspite of the generally prevailing negative reputation of the madrassahs in the society, she believes that the teachings at madrassah are the "revealed" and the "sacred", therefore, far more superior to the mainstream education. Talking about the career of madrassah- graduates, she says that the primary job of any madrassah-qualified person should be the preaching of religion by establishing more madrassahs or working in the mainstream education system as teachers of religious studies. She is aware that such a work will only earn little income but she believes that the material gains is not what a true madrassah- graduates should aim for.

Sometimes it is for the perpetuation of the family tradition that a girl joins the madrassah. In such cases, the family is involved in spreading the religious education since generations. Binte Rehan comes from one such family. Her father is an *a'lim* (religious scholar) and so is her elder brother. In keeping with the family tradition she aims to work for dissemination of the religious awareness among the masses. As mentioned earlier that MJH offers the best *Takhasus* (the highest degree) course in the country and as she aims to become a *mu'alima* and later might open her own madrassah she could choose nothing less than the best. She considers herself lucky to be born in a time when madrassah for women are rather widespread compared to the past when only male madrassahs were popular.

In a few cases, a previous experience is mentioned as the inclination factor. A few girls report that they went to madrassah for memorization of Quran at an early age. Later they joined the mainstream education. However, they could never forget the enlightening experience from the past and always thought of rejoining the madrassah once their studies are completed. Binte Ishaq, a student of *a'lmia* is one such student. She went to madrassah when she was 10 years old for one year to memorize Quran.

Later she joined the mainstream education and studied till 12th grade. She says that she always dreamt of coming to madrassah again because of the unforgettable experience. She feels that religion is followed in a true spirit in the madrassah.

Social Factors: Various social factors also contribute towards making a choice between a madrassah and a school. The aspiration of the parents about the educational pursuance of their children is a common factor. In Pakistan, it is customary for the parents to decide for their children's future- i.e. the type and the source of education. It is not uncommon for the parents to keep their daughters from attending a school resulting in a low literacy-rate. Within the Pakistani context, the parents often refer to the father who can have a strong influence on parents' decision (Farah & Shehra quote Ashraf, 2007: 19). Quite often the parents do not wish their daughters to go to the mainstream education school and so frequently the girls' join madrassah . Farah and Shehra argue that in Pakistan, due to the long distances parents often do not like to send their daughters to distantly located schools because of the potential threats they may face (2007: 20). However, for the students of MJH the distance never posed a problem. The segregated environment and observance of *purdah* rules prohibiting the entry of men or even the close relatives of students inside the madrassah overrules these fears. Moreover, the students are not allowed to go outside the premises until accompanied by a male member of the family.

Another important reason is that parents prefer to send their daughters to the school where majority of the girls from the extended family study. Binte Bilal studies along with eighteen girls from her extended family. For her, this carries numerous benefits. She thinks that the presence of her cousins does not let her or any of them feel homesick. It also gives them a sense of solidarity. Although she appreciates the madrassah system yet she feels that the presence of her cousins makes her feel more secure. She is sure that their fine experience will be a source of inspiration for the younger girls of their family to join the madrassah. She informs that initially she and her two sisters were enrolled in the madrassah. Then the other girls of the family got the inspiration followed Binte Bilal and her sister one by one. During the course of my research I found that inspiration by a neighbour or a cousin or a friend played an important role for many girls in deciding to join the madrassah. i. Most of the girls show awareness for the little possibility of their wish to study religion being rejected by

their parents. The present research shows that generally being religious means earning merits in the life hereafter not only for one's self but for the family as well.

Educational Factors: All those reasons that are related to the mainstream education in any way; be it the dissatisfaction with it, inability to cope with its curriculum / system or non-availability of educational institutes within the vicinity, are compounded under this heading.

Zaman argues that in Pakistan a significant number of dropouts from the schools opt for madrassah education (2002: 224). [36] This study endorses the stance. Quite a few girls mentioned their inability to cope with the mainstream education and hence left it and chose the religious education as an alternative. This inability can be reasoned on various grounds. The horrendous circumstances of overpopulated public schools, the lack of proper attention needed by the individual student and the inability of the parents to help the children in their studies due to their illiteracy or inadequately education are only a few of the many reasons. Notwithstanding the comprehensiveness of the mainstream curriculum, the students at the madrassah find it comparatively easier to understand, learn and reproduce because majority of the books are in Urdu, a language known by almost all of them. The common view regarding the madrassah education is that it is very simple and only the failures and weak students go to the madrassah. Although the students of madrassah find that the language is an aid for better understanding, but other than that they argue madrassah education as demanding and tough as any other education. The case study of Binte Imtiaz highlights this point and simultaneously appreciates the education system:

> *I could no longer study after my 8th grade. I failed to produce good results so I thought I should do something easier. I used to hear people saying that those who are not intelligent go to the madrassah because the studies are easier, but this is due to their ignorance of the system. When I came here I found that the studies are quite*

[36] Zaman quotes from The News, one of the leading English newspapers in Pakistan, the statistics of dropouts calculated in 1994-95. In its issue dated 27th June 1995, The News reveals that the ratio of dropouts among boys was to be 43 percent in the urban areas of Pakistan and 78 percent in the rural area. For girls, the ratio was 59 percent and 88 percent, respectively. Zaman argues that "such dropouts appear to comprise an increasing proportion of those now studying in madrasas…"

> *tough. We have to learn a lot and on daily basis, if we do not, we would fail. Despite of the fact that it is tough I like the madrassah system better. The students have close interaction with the teacher. If we do not understand we are free to go and ask any teacher who is available. Teaching and Learning, both processes are more intense here. (Binte Imtiaz, 20 –student, a'lmia)*

Among the many who decided to pursue the madrassah education there were few who had a fine experience of mainstream education but still opted for the madrassah because of their very little knowledge about religion. They showed their dissatisfaction with the religious study course (known as Islamiyat) and found it insufficient to fulfill their spiritual needs. Despite the fact that from the earlier grades upto the bachelors level Islamiyat is a compulsory course, but it failed to provide satisfactory answers to many of their queries about religion.

Many students come from far off rural areas, especially from that of NWFP and Kashmir. These girls often complained about the lack of mainstream schools in their areas. Generally speaking for the girls especially dwelling in the rural areas of Pakistan, the lack of schools- is the most common reason for either none or insufficient exposure to education. A dearth of female schools impedes their literacy rate (Fair quotes Andrabi *et.al.* 2008: 37). However, this lack does not mean that they lose their interest in seeking education. For instance Binte Ali after passing the primary level was unable to pursue her studies because there was no secondary school for girls in her village. Her parents did not allow her to go to the nearby town to study further. She could not sleep at night and used to cry a lot, this continued for months, such was her passion for seeking knowledge, she explains. Her father came to know about MJH through his colleagues and he brought her there. He liked the madrassah because the education was free, girls stayed with girls and they were not allowed to go outside. Binte Ali says that she enjoyed studying in the madrassah so much that after the completion of her studies she joined it as a *mu'alima*. She is satisfied with both; the quality as well the type of education that she has acquired.

Economic reasons: Very often, those who cannot afford the expenditures entailed by mainstream institution- especially the private ones comes to join madrassah. Singer argues that "[T]he reason for the madrassas new centrality stems from the weakening of

the Pakistani state….the madrassas became immensely popular by targeting the lower class and refugee populations, whom the Pakistani state has failed to provide proper access to education" (2001). However, it is interesting to note that the students at MJH often prefer not to mention financial constraints as a decisive factor for choosing the madrassah rather they prefer to mention a deep interest in religion as the main reason. Contrary to this the administration of the madrassah, the teachers and in some cases where I got an opportunity to have an informal conversation with the parents, unaffordability of the education expenditures, comes up as the key factor behind madrassah enrollment. Mother of binte Fazal, who has eight children all studying at the madrassah, complained about the heavy expenses of the mainstream system. Her husband owns a small general store in a town in Kashmir. Initially when they had two children they enrolled them in a school but later when they started to have more children, they realized their inability to educate them because of their economic situation. So despite of the mother's desire that her children study both, worldly and religious education, due to the inadequate finances the parents had to enroll all of their children to madrassah. She blamed the government for not taking care of the children born in poor families and appreciated the madrassah system for catering their needs of her children. The do not have to pay any fee except a nominal amount for the annual examination fee.

The desire to educate daughters also reflects an inclination towards upward social mobility through better job prospects to say the least. With a specialized degree in religious studies, the girls can opt for teaching in any madrassah, run their own seminary or if they have sufficient exposure of the mainstream education system they can work there as well. At MJH, there are instances of all the three cases mentioned above. Just as financial constraint is never mentioned as a factor for joining madrassah, economic benefit out of education is never mentioned as the primary reason for acquiring education. It is always nobility of the teaching profession; a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement by serving the society; and above all earning *sawab* (religious merit) are mentioned as the inspirations for work. Most importantly, for an educated girl there are better marriage prospects which are even more important than better job prospects. The girls believe that an educated man will obviously seek for a compatible partner.

5.2.6 Their Ideology about knowledge

The girls believe that seeking knowledge is of premium importance in the life of a Muslim. The significance of knowledge (*ilm*) in Islam is evident from the fact that there are about 750 references to it in the Quran, the most revered book of Muslims, the third most used term after God (*Allah* 2,800 references) and Lord (*Rabb*-950 references) thus confirming its centrality in the religious tradition. Rosenthal argues that "the frequency with which the root –l-m occurs in the Qu'ran is not a matter of chance. It is mentioned with such persistence that nobody could fail to notice it. It was a concept that the Prophet wanted to be noticed. It was one of the basic ideas he has made it his business to convey to his followers" (Rosenthal, 1970: 20). Moreover, the Quran at several places invokes Muslim to acquire knowledge. The ideology of knowledge of the pupil of madrassah can be best understood with reference to their ideology of life itself. Following is an explanation of their ideology of life, succeeded by their ideology of knowledge.

The ideology of life: The girls at the madrassah believe in a second life which is permanent. The present life is transient and short-lived with death being a reality. The real life is the life hereafter which is eternal. All the energy in this life should be utilized to achieve success in the next life. Life is often metaphorically referred to as an examination hall and a period of test[37]. Whatever is done during the life will be rewarded in the afterlife. While life is regarded as an examination hall, the human body is compared with a machine. The examiner is believed to be one God who has created everything. Just as every machine has a guide manual for its proper functioning, the human machine has to be guided by the religious books. The ideology of life and knowledge is circular: Life is about learning; learning is about religion: Learning religion teaches the correct way to live which in turn would lead to a successful eternal life in the hereafter (Fig. 26). Just as religious knowledge is considered the real knowledge, life hereafter is considered as the real life because it is believed to be eternal. It is also believed that people who are righteous in this world would go to the Paradise and enjoy a blissful afterlife but those who are not would be sent to the Hell

[37] The use of metaphor and similies is a common practice among the people in the madrassah. This is discussed in detail later in the chapter.

and. Thus, it is very important to live the life according to religious decrees in order to be successful in the next life. The people at the *madrassah* believe that Islam is not just a religion it is "a complete way of life" hence, life should be lived in accordance with *shari'a*, the rules of the religion.

> *There are certain essentialities of life which need to be known, what needs to be done, what is permissible and what forbidden. The knowledge of ibaadaat (sing. Ibadat meaning prayers), the knowledge of sahih (right) and ghalat (wrong), jaiz (legal) and najaiz (illegal), halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden), paak (unpolluted) and napaak (polluted), bear the secret of successful life. This would restrict us in some ways but that is for our own benefit as we say here "zindagi Rab chahi, agay man chahi" (Live life as God wishes and get what your heart wishes in the hereafter/ Live life according to God's will so that the next life is lived with personal will)" (FGD, students).*

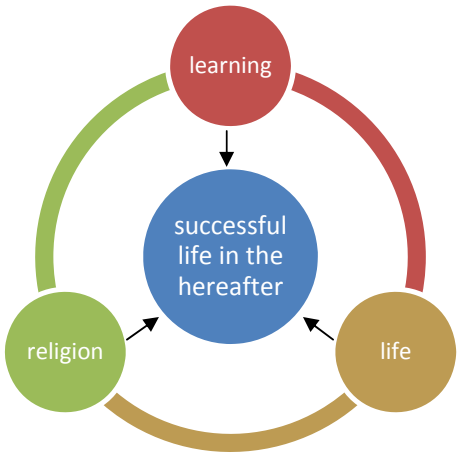

Figure 26: Ideology of Life

The ideology of knowledge: The girls divide all types of knowledge into two main categories: *deeni ilm* (religious knowledge) and *dunyavi ilm* (worldly knowledge). Within their ideological framework these two broad categories do not fall on the same scale rather exist in hierarchy with religious knowledge being superior. While acquiring religious knowledge is *farz* (Arabic *fard*; obligatory) the pursuit for worldly knowledge is not obligatory rather preferred. The madrassah pupils believe that those sayings of the prophet that require Muslims to acquire knowledge actually refer to the learning of the religious tenets. Religious knowledge is the real knowledge while worldly one is

merely acquisition of a skill. Hence, according to my interlocutors worldly knowledge should always be kept subservient to the religious one.

> *The real knowledge is that of the religion. The knowledge of the life hereafter, that is everlasting. We learn to know the Creator better and to worry about the next life. Our aim is not to know the world or to worry about worldly matters (binte Moeen, student-Darja, Takhasus)*

Religious knowledge primarily includes: Quran, the holy book; *Tafsir,* the exegesis of the holy book; *hadith-s* the sayings of the prophet; *Sunnah*, the prophetic tradition; *Fiqh* the Islamic jurisprudence and *Shari'a*, the Islamic legal system. Learning of the Arabic language has always been part of the curriculum since most of the religious scripture originated in this language. All the other types of knowledge are considered secondary in the learning process. The mainstream education system falls under this category.

5.2.7 The mainstream education system versus Madrassahs

A very interesting aspect of the present research is that any discussion about the ideology of knowledge always involves a comparison of the religious education system with the worldly one. This comparison is made on several levels with an effort to show the superiority of their system against all the other systems of learning. Two complementary dimensions of this stance include a self-defensive position together with a justification for the need to promote religious knowledge. The self defensive position is an outcome of the awareness of the negative image of madrassahs held by the society in general particularly post 9/11 scenario. The madrassahs in general while MJH and the Red mosque in particular are considered as terrorist breeding institutes promoting an extremist version of religion. In the following is explained the most commonly mentioned aspects of comparison between mainstream and madrassah education.

Identity and Language: The justification for the need to promote religious education concerns identity issues. The idea of constructing a true Muslim identity lies at the heart of such a standpoint. Such an identity requires fulfillment of certain obligations which can be done rightfully only after the acquisition of the right kind of knowledge as explained in the ideology of knowledge. This Muslim identity, my interlocutors believe, supplements the nationalist identity. The two nation theory by virtue of which Muslims of the sub-continent demanded a separate homeland is often mentioned to

support the argument. Their mindset is reminiscent of the one prevalent during the colonial period. The worldly education system that emerged during the colonial rule in the sub-continent was never accepted by the *ulema* as a legitimate system of education. Watt argues that during the colonial period even when the "ulema were not exactly anti-British, but they discouraged Muslims from obtaining a Western education" and strongly opposed "the study of the infidel language of English" (Watt, 1988: 41). Talking about the Deobandis madrassahs in particular, Jafferlot argues that "[I]n reaction against the colonial presence….the ulemas of Deoband dropped English and 'Western' sciences from the education curriculum, and promoted instead the study of the Koran, the Hadith, Islamic law and science" (Jaffrelot, 2004: 223-224) According to my interlocutors learning of English language symbolizes persistent sub-ordination to the West. Hence, they would like a change in the medium of instruction promoting Urdu and Arabic- the national language and the language of the religion to emphasize nationalistic and religious identity.

> *I have been to school for some years but would never like to go again until and unless there are some changes, for example, schools should emphasize more on national language, give it more importance. Why do they use English? Why don't they call school a "darsgah" (place for learning) and class a "jama'at (literally means community with reference to school it means grade or class)? I don't say that English should not be learnt it's only that Urdu should be given more importance, Arabic is even better; it is the language of our prophet. I love my country and more than that I love my religion and I know from my personal experience that this love is emphasized in a madrassah but not in school (binte Javed, 21-student, a'lmia)*

> *The English wanted to distance us from our knowledge. And we made their task easy by succumbing to their wishes. We started thinking the way they wanted us to; that our system is backward and their system is progressive. We are to date serving them. The reason we are not successful is because we have disowned our own system, we have disowned our identity. Now most of us are Muslims by name not by practice. Only a handful of people are religious in the real sense (binte Haroon, 22-student, a'lmia).*

Given the fact that Urdu is the primary medium of instruction in public schools and madrassahs, which together formulate two third of the education sector, it is no surprise that they prioritize the language. The girls show a preference for Urdu for two reasons, one that it reflects patriotism and second that there understanding of the language is much better than English.

Environment, Curriculum and Training: Language alone is not the factor leading to the dissatisfaction of the madrassah pupil with the main stream system. There are several alterations that are needed before it can be considered suitable in accordance with the *shari'a* requirements. On one hand, it involves major changes in the curriculum with inclusion of more religion oriented subjects. While on the other hand a change in the environment of educational institutes is deemed necessary; an environment that promotes religious ideology. The idea of gender segregated institutions lies at the core of such an environment. There is a strong belief that the social environment impacts behavior. And it is fundamental for the educational institutes to create an environment conducive to practice what is being taught. Only learning is not considered enough. It is essential to practically apply what is learnt. The girls inform that, on theoretical level students learn the importance of offering prayers five times a day while on the practical level they learn the correct way of doing it. In comparison to the mainstream system, the madrassah system is portrayed as the perfect learning institutions giving due importance even to the secular fields of study. The following excerpts from a focused group discussion with students of the final grade are reflective of the above mentioned points. The students while discussing their ideology started to make comparison between what they have learnt in schools and what they are learning in the madrassah with latter playing a vital role in their lives.

> *The main drawback of the school system is that if offers co-education which is wrong and negates the purdah law. Then the curriculum there has all sorts of man-made stories. It should be revised with the suggestion of the ulema (religious scholars). We have here the perfect curriculum, you know why? (pauses and waits for an answer noticing that I am waiting for her to speak she continues to explain) Because it teaches shari'a. Here we are told that every person has two types of obligations, towards the Creator and towards other human beings. We are trained fully to fulfill both types of obligations. We feel we have*

wasted our lives in school. We have here both, the religious knowledge and the worldly one but only to that extent which is required.

Schools disseminate knowledge for the sake of knowledge. You can check the syllabus; there is the subject of Islamiyat, teaching about Islam. There is so much repetition, the same things are repeated till Masters level and what is even more pitiable is that they do not practice it.

Our moral self is trained here, we become morally practical and active which is rather more essential for survival than the money. Practicing the knowledge is very important. Just as one cannot expect to pass a chemistry course without giving practical one cannot expect to be a true madrassah student until practicing what is taught. The environment here corresponds to what is being taught.

Materialism versus Spirituality: A major difference perceived between the two systems is that while one is required for physical being the other is essential for the spiritual, with the latter having precedence over the former. It is believed that the mainstream system promotes materialism and individualism (*nafsa nafsi*) as against that the madrassah which emphasize on religiosity and morality. The mainstream education system for them has also fallen victim to the existing capitalist economy which has commercialized everything including education. The girls believe sole aim of education has been reduced to earning as much money and material gains in this life as possible. This materialistic ethos has created an unending environment of competition leaving people with little time to care for each other. It has prioritized self-interest against the well-being of the community. The teachers of the mainstream education, according to them are not interested in teaching but earning money. Such self-centered aims leave them with little sincerity and time for their pupils. As against that, the girls say that a *mu'alima* of madrassah, since she teaches religion is particularly cautious about transmission of the right kind of knowledge in the correct way. She ensures that the student has comprehended it well, is practicing what is learnt and endorses it by practicing it herself first. The following extracts from various interviews reveal that the students hold a negative opinion about the mainstream education system.

In schools we are explained the process of birth, in madrassah I learnt why I was born. There I learnt about the structure of eyes and its physical function but here I learnt the morality attached to it. Do you see the difference? It is between the physical and the spiritual. So I would say that I found my aim of life here (binte Dilawar, 20-student, aama).

In schools, well honestly, I think there everybody's target is to earn money and the students to learn to earn money. There is materialism, there is competition, and one feels as if in a race, everybody striving to win. They charge exorbitant fee but do not care for the children as such. Here our teachers take us by finger and in a way they spoon-feed us. They take care of us, warn us when we do wrong, they pay individual attention to each one of us (Binte Khurram, 25-student, khasa).

The schools train students to become egoist and materialist. Parents and their children do not realize it at present but soon they will. The teachers are there either to earn money or for fun, either way they are not interested in the pupil's welfare. They have weak foundations. Their outlook towards life is wrong, hence the outcome is wrong. Those with religious knowledge never fail, for they do not look for high incomes, they are not materialistic, they know how to live within their limited means (binte Moeen, 18-student, takhasus).

Materialism, Competition and Gender: The girls perceive that the mainstream education creates competition among individuals irrespective of their gender. The madrassah study is also considered better because it evades the possibility of competition between genders; rather it encourages complementarities. It is believed that men and women are created to perform certain roles and that the material competition created in the mainstream system between the girls and boys will jeopardize the system suggested by the religion. These gender-specific roles regard men as the bread winners. Going into the public sphere to earn a living and provide for the needs of the family is their obligation. On the other hand, the private sphere of home and family are considered primarily as a woman's domain. From the girls' perspective the worldly

knowledge is about acquiring skill needed primarily to earn livelihood, therefore it is considered more important for men. While discussing schooling at MJH, the students revealed how they come to know the real aim of their life after coming to the madrassah. This conception of the real aim has its roots not only in the religion according to which men are the "guardians of women" (from Quranic verse 4:34) but also from the cultural understanding of gender-specific roles. Thus, while Binte Ali reflects on how she learnt the aim of her life as a female in *madrassah*, Binte Farooq elaborates on what the aim actually is.

> *Our aim is not to earn the material things in this world, hence, not to seek a job. Every educational institute promotes a certain ideology; inculcate in its pupil a certain mindset. In schools one goes with an aim to find a better job later in life. There we learn to find a job but we do not learn how to live the life. What should be the aim of a girl's life, I have learnt that here. Now I am satisfied, I think I will perform the duties accorded to me well (binte Ali, 20-student, a'lmia).*
>
> *It is an obligation on every man and woman to educate him or herself. It is ibadah (prayer). However, this education is not the scientific, worldly education but that of religion. The worldly education is more important for men compared to women because they have to go out and earn money for the whole family. The women should stay at home and try to learn all that helps her make the environment of the home better and for the training and upbringing of the children. Women should not even think of competing with men. Both men and women should follow religion which tells them not to compete but to complement each other (binte Farooq,22-student, aama).*

An expression of contempt: The comparison reveals that their ideological framework, about educational institutions, positions madrassah on a much higher pedestal compared to the other educational systems. Lack of religious curriculum and practice, adherence to materialistic ethos and desegregated gender environment has diminished the image of the mainstream system in their eyes. The much repeated point is that while

religious knowledge helps learn the aim of life, worldly knowledge makes one learn nothing but meager things of life. It is interesting to note that they never say that mainstream education is not important but at the same time the utility they associate with this kind of knowledge shows how critical they are for this type of education. More than often this criticism carries an overt expression of contempt. The reason for this contempt is not the knowledge itself but the idea that acquisition of such knowledge often leads to the following of the west. The fast spreading western values are considered the root cause of every problem with religion being the only antidote. The following extract from a *mu'alima's* interview reflects her disapproval of the mainstream education

> *I won't say that there is no education in schools but I believe it does not bring us near to God. It only teaches us how to earn money, how to eat and to go to the toilet. But this is not enough!(binte Bilal, 20-mu'alima)*

A student puts across the same point in the following words

> *No kind of education is without use, but no matter how long we stay in school, how long we spend to learn the worldly knowledge in the end the most important thing learnt is how to use the toilet (binte Nasir, 18-student, a'lmia).*

Never had this disapproval of the worldly system of education been as explicit as when the Lal Masjid cleric[38] declared that Quaid e Azam University had turned into a brothel. He also called the women studying at the university immoral and did not consider it wrong to throw acid on their face (Post 2007c, Dawn 2007a, The News 2007b & c). His extreme criticism of the university was based on two arguments; that the university allows free intermingling of the two genders and that the women at the university do not observe purdah. While free mingling of the two genders is prohibited in the religion the observance of *shara'i purdah* (will be discussed in detail in the next chapter) is considered an obligation on every Muslim woman. Given the fact that majority of the universities in Pakistan, both public and private are co-educational and purdah practices

[38] The statement is allegedly made by Maulana Abdur Rashid Ghazi, the naib mohtamim of the madrassah on an "illegal" FM radio broadcast from the Lal Masjid (Dawn 2007a)

in the country varies extensively in expression, such a statement earned nothing but condemnation by the public in general and by the university students and teachers in particular. As a reaction a protest meeting was arranged by the Physics department of the university comprising about 200 students and teachers. It passed a resolution that the cleric should be apprehended for such an irresponsible statement.(ibid) The university administration and the chancellor[39], however remained silent about the issue (The Post 2007c).

If it is important at all to acquire the worldly knowledge? The interviews reveal that their perspectives on knowledge and comparison of schools and madrassahs, show consistency. It seems that the *madrassah* inculcates a sense that puts religious knowledge above to the worldly one. Also that acquiring of the skill is more important for men compared to women because they are the earning members of the family. The dissatisfaction and contempt seems to rule out the importance of worldly education altogether. However this is not true, for the essentiality of worldly knowledge is not negated altogether. Infact, the majority, 28 out of 35 respondents, believed that worldly knowledge is if not equally than significantly important. The reasoning for such a stance is again supported by religion. Since seeking knowledge is considered a primary task of a Muslim, it is believed that it is his/her duty to learn from wherever he can as much as he can. No type of knowledge goes waste. And all types of knowledge ultimately lead to the recognition of God. The more learned a person is the more beneficial he is for the religion in particular and for the society in general. For example, a doctor who is also a religious scholar is doubly beneficial; he will not only be able to perform his duty as a doctor but will also promote religion to his patients. The survey forms show that within the nuclear family of most of the girls, atleast one member has undertaken mainstream education which further supports the argument that the importance of worldly education is not negated altogether.

5.2.8 Faculties at Madrassah and their Curriculum:

The madrassah has a comprehensive structure for learning. Different courses are offered under the supervision of competent *mu'alima-s*. An introduction to the four major faculties at MJH is as follows:

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[39] In Pakistan the president is also the chancellor of all the public universities.

5.2.8a Faculty of *Tajweed* ul Quran

Tajweed literally means "to improve" or "to make better". With reference to Islam it is the art of recitation of Quran, the holy book with proficiency. Under this faculty the students learn to recite Quran in accordance with specific set of rules for correct pronunciation and articulation of the syllables. All the students at MJH learn *tajweed* (correct recitation of Quran) as well as *ilm-ul-tajweed* (the science of Quranic phonetics). It is considered as the first step towards learning religion because of two main factors. One that Arabic is a vast language and any change in the pronunciation of a word may lead to a change in its meaning. The second is the belief that Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammad alongwith the rules of recitation.

5.2.8b Faculty of *Hifz*

A small number of students come to MJH only for memorizing the Quran. Hifz literally means to protect, to guard or to preserve. *Hifz* as a tradition has as long history as the Islam itself. The Prophet memorized the Quran and passed it on to his companions through oral recitation. This tradition is living to-date. In almost every madrassah services are provided for memorizing the holy book, in MJH as well. Generally it is not recommended for the girls to memorize the Quran because of the belief that girls have faulty intelligence (*naqis ul aqal*) and it is quite likely that they forget the verses memorized, doing more harm than good to the religion. Although it is not encouraged yet when a student shows interest in learning they are never stopped from doing so. A student must be primary pass and not more than 10 years of age to get enrollment in the programme. Students after successful completion of this course are conferred with the title "*hafiza*" (keeper, guardian, protector).

5.2.8c Faculty of pre A'lima course: the preparatory stage

The student should be SSC holder or Matric pass in order to register for the A'lima course. Since a considerable number of girls in the madrassah are those who due to financial constraints have either never been or only for a short while attended an educational institution. Therefore the administration started this programme. This faculty prepares the students for the *A'lmia* course. Three sub-departments with syllabus integrating secular and religious education operate under this faculty. These departments are based on the level of knowledge provided to the students keeping in view their previous learning and schooling experiences if any.

Ibtidaya:(primary or elementary): this programme was initiated to accommodate girls who have never been exposed to any type of learning, neither school nor madrassah. It is a three years programme covering a five year syllabus of the mainstream education system. The subjects taught include, Urdu, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, General Knowledge, Arabic, Computer and Islamiyat. Generally the books are the same as used in public schools approved by the text book board of the respective province. At the end of the course the students are considered as primary passed.

Mutawasita: (middle): Students of *Ibtidaya* or those who have received their primary 5 years of education from the worldly education schools. Like *ibtidaya*, this level is also a 3 years programme. The successful students are given the degree of middle or 8th grade. The subjects taught are an extension of the ones taught in *Ibtidaya.*

Oola (the first) (The intermediate stage) The pre-condition to enroll in this programme is successful completion of the 8th grade from the mainstream schools or *Mutawasita* level from a *madrassah*. In this one year programme the students are taught courses to build a foundation for the comprehensive specialized *a'lmia* course.

5.2.8d Faculty of *A'lima*: The Final Stage

It is actually this four year course that attracts the majority of candidates. The students after completion of the studies acquire certificate which is equivalent to a Masters degree in religious studies. This helps them pursue career as a teacher of Islamic studies, a freelance *a'lima* (religious scholar) delivering lectures on various religious issues or if they have finances they can open up their own *madrassah*. The *A'lima* course has four levels: *Aama*, *Khasa*, *A'lia* and *A'lmia* or *Dora-i-Hadees*. The minimum pre-requisite for entering this course is either SSC or the *Oola* certificate from a madrassah. The students can enroll in any of the four grades provided they have successfully completed the previous grade from another *madrassah*.

Curriculum: for the Degree Programme: The curriculum of Sunni madrassahs for the *A'lim* degree is popularly known as *Dars i Nizami*. It is believed to have been

developed by Mullah Nizamuddin (d. 1747), of the *Farangi Mahal*[40] school in South Asia. The curriculum was the culmination of a process of standardization and systematization of Islamic learning (Alam, 2008: 49). Before the development of Dars i Nizami, the process of education was informal with no specific time period to complete the studies (ibid). Mullah Nizamuddin systematized the process of Islamic learning and organized the curriculum along two broad categories:

> ***uloom-al-naqalliya*** (transmitted sciences) related to religion including dialectical theology, life of the Prophet, *Hadith*, *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Quran), Islamic Law, jurisprudence, rhetoric, and grammar as well as Arabic literature and logic
>
> ***uloom-aqalliya*** (rational sciences) including medicine, mathematics, astronomy, history, philosophy, prosody, and polemics (Fair, 2008: 3; Malik, 1996, 166-67).

The original curriculum had a bias in favour of the rational sciences (*ma'qulat*) as against the transmitted sciences (*manqulat*). The books on Philosophy, Logic (*mantaq*) and Medicine far exceeded the books of purely religious character (Alam, 2008: 49). The contemporary madrassahs, however, teach the modified version of Dars i Nizami, devised by the *ulema* at the school of Deoband in the nineteenth century (ibid). The modified curriculum extensively reduced the content of 'rational sciences' (ibid). It rather emphasized the study of transmitted sciences particularly the hadith (Metcalf, 1982: 100f).

Although Dars-i-Nizami is taught in all the seminaries the syllabus is adapted to correspond to the different schools of thought. The curriculum is composed by their respective scholars comprising books by the *ulema* of their own *maslak*. At MJH like in other Deobandi madrassahs for the *A'lim* course *uloom-al-naqalliya* are given the

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[40] The establishment of Farangi Mahall as an institution of learning in Lucknow was a development in the study of rational sciences made during the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The building in which it was housed, previously owned by a European merchant, was donated by Emperor Aurangzeb to the family of Mullah Qutubuddin Sihalwi. Sihalwi; a leading scholar of rational sciences. He was succeeded by his third son, Mullah Nizamuddin Sihalwi who turned the place into a seat of learning in the early eighteenth century (Riaz, 2008: 64). It is him who developed Dars i Nizami, followed to-date in madrassah, albeit in a modified form.

primary importance. The syllabi for the first three years is concentric and developmental, revolving around the subjects of *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, *Hadith*, Islamic History, Laws of Inheritance, Arabic syntax and Grammar. In the final year, known as *A'lmia* or *Dora i Hadees* (Arabic: Hadith), as the name suggests only *ilm ul hadith* (the science of *hadith*) is studied. *Sahi Sitta* (the six famous books of *hadith*) forms the curriculum for this year. At the end of the course the students acquire an officially recognized *sanad* (certificate) from their respective board. This degree is recognized as an equivalent to Masters in Arabic and Islamiyat of the worldly or formal education system.

MJH, like other female seminaries, offers an A'lim course shorter in duration compared to the one in the male seminaries. While in the male seminaries it takes eight years to complete the course in the female seminaries the same course is compressed to six years[41] (Fair, 2008: 51) and in case of MJH it has been further reduced to four years. On inquiring the opinion regarding the condensed course, the teachers and the students both, showed a positive response. Education and marriage both are considered as essential for an individual. From the girls' perspective education should be such that does not compromise their appropriate age of marriage. It is generally believed that *girls should not be kept at father's home for long after they reach their puberty*. Hence, a condensed course of four years seems the best solution *equipping them with the right amount of knowledge at the right age*.

5.2.8e Faculty of *Takhasus* (specialization): post A'lim course

This is one year programme (two years in case of male seminaries) of specialization in one of the following fields: *fiqh*, *hadith*, Arabic literature, *tafsir* or theology. MJH offers *Takhasus fil fiqh* (specialization in Islamic jurisprudence). It is also called the *ifta* course. *Ifta* is an Arabic word derived from *fatwa* meaning notification or authoritative legal opinion; with reference to Islam it means religious ruling. Upon successful completion of this course the students are conferred the degree of *muftia* (pl. *muftiat*: expounder of Islamic law capable of giving *fatwa*). The administration attaches special value to these students and offers them employment in MJH as an *a'lima* for teaching or *muftia* to serve in the *Dar ul Ifta* department of MJH or both. Dar ul Ifta was opened

[41] Fair generalizes the condensation of the course to six years in female *madaris*, however, through my personal experience I have come to know that not all *madaris* do so. Infact, many female *madaris* compress it to half the duration for male students, that is four years.

with the vision to provide help to common women seeking religious solutions to those problems that they feel uncomfortable in discussing with a mufti (the male jurist). These problems are usually related to their domestic life, husband-wife relationship, problems with in-laws, infertility etc. Two types of solutions are provided depending on the nature of the problem: one that the concerned woman is given amulet or told to recite sacred text at specified time in specific number to get rid of the problem and secondly, in case of problem related to the Islamic law, they issue a fatwa (a religious verdict). While the former does not require assistance of male colleagues but in cases where fatwa is required the *muftia-s* prepare the case and send it for authentication to male *mufti* in darul ifta department of the nearby red mosque with which the seminary is affiliated. A fatwa issued by a female scholar is not considered valid unless authenticated by a male scholar. Binte Inaam working for dar ul ifta believes that it is a just a religious formality:

> *it is just a formality demanded of religion. Since a fatwa by a female authority is not valid until and unless signed by a male jurist, therefore we send it to the male section. It is a rare case that any mistake is pointed out. We send it after intensive research so there is no point that they are not accepted by our male colleagues (22-mu'alima)*

Table 4 shows the degrees of madrassah and their equivalent in the mainstream education system. It is important to note that in order for their degree to be recognized as equivalent to the mainstream the students have to successfully clear the examination of three subjects, English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies.

Level	Duration	Certificate	Comparable Degrees
A'ama	1 year	Shahadatul Thanviyahul A'ama	Matric or 10th Grade
Khasa	1 year	Shahadatul Thanviyahul Khasa	Intermediate (FA) or 12th Grade
A'liyah	1 year	Shahadatul Thanviyahul A'liyah	Bachelors or (BA)
A'lmiyah	1 year	Shahadatul Thanviyahul A'lmiyah	Masters or (MA) in Arabic or Islamic Studies
Takhasus	1 year	Varies with specialization	Post MA or PhD

Table 4: Madrassah Degrees and Comparable Mainstream Education Degrees

5.2.9 The Annual Academic Year

The annual academic year at MJH, like the other madrassahs, follows the lunar calendar. This is contrary to the Gregorian calendar followed throughout the country. The year starts with Shawaal the 10th month of the Islamic calendar and is divided into three terms of almost 3 months each. The evaluation during the first two terms is done by the madrassah administration itself while the annual examinations are administered by the respective umbrella organization of a particular madrassah. In case of MJH it is Wafaq ul Madaris Al-Arabia Pakistan, the umbrella organization for Deobandi Hanafi Sunni, with the head office in Multan.

While Sunday is the national holiday, the madrassah chooses Friday instead. The madrassah administration believes that since the prophet compared Friday to an Eid[42] day, therefore, the Muslims should have a day off on Friday instead of Sunday which they consider as *the day of non-Muslims and angraiz* (anglistic). Worth mentioning here is the Friday controversy of the colonized states. Friday is considered "the day of assembly" and a "day of special congregational services" for Muslims (Katsh, 1963: 5). Durán et. al explain that during the colonial period Sunday was the public holiday which was changed to Friday after independence. The argument in favour of Sunday has an economic base while for Friday it is religious. As explained earlier that for Muslims Friday holds importance as the assembly on the day is characterized by community counseling. The issue of Friday/Sunday controversy existed in Pakistan as well, with change of the public holiday from Sunday to Friday and back, several times. Those who favour Friday in place of Sunday argue that complete decolonization is not possible unless Sunday replaces Friday as a public holiday (Durán et.al., 2001: 175-177). The present research confirms that the public holiday on Sunday is viewed as a legacy of colonizers who were non-Muslims and hence not to be followed.

Similarly the annual vacation is given during the month of Ramadan (the month of fasting) unlike seasonal vacation by the mainstream institutions. The three months summer break in the mainstream institutes is reduced to 15 days only in a madrassah and compensated with Ramadan and Eid holidays. The following of the Islamic

[42] Literally refers to celebration or festivity. Muslims observe two Eids during the year, Eid ul Fitr that marks the end of the month of fasting and Eid ul Adha, the feast of sacrifice is celebrated at the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

calendar, the Friday holidays, the Ramadan break and long Eid vacation are significant in the sense that they are considered as symbolic of the deep extent of devotion to the religion held by all in the madrassah.

5.2.10 The Teaching Pattern

The teaching methodology follows the didactic pattern. Jarvis explains this method as "approaches to teaching [that] generally assume a one-way communication approach and that a selection of culture (body of knowledge) should, for a variety of reasons, be transmitted to the students to learn. This knowledge is usually taught by the lecture, or some other similar mode of instruction" (Jarvis, 1985: 94-95). At MJH the transmission of knowledge takes place through the lectures delivered by the teacher, however, students' participation is regarded as necessary to as it helps the teacher to assess the understanding of the subject by the students in general. It also helps her to evaluate an individual student's progress and attitude towards learning.

During the school hours which start at 8 in the morning and last till 1 in the afternoon, the students attend 6 lectures on different subjects with one hour break in between. Each class starts with a revision of the previous day's lecture. The students are asked questions randomly by the teacher. In case of failure in reproducing the lesson taught, the teacher may ask the student to keep standing for a few minutes and in worst cases during the whole period, so as to ensure that she pays due attention to her studies in future. The teachers, who are usually patient to the students' queries and kind towards them, believe that such reprimands are sometimes necessary for the moral training of the students, to build in them a sense of responsibility which is necessary given the seriousness of their studies. One of the teacher who called these small punishments as a favour to the students argues that they are done just to let them realize that *matters of religion are no joke and should not be taken lightly, religion when properly followed brings salvation in the hereafter*. Given the spiritual aspect of the studies the students often show a great zeal and reverence for their learning. The students' reaction towards such punishments is of deep embarrassment arising out of a failure to cope with their studies and more than that because it reflects negligence towards religion.

The daily revision and evaluation is followed by a lecture carefully prepared by the teacher. The teacher either reads from the book herself or asks a student to read out loud. Then she continues to explain the topic simultaneously referring to all the notable

religious texts affiliated with the topic. For example, a lecture on the topic of fasting would start with the references from the Quran, moving on to Hadith then what notable religious scholars have to say about the topic. She would explain both, the spirituality and practicality of fasting. She would also bring into dialogue the variations in the perspectives about fasting held by the different schools of thought with a justification in favour of their own. The students who sit on floor in queues carefully take down the notes for later revision.

The administration perceive their schooling system as a well-established one. The teacher student relationship is a hierarchical in nature, with students placing teachers on high altar. The girls believe that the high degree of respect and obedience by the students is reciprocated by the teachers' kindness, individual attention and deep concern for the moral upbringing of the students.

5.2.11 Disciplining Religiosity:

An important feature of the schooling at MJH is disciplining of the students to perfect them as religious being. The students are exposed to two types of training: the formal regularized training and the informal which takes place all the time. The informal training refers to on the spot correction by a teacher or a senior student in case a student is caught doing something which is not in line with their interpretation of the religious doctrine, this includes correcting inappropriate behaviour, negligence towards religious obligations and incorrect way of performing them. The formal training which is of two types is primarily concerned with the art of perfecting religiosity. The first type includes scheduled programmes for practicing the correct performance of religious prayers and rituals. In the presence of a teacher the students are taught how to make ablution and to offer the prayers; the proper technique, body postures, prayers and the correct way of recitation. The second type of formal training is done with the help of inscriptions on the wall. These inscriptions help them memorize short prayers before performing their day-to-day activities and guide them to carry out even the mundane activities in accordance with religious regulations so as to earn merit out of them as well. Guiding to the righteous path they are found everywhere; in the dining room, on the water coolers, on the door of toilets etc. These inscriptions also play a role in creating a responsible civic sense among the students. In the following are presented a few examples:

Figure 27 shows the inscription on the wall of the *Fundaq* (the canteen). It states the short prayers to start and end the meal and also the etiquette for dining. There are 12 rules to be observed: to spread the dining cloth, to wash hands, to start in the name of Allah and say it loud, to eat with the right hand, to eat from the portion infront of an individual, clean and eat the morsel in case it drops, do not to lean back, to take off the shoes while eating, to either sit cross-legged or with one knee on the ground and to slightly lean towards the food, to wash the utensil after eating because the utensil then prays for the eater's forgiveness, to wash the hands and to rinse the mouth. In most of the case, the rules of followed but as the hall is equipped with benches and tables the rules concerning dining on the floor are often ignored. Another rule which is often ignored is taking off the shoes while eating. When asked the girls said that the preferred way of dining is to sit on the floor and it is compulsory to take off the shoes during that. But as the hall is equipped with furniture it is not necessary to sit on the floor. Besides the room is a big hall which except the break time, is used as a lecture hall, dining on the floor would involve extra time for spreading the sheet, laying the things and then cleaning up. In order to save time they sit on the benches.

Figure 28: Principles and prayers for eating

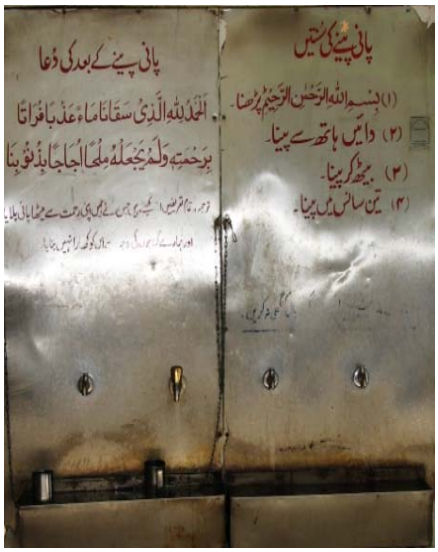

Figure 27: Sunnahs and prayers for drinking water

The inscriptions on the water cooler (Fig. 28) are a reminder to the students of the prayers to be said before drinking water. It also enumerates the four *sunnah-s* for drinking water; to start drinking in the name of Allah; to drink with the right hand; to sit while drinking; and to drink it in three breaths. On the left side is the prayer one

should read after drinking water, it can be translated as "all praise is to Allah who provided us with sweet water to drink and did not make it bitter because of our sins".

While Figure 29 shows the inscription with the electricity socket. It instructs the students to switch off the lights and fans when not required. That electricity is a blessing of Allah and should not be wasted. These instructions are found almost near every socket; it reflects the importance of repetition during a learning process; a *mu'alima* identifies it as an important teaching technique. She explains that some of the girls are quite young; their minds are not mature enough. It is important to repeat the instructions and the short prayers so that they instills in their mind, once they are instilled the girls will never forget them throughout their lives.

Figure 29: Instructions to avoid wasting electricity.

Apart from instructional inscriptions and prayers, also on the wall are inspirational quotes and poetic verses. The poetic verses are written by the *mohtamim* of the madrassah. These verses deal with various issues concerning religion. For instance Figures 30 and 31 show verses that are reminder of the temporariness of the present life. According to the verses in Fig. 29 the reality of the seemingly beauty of this world would be realized only after entering the grave. It conveys that the present life is a mere illusion and the real life is the afterlife. Therefore, an individual should worry more for the afterlife than this transient phase. The verses in Figure: 31 carry a similar message; they give a general advise to the people who are occupied with the worries of

Figure 31: Inspirational Poetic Verses (1)

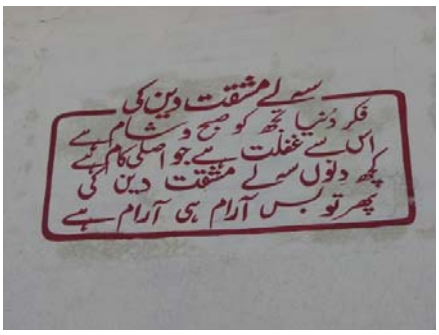

Figure 30: Inspirational Poetic Verses (2)

the world and forgetful of their religious duties to bear the hardships of religion for a few days in this life and then rest in comfort forever in the hereafter. A senior student of the madrassah explained the two-fold significance of these verses; as a reminder that whatever one does will be rewarded or punished in the hereafter and this starts as soon as one enters the grave. It is to remind that the beauty of the world is deceptive and religion is the reality; those who follow religion will be rewarded while those who are lost in this world will regret. In similarity to the inside walls, the boundary walls of the madrassah from the outside are also embellished with *hadith-s* (sayings of the prophet).

The books, audio cassettes and audio and video CDs available in the canteen[43] of the madrassah are significant instances of disciplining religiosity and promoting religion in general and certain notions in particular. The two most noticeable concepts promoted through them are *jihad* and purdah. Islamic values and *shari'a* law are among other popular topics. It is interesting to note that even the leisure reading is controlled by the administration. The two most popular magazines among the students that are available in the madrassah include monthly magazines titled *Binaat i Ayesha* (the daughters of Ayesha- one of the wives of Prophet Mohammad) and *Talibaat i Islam* (the (female) students of Islam). As is evident from their names they concern the female gender. Besides issues related specifically to women, these magazines, also discuss a wide variety of Islamic values and norms, ethics and regulations, history and other general issues discussed in the light of the religion. The religion-oriented magazines and CDs reflect their ideology that even entertainment should be in congruence to Islamic teachings and disseminate some sort of religious information and learning. While the availability of these books and CDs is a covert and taken-for-granted expression of controlling entertainment, on some occasions this ideology is overtly expressed. During a regular function organized by the madrassah, before girls were to perform a skit regarding the girls occupation of the Children's Library, the principal announced that it should not be watched only for the purpose of entertainment; the several moral and religious messages and meanings it is embedded with should not be ignored in the pursuit for entertainment.

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[43] As will be explained later in chapter 6 and 7, the students of the madrasah are not allowed to leave the premises unless accompanied with a mahram (a male relative with whom marriage is impermissible). Most of the girls come from far off places and buy things they need from the canteens inside the madrassah.

The disciplining of religiosity finds its strongest expression in the dress. The students in the absence of any formal rules and regulations are trained in a way that they are most cautious about their dressing. I will discuss this aspect separately in the following chapters. At this point it would be worthwhile to see MJH as a "total institution" in Foucuadian sense that exercises control over the "docile" bodies of the pupil in multiple ways; a concept found equally useful by Winkelmann (2005) in her study of girls' madrassah in India. She emphasizes that madrassah as a total institution regulates its pupils much through disciplinary rules which function as both, explicitly as well as implicitly, also confirmed by the present study. The underlying principle for the disciplinary society to emerge is "a functional inversion of disciplines" (Foucault, 1995: 210); MJH was established with the view to provide equal opportunities of education to the female strata and those who cannot afford to pay for education. In doing so it aimed to increase the utility of the members of the society by increasing their knowledge and skill; a characteristic typical to disciplinary settings (Foucault, 1995: 210). Discipline works as a docility-utility-duo; exercise control over the docile bodies, defined as "body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1995: 136). The girls in the madrassah can be identified as Foucault's docile bodies transformed from illiterate to literate significant members of the society. While discipline exercises control and demands obedience it also involves "an increase of the mastery of each individual over his own body" (Foucault, 1995: 137). In learning the religion and increasing the utility in the society the girls tend to know more about themselves; their capabilities and potentials, their position with reference to religion and their role vis a' vis the society. Inherent in process of increasing knowledge about the self and increasing utility, is the power awareness and its use. Discipline however, works in a way that increases "the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility" and "diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience" (ibid: 138). It demands "strict subject"- the hierarchy of individual, and obedience to those better in knowledge, older in age, higher in status (with reference to learning and administrative structure) - all contribute towards disciplining of individuals. Obedience is the rule; and obedience is a trait that brings respect. Disobedience is considered as a rebellion to the group norms, and hence, punishable. Teaching at MJH begins with the obedience of the Divine decree through learning the religious scriptures. To do that an understanding of it is required. To understand one must rely on the knowledge of those who are learned and know more. Discipline in terms of obedience reaches its climax in the madrassah

for it calls of an unquestioned following (*taqlid*). Obedience in the form of accurately following the established norms and religious values is reflected in all the actions of the girls. As Foucault points out that "detail" has always been an essential characteristic of theology and asceticism since long "for the disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail in unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it" (Foucault, 1995: 140).

The authority of the madrassah transcends space; the madrassah as a total institution inculcates in the girls obedience, thereby exercising control over their bodies even when they are in other spaces. The girls seek for the guidance of those whom they consider superior in knowledge. A recurrent issue is how to cope with the opposition of the family regarding their burqa. The girls never decide for themselves and prefer to rely on the solutions offered by their teachers and the principal, who are considered as more knowledgeable. Such cases reveal that the authorities provide compromising solutions to the girls inorder to avoid conflict with close family. For instance in the case of binte Faheem, keeping in view the strong opposition of the family, *Aapi jaan,* the principal of the madrassah, asked her not wear burqa which is more conspicuous and objectionable but to cover herself with a big shawl in the presence of *namahram*.

5.2.12 The transmission of maslak: the process of *radd*

An important aspect of the teaching and training in the madrassah is transmission of maslak, the Sunni Hanafi Deobandi school of thought. This involves rejection of all the other schools of thought; the process of rejection is called *radd* (refutation). Rehman argues that refutation is one of the two important aspects of madrassah education in Pakistan; the other being the study of the medieval Islamic text. He explains the two dimensions of refutation, one that rejects the modern values including "socialism democracy, modernism, individualism etc." and the other that disproves "the beliefs of other sub-sects of Islam." (Rehman, 2002: 33). While I have explained parts of the former dimension of refutation in section 5.2.7, I will continue with the latter aspect, that is refutation of other sub-sects in the country.

Pluralism of Sunni maslak-s is taken as a given fact and the diversity in Sunni trends is regarded as a blessing for it helps to keep all the various manifestations of Prophetic traditions alive. The differences in interpretations of the religious texts by the different schools of thought, are conceived as alternatives of one another. While diversity is

appreciated, personal interpretations and reasoning are not encouraged nor is it allowed to borrow different concepts from different maslak-s simultaneously. *Taqlid*, following of one particular school of thought is considered essential because religion is taken as a matter of *manqulat* (transmission) and not *aqliaat* (rational thinking). *Taqlid* is conceived as learning from someone who knows more. It is important to choose one particular school of thought and adhere to its doctrine for two reasons: one that it renders specific religious identity and second it ensures religious purity. For the sake of religious purity borrowing from the different schools of thought simultaneously is disapproved. It is believed that if allowed people will look for the easier way in every issue related to religion which in turn will reflect weak spirituality and lesser religiosity. Binte Faheem, a student from *Takhasus* expounds on the matter in the following manner:

> *Religion is to satisfy the spiritual needs of people. People ask why taqlid is important, it is very simple, if you fall sick what will you do? You will definitely not start reading the books of medicine yourself to diagnose the problem and seek a remedy. You will seek a specialist's opinion. It's the same with religion, you cannot learn religion by yourself you have to follow a specialist. Likewise, when you are sick you will not go to an allopath, homeopath doctor and a hakeem*[44]*simultaneously, you will go to one of the three. If you take medicine from all of them simultaneously you will actually be doing harm to your body. The same is the case with the spiritual body, you have to choose one of the four maslak-s and then remain sincere for the sake of religious purity (23-student, takhasus)*

The liberal side of the argument supporting *taqlid* accepts pluralism of the maslak-s. The conservative, however, refutes all the other schools of thought in favour of Deobandi Hanafi School. The various schools of thought are divided on two levels: the primary level which comprises of the four major schools of jurisprudence[45], Hanafi,

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[44] Hakeem literally means the wise. Here it refers to the indigenous healer.

[45] These four schools of Islam are highly revered and refutation is never directed towards them. However, an implicit indication to the superiority of Hanaf'i School is always there. This superiority is based on the fact that the Hanaf'i School is the first one to emerge among the four schools.

Shafa'i, Hanbali, Maliki prevalent all over the world. These four schools of thought are deeply revered and it is believed that a Muslim must strictly follow one of the four. On The secondary level refers to the divisions among the Hanafi School in Pakistan. The secondary level also involves those groups who do not believe in *taqlid*. Since most of the madrassahs in Pakistan follow the Hanafi School with only a few which do not believe in *taqlid* (Fig. 23), the process of refutation at MJH largely concerns this secondary level. During my stay, more than often, I have been suggested to read the book *Ikhtelaf i Ummat aur Sirat i Mustaqeem*[46] (Discrepancy among the Ummah and the Righteous Path) claiming that it would clear any ambiguities that I have about religion and lead me to the correct path. Written by one of the leading Deobandi Hanafi scholar Maulana Mohammad Yousaf Ludhianwi, it is a comprehensive book that explains the differences, ideological and non-ideological, among the various sects on the secondary level with a justification in favour of the Deobandi Hanafi school. The book is a compulsory reading for all those who join the madrassah. This endorses that the schooling at MJH inculcates in the students the Deobandi Hanafi spirit which is considered as the correct religious doctrine. Figure 32 further elaborates this finding. It shows the level of awareness about various schools of thought before joining the madrassah. Out of 35, 17 were not aware of the existence of the Deobandi Hanafi school. Out of the 17, majority just knew that they are Sunni while a few also knew that in Pakistan it is the Sunni Hanafi Islam which is followed by the majority. They believe that the madrassah education spreads awareness about the existence of various schools of thought, brings into dialogue the diverse perspectives and refutes the incorrect versions. The girls falling in this group inform that after joining the madrassah they not only started to follow the Deobandi Hanafi school themselves but also preached the same to their family and friends. Those who already knew that they belong to the Deobandi Hanafi School are the ones who acclaim to have a religious family background, with their fathers involved in preaching activities. The remaining two who come from another school of thought, that is Sunni Hanafi Barelwi, were not satisfied with the teachings of their school. They believe that all their confusions about religion

[46] This book is included in the curriculum of the *Takhasus* degree. Hoewever, almost all the students, juniors and seniors, have read it to understand their maslak better. After reading the book I found out that the argument presented in the book are internalized by the students. Their reasoning in favour of the Deobandi Hanafi maslak are based on the logics presented in this book.

have been resolved after coming to the madrassah. While their families still follow the Barelwi school, they say, that they pray for them to leave the incorrect path.

In majority of the instances the discussion on following a particular school of thought always concludes with a reference to *hadith* where the prophet predicts that his followers would eventually be divided into 73 sects of which only one would be righteous and go to the heaven. Although they never explicitly claim that it is the Deobandi Hanafi school the prophet talks about because the name of the sect is not mentioned in the *hadith*. However, an implicit indication to the claim is obvious. The claim is established as if there are going to be 73 sects out of which only one is righteous it has to be Deobandi Hanafi because they follow the correct interpretation of religion.

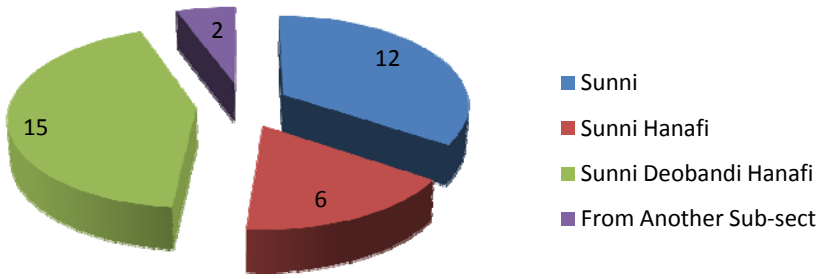

Figure 32: Awareness about their maslak before joining the madrassah

5.2.13 Identity construction: the Puritans

During my stay at MJH I found two areas of inquiry particularly interesting, the creation of identity and the various forms of its manifestation. It seems as if all the energies are geared towards construction of a particular identity, an identity that has its roots embedded in religion. Talking about the role of religion in identity construction Seul argues that "religion frequently serves the identity impulse more powerfully and comprehensively than other repositories of cultural meaning can or do" (Seul, 1999: 567).This we shall see in the case of MJH. I choose to discuss identity not as a structure rather as "a set of processes operating in a principled manner" which is more relevant

in this particular case (Breakwell, 1986: 23, 25). These sets involve two major processes, assimilation-accommodation and evaluation. While assimilation refers to "absorption of new components", accommodation helps in the "adjustment of the new elements in the identity structure" and rearranges the "salience and central hierarchies". The process of evaluation establishes "subjective indices of relative worth for potential additions to identity" (Breakwell, 1986: 23, 25). These processes are guided by either one or a combination of four principles: "self-esteem" or "the desire to be evaluated positively", "distinctiveness" or "the desire to be unique", "continuity" or a "consistent account of self-conception" and "self-efficacy" that is the "strive to be competent" (Breakwell & Lyons, 1996: 34, 35). Breakwell argues that individual identities are "fluid, dynamic, and responsive to its social context" (1986: 19). My experience at MJH reveals that there the girls, who are already Muslims, derive a new sense of "Muslim identity" after coming to the madrassah. As soon as they enter the madrassah they find their older identity called into question and the process of identity construction starts right thereafter. One of the students while discussing her experience of the life in madrassah showed regret for not putting in enough efforts to know the correct form of religion:

> *I feel as if I have wasted my whole life. I used to perform my religious obligations regularly but not the way they are supposed be performed. I did not know the correct way of doing them then (binte Haris, 18-student, a'lmia).*

The students learn new or reformed ways of performing religious duties and adapt to them. Not only do they learn new ways they also learn new hierarchies. One of the important questions about the madrassah experience includes what is the most significant thing that they have learnt in madrassah. The usual reply is either of the two:

> *We used to think religion is for life, we learnt here that life is for religion*
>
> or
>
> *Islam is not just a religion it is a complete way of life and we are taught and disciplined to reflect this belief in everything we do.*

This shows that religion gains prime importance in their life after joining the madrassah. The process of identity construction shows a shift from being Muslims to

being the puritan Muslims. This process which is initially guided by the principle of self-efficacy results in students' acquirement of distinctive identity and a renewed sense of self-esteem, reflected through their affiliation with one particular school of thought and enhanced religiosity, respectively.

The students through interaction with a new social context acquire a renewed sense of individual identity as well as a distinct group identity shared at two levels: on the macro level the students share their identity with all those studying in madrassahs while on a micro level they affiliate themselves with one particular school of thought the Deobandi Hanafi Sunni. The new social milieu exerts its own social influence which plays an important role in the formation of individual as well as the group identity. To analyze what kind of social influence is dominant in case of MJH, I find the Kelman's model of social influence [47] particularly useful. This model fundamentally deals with the "evaluative components" of social influence which are categorized into three: compliance, identification and internalization.[48] Compliance occurs when a person accepts the influence of another person or group to "achieve a favourable reaction from them" (1999: 8). Identification occurs when a person accepts the influence because it helps to develop a positive self-conception. In case of identification a person vicariously participates in pre-established identities of the influencing agent, a person or a group and "gain[s] a sense of power and status that, as individuals, [he] lack[s]" (ibid: 13). Internalization occurs when a person identifies with another person or a group because the individual's existing values are in congruence with the influencing agent (ibid: 10). In the case of MJH, the girls "identify" with the new social group they are encountered with. The administration of the madrassah influences the girl through the dissemination of specific field of knowledge that is the knowledge of the religion. It also influences their ideology of knowledge which places religious education above all

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[47] Kelman defines social influence as "change in a person's behaviour as a result of induction by others, whether another person or a group". Kelman argues that social influence has multiple expressions, including "suggestion, persuasion, modeling, coercion or providing information" and leave an ipact on a person's "attitudes, opinion, beliefs, values and actions preferences." In case of MJH I found that all these expressions are exercised through formal and informal lectures disciplining rules and regulations. (1999:7)

[48] Although Kelman refers to the multiple expressions of social influence his model largely concerns its evaluative components (1999: 7).

the other forms of education. The girls with their newly acquired belief that religion governs life and with their new status of religious scholar find themselves capable of speaking with authority on different matters of life with religion always acting as the reference point.

An interesting feature of this group identity is that it is established against an absent other. During my discussion on various topics I have noticed that this absent other is always present in the minds of my interlocutors to make comparisons with. Talking about the essentiality of the "other" in identity construction, Burgat states

> "But as we know, talking about the Other is in many ways talking about ourselves. It is indeed the Other who tells us who we are, what space we take up in the world, and for many what role we play in it. Identity is only the result of the encounter with otherness….It is on the Other that our "relativity" depends and we will thus identify ourselves with or against him" (2003: 21).

In the present research I was particularly interested in knowing as to who falls into this "other" group. I felt challenged to define it group because often the imaginary "other" is referred to with a very broad term *log* meaning people. However my curiosity and frequent questions about it showed that it is not one particular group. The boundaries of this group are rather lose, it could include anyone who does not study in madrassah or holds a negative viewpoint about it or those who does not adhere to the Deobandi Hanafi principles. In its widest sense it would include the West and those who imitate the western culture. What defines this other group is the content and the context of a particular discussion. So when the discussion is about gender identity the absent other is usually the non-Muslim western women and indigenous women who follow them while a discussion about *maslak* would lead to a self-definition against the Barelwis and Ahl-e-Hadith, the other two dominant religious groups in the country. Another noteworthy feature of discussions on identity structured against another group is its tri-dimensionality which includes the conception of the self, the perception about the other and the presumed conception of the self by the other. The self is defined in opposition to the other as more religious, moral and spiritual. The negative perception of the other is reciprocated by the presumed negative image of the self held by others as backward and conservative.

This group identity as puritan Muslims is expressed in various ways; ideology, schooling, behaviour, speech and actions. However the most dominant expression is the uniform dressing of the girls; dressed in black and covered from head to toe. The following chapters deal with how they conceive, perceive and then express their religious identity through their dress.

6 PURDAH: THE ALL CONCEALING DRESS

Our Burqa is our uniform

This chapter focuses on the uniform dress of the girls at MJH in the absence of any written rules and regulations. To me, as would to any outsider, it appears that the burqa clad women entering the madrassah don it throughout the day. Contrary to the expectations, on entering the madrassah, I realized that this uniform is to be worn only when in public or when there are men around. Just as any other Pakistani child who takes special care to wear a proper uniform to school, the girls at Jamia are particularly conscious about their uniform - the burqa; only that they wear it outside the school. There is no formal ruling about this uniform yet the girls on joining the madrassah soon end up wearing it in replication of their colleagues. It renders them with a specific identity and reflects their ideology, an ideology that is learnt in the madrassah. Their sartorial specificity is not mere a reflection of their affiliation to Islamic school, it means much more to them which will be elaborated in this chapter.

During the course of my research I realized that the uniform burqa is actually a learned behaviour, which becomes an important part of their conceptual framework regarding dress only after joining the madrassah. The pupils at the madrassah say that previously they had a different conception of purdah, which they consider as lack of knowledge or ignorance of its correct form. The proper form is explained as a dress that conceals the whole body. An inquiry about their earlier way of dressing reveals the diversity in clothing and the varying degrees to which the body is covered. What is common in all the cases is the wearing of *shalwar, kameez* and *dupatta*, the national dress of Pakistan. Shalwar, is loose baggie pants; kameez a long tunic and; *dupatta* is a long wide piece of cloth usually measuring approximately 2-2.5 meters in length and 1 meter in width. The conservative form of this type of dress is loose in shape and covers the whole body from head to toe, usually leaving the face uncovered. Shaw's description of the Panjabi Muslims' modest dress aptly describes this form. She explains that "[F]rom puberty onwards, she (Panjabi women) should always dress modestly, wearing loose garments

such as shalwar-qamis[49] (loose trousers and a long blouse covering the hips) worn with a *chadar* (shawl) or dupatta (headscarf) over her head and concealing the shape of her breasts (Shaw, 2000: 74). Compared to the burqa or *chadar* a dupatta is considered modern as Shaw notes that a "dupatta, in the city, signals modernity, especially when it is worn not carefully over the hair but casually over the shoulder" (Shaw, 2000: 118). The modern form of the national dress includes dupatta worn casually as explained by Shaw and it may not conceal the whole body; the head remains uncovered and part of or whole of the arms revealed. In case of the present research both forms of dress; conservative and modern were worn by the girls, with majority wearing the conservative one even before coming to the madrassah.

The pie chart (Fig. 33) shows the diversity of clothing among my interlocutors prior to the learning of the correct form of purdah (correct as perceived in the madrassah) and adapting to its sartorial expression. Out of a total of 35, 8 girls did not cover their head before joining the madrassah. They then believed that purdah of the heart holds primary importance, that is, the heart should be free of any ill intentions and to maintain a distance from the other gender. The figure 33 reveals that majority of them covered their head either with dupatta or *hijab* (a square piece of cloth, usually 1x1 meter to cover the head). The full body coverings used is of two types; *abaya* and burqa. The wearing of *hijab* and *abaya* (a long gown worn together with a head scarf) reflects the Arab influence on Burqa, which is not new to the sub-continent. The reason is Pakistan supplies many labourers to the Arab and Gulf states. These people on their return bring with them the cultural influence of these states. The burqa used in the madrassah is an amalgamation of *abaya* and the olden style of burqa. It is interesting to note that out of 35 respondents only one girl claims to observe *shara'i purdah* before coming to the madrassah, the rest even if they covered their body and face believe that their previous dress pattern does not fulfill the requirements of *shara'i purdah*.

[49] Transliterated in the present thesis as kameez

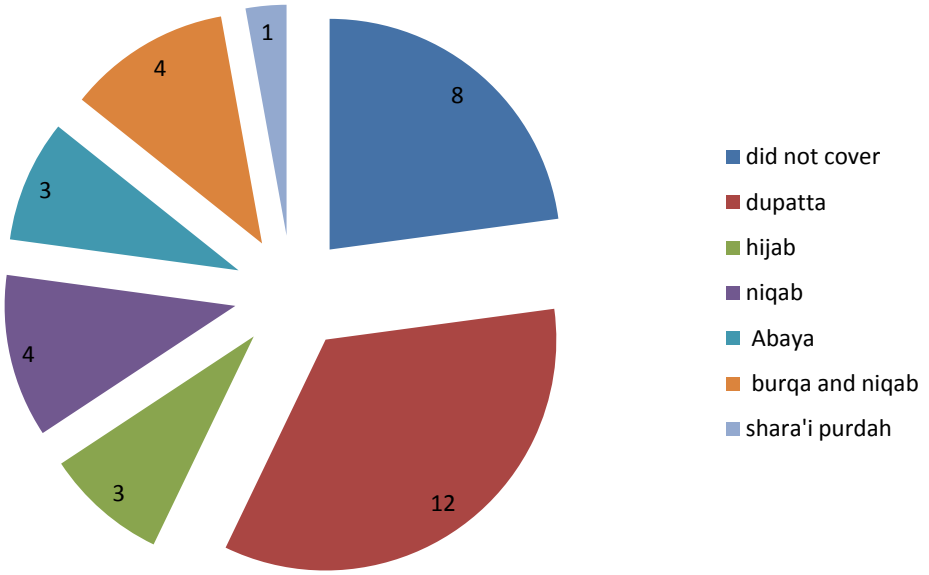

Figure 33: Diverse forms of dress worn before coming to the madrassah

The research also establishes regional, religious and social factors as variables effecting dress pattern. Those who come from rural areas dress more conservatively compared to the ones from the urban areas. Similarly the ones from religious families are more covered up irrespective of their residence in rural or urban spatial settings. The girls who belong to the Northern areas of Pakistan are already accustomed to the strict purdah rules in dress including covering of the face. Daly attributes that diversity in dress patterns to Pakistani women's participation in "a range of formal and informal educational opportunities" consequently leading to "a range of visual appearances [are] present in private and public contexts. This reflects the varying individual and familial acknowledgement of socio-economic and religious realities and their experiences" (Daly, 2005b: 504). Shaw describes in detail the diversity in observance of purdah as follows:

> "[I]n practice, observance of purdah varies tremendously according to region, wealth, religious tradition and caste status. Purdah is reputedly

> stricter among the Pathans[50] and in the north-west of Punjab and more relaxed in the canal colony districts. Within any village, strict observance of purdah is generally associated with families wealthy enough to allow their women not to work. In poorer families, women have to work in the fields alongside……. Even so religiously, orthodox or high caste families may be stricter about purdah than wealthier but less orthodox families. Purdah may be more relaxed within the areas of a village where households of the same biradari adjoin, since there may be close links of kinship between households members" (Shaw, 2000: 75).

Haeri notes that in the major cities in Pakistan, almost never without their duppattas the "unveiled and veiled" women appear side by side and in all the variations (Haeri, 2002: 8). "Women's attire combines modesty with beauty, while allowing for individual taste and financial resources to improvise upon it" (Daly, 2005b: 504). Weiss on the other hand notes that "among wealthier women, many in metropolitan areas such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad no longer strictly adhere to traditional modest dress; the dupatta, for example, is often used in such cities as a colorful accessory rather than as a functional piece of clothing" (Weiss, 1986: 99), this we will later see in the chapter is highly disapproved by the women of the madrassah. Weiss describes dupatta as "essentially a diaphanous veil, [which] serves a very important function in traditional society, as it assists women in covering both their hair and their "bodily ornaments". She argues that in urban areas of Pakistan "[T]hin scarves are now occasionally substituted for the dupatta …. making it merely a fashionable ornament" (Weiss, 1986: 110, n.39).

It is important here to understand the widely prevalent notion of traditional modest dress; that is the more it covers the more modest it is considered. Bano Qudsia, an eminent novelist who writes about social issues, describes modest dressing and says "it is all a matter of degree, *burqa* clad women consider unveiled women with long braids

[50] Also called Pusthoon, are the people from the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan (NWFP)

liberal-minded.[51] The ones with long braids consider women with short hair immodest. But the latter thinks she only has a haircut, the true immodest women are those who put mascara and eye shadow during the day, who in turn believe that she is still pious compared to those who do not wear dupatta, wear see-through clothes and smoke cigarette in public. And for this smoker the real vamp is the one who sits with men and watches blue movies…. and it goes on"[52] (2002: 35, 36). The text elucidates that more concealed the body parts are and lesser the use of ornamentation and beautification products is, the more modest a women is considered. Van der veer recognizes shalwar kameez and dupatta covering the head and upper part of the body as the minimum requirement of modesty in dress in the sub-continental region (Veer, 1994: 100).

The diversity in dress pattern and the varied degrees in the observance of purdah owes to the fact that in Pakistan, unlike Saudi Arabia and Iran, there is no state policy concerning women's dress code."In the Qazi Court, the highest authority of Islamic jurisprudence in Pakistan, the federal Shariat court has held that there was no justification for purdah either in Quran or Sunnah" (Khan, 1999: 31). Dress in the country is not regulated by the state but by the individual him/herself and is influenced by social-religious and economic factors.

It is within this larger context that the present study locates purdah observance in the madrassah. Using the simple questions; what is purdah, how, why and when it has to be observed, I will try; to elucidate purdah primarily as a dress with all its physical dimensions; decipher its symbolic significance and; explain its contextual and conditional nature. The question "what" deals with the physical features of purdah which finds its greatest manifestation in dress. The detailed discussion over the concept reveals that purdah is not limited to dress; it regulates behaviour and gestures as well. Also once inside the madrassah it is impossible to ignore the incorporation of purdah rules with the spatial arrangements. Purdah also has to be observed in behaviour, an analysis of the behaviour of the girls at jamia would help understand that. Besides

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[51] It is important to note that the tone in which liberal-mindedness connotes the concept as a negative trait in the society

[52] The original text is in Urdu which has been translated into English by the author.

purdah rules also affect the mobility of women and restrict it to a considerable extent as compared to their male counterparts.

6.1 What Is Purdah? How It Has To Be Observed

6.1.1 Purdah: the gendered term:

Aurat naam hi purdah ka hai (the word woman means purdah) is the instant answer to the question what purdah is, from teachers and students alike. This is often followed by the statement, *aurat hai hi chupanay ki cheez* (a woman is something that needs to be kept hidden). The Urdu word *aurat* means woman. It is derived from the Arabic term *awra* (also spelt as *aurah*), a noun that comes from the verb "awira" meaning "something shameful to look at" (Goto, 2004: 289). The noun *awra* means "an object to be concealed" (Engineer, 1996: 90). It also means "private parts" (Zeno, 1996 : 102). The Dictionary of Islam provides two meanings for *aurah* or *aurat*, one shame or modesty, second that part of the body that must be covered (Hughes, 1995: 565). The English translation of the word suggests that in its singular form it means defectiveness, imperfection, blemish, flaw while the plural awrat refers to pudenda, genitals or weakness. It may also mean blind in one eye, false or artificial (as in teeth or hair), and lending/ borrowing.[53] Because of its gendered connotations, awra is perceived as one of those terms held inauspicious to the Muslim women. This is due to its primary association with notions of body and women. Elguindi's analysis of the usage of this term in Quran reveals that compared to its English translation, the term as used in the holy book of Muslims, can neither be confined to body nor to women. Referring to verse 24:31, 24:58 and 33:13[54] she suggests three different interpretations for the term; "women's genitals"; 'notion of privacy, private space and time"; and "protection,

[53] Wehr's Arabic English Dictionary (1994)

[54] **24:31-** . . . and male slaves or eunuchs or underage boys not yet sexually mature for contact with women's *'awrat* [genitals] in intercourse . . . (Elguindi, 1999: 141)

24:58- O believers, eunuchs and underage boys should not intrude upon your privacy on three occasions [or at three times of day]: before *fajr* [dawn] prayer, when you are resting at noon, and after *'isha* [night] prayer.137 These are three *'awrat*, outside of which interaction is not held against you or them . . . (ibid)

33:13- . . . if a group of them ask the Prophet for leave saying "truly our homes are *'awrah'*," though they were not *'awrah*, then their intent was to flee the battle . . .(ibid)

safety, vulnerability, security, and privacy". She calls for a more comprehensive paradigm for the explanation of this term; a paradigm that would then stress the term *aurah* as connoting the concept of "weakness" and "vulnerability. In doing so it would depict its "connections with the broader notions of Arabo-Islamic sanctity and privacy of the home and the family" (1999: 140-143). While Elguindi's analysis holds immense significance for scholarly discussion of the term, it is not applicable for the present research. Because the only verse referred to by my interlocutors, for explanation of the term is 24:31 where it refers to women's genitals. In case of the present research the word has always been associated with notions of privacy, concealment, shame, pudenda, and genitals.

While *aurat* is the most commonly used word for women in Urdu language, a less common and more formal term is *mastoorat*. *Mastoorat*, like its synonym refers to women who cover themselves. It is derived from the root word *satr*, a term which carries immense significance in the context of purdah due to its meaning. *Satr* literally means "hidden" while in the light of *shari'a* with reference to purdah and dress it means "those parts of the body which must be covered" (Attaria, 2006: 35). It also means "a curtain or a veil" (Hughes, 1935: 565). According to *shari'a*, *satr* is different for men and women. For men it requires to cover the body from the waist to knee. For women satr requirements are different for the free women and the slave ones[55]. Free women must cover their body from neck to feet while for slave women it is the same as men that is, from waist to knee (Hughes, 1935: 565). At the madrassah however, *satr* for women requires them to cover their whole body, including the face. It is preferable to cover hands and feet too. It is noticed that in most of the cases on encountering men, the girls at the madrassah seem considerably more conscious about covering their hands while feet may be left uncovered. For men, although theoretically they agree to the definition of *satr* but practically prefer that men cover themselves more than that is required of *satr*. *Shalwar kameez* which is the national dress of men too is appreciated as the best for them while pant/ trouser/ jeans and shirts are considered as symbol of

[55] According to the pupil of the madrasah, the difference in Purdah of free woman and a slave existed only in the olden times when slavery was part of the Arab society. During present times such distinction is not applicable, all Muslim women are required to cover themselves head to toe.

Westernization and are not taken as the proper dress. It is important to note here that the code of *satr* also requires men and women not to reveal their certain body parts infront of their own gender as well. For man-man and woman-woman *satr* includes the body parts from naval to knee. Women, however, are required to observe *shara'i purdah* infront of non-Muslim women (Shehri: 513). When asked, satr is explained by the girls in the light of *shari'a*. Practically speaking, they cover themselves in accordance with the social norms, always wearing shalwar kameez that completely covers their body. They even keep their head covered all the time; this they explain reflects their religiosity.

With such a link established between the term *aurat* and *mastoorat* and clothing, it was hard to ignore the complete negation of Saussarian theory, where signifier and signified do not have a natural link but an arbitrary one; a link that becomes evident on the very first response to what is purdah. A natural link is emphasized between the word *aurat* and *mastoorat* and the actual physical being; a link which requires women to observe purdah. This natural link has its roots in their belief that Islam is a religion supporting nature, *deen i fitrat* and purdah is a divine decree, which is discussed in the following sections of the chapter.

6.1.2 A Divine Decree

The rulings of the purdah are deeply rooted in the religious texts; Quran and *Hadith*. The Quran is believed as a Divine text, which cannot and has not been altered since its revelation on Prophet Mohammad 1400 years ago, and must be followed unquestioned. At the madrassah the primary aim is to learn religious text, including Quran, *hadith* and other historical-traditional religious discourse. The latter helps to explain the divine revelations, the way the decrees should be obeyed and the context in which they were revealed. Purdah is primarily justified as a divine decree that has to be observed unquestioned.

My interlocutors justify the unquestioned following of the religious decrees saying that a Muslim does not spend life according to his/her own wishes rather he/she spends the life according to the rules set by religion. To be a Muslim, for them, means total submission to the divine law which is explained by *shari'a*. There is no flexibility in issues related to *shari'a* and purdah is believed to be an important one. It is regarded as

farz, an obligation. *Farz* is defined as "those rules and ordinances of religion which are said to have been established and enjoined by God Himself" (Hughes, 1995: 124). The girls at the jamia believe purdah as one such obligation, the instructions of which are laid in the Quran. The oft-quoted verses in this regard are the following:

> "O Prophet, tell thy wives and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments (*jalabib*) over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful" (33: 59)

> "And say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils (*khimar*) over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husband, their father, their husband's father, their sons, their husband's sons, their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons or their women, or their slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of shame and sex…"(24: 31)[56]

These two verses[57] answer the two questions, who has to observe purdah and from whom. They are explained in the following:

6.1.2a Who should observe purdah:

The girls at the madrassah explain that with the commencement of puberty purdah becomes an obligation for a Muslim woman. This means that purdah observance marks

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[56] Translation by Yusuf Ali. http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch

[57] Purdah is practiced in a variety of ways by Muslims around the world which establishes that although these verses seem quite clear yet they have been interpreted in a variety of ways by the Muslim scholars. Brown also puts forth this point while discussing veil among Muslims in France (Brown, 2001: 711). I will here deal only with the one taught and practiced in MJH.

the transition from one phase to another of the rites de passage. Girls before puberty can wear different forms of clothing. Daly argues that "[A]ge related use of veils, veiled and veiling practices across cultures frequently defines the transitions between stages of the female cycle that reference physiological development and change as it relates to social status. One critical period is between youth and puberty" (Daly, 2005a 392) . She notes that among Afghans young girls begin to wear "chaadars, veils or head coverings to signal their change in status from a young non-menstruating girl to a menstruating young woman, a young woman who is now of marriageable age" Purdah among girls of the madrassah is an age-related issue, starting with puberty, Binte Ahmed a young *mu'alima* explains this in detail

> *On reaching puberty a girl should observe purdah. There are three indicators of puberty, menstruation, pubic hair growth, and pregnancy. The age generally varies between 9-12 years. The minimum is 9, below 9 a girl is considered as a minor and is not required to observe purdah. (Binte Ahmed,19- Mu'alima)*

In Pakistan, it is a common custom especially in the urban areas that young girls often wear western clothing including dress[58], skirts and jeans. Many private schools maintain dress as uniform, a practice found as misleading and unIslamic by my interlocutors. Umme Kashif, a student in the madrassah, whose daughter studies in a private school complains about the administration of the school as forcing young girls to leave their Islamic tradition. The school uniform is a knee-length dress. As she does not want her daughter to go bear legged she makes her wear *shalwar* and also a head scarf. She narrates rather contemptuously about how in the beginning she had to convince the "modern" teachers of the school that she would not allow her daughter to come "half naked" who though reluctantly but allowed her to wear shalwar and headscarf.

A book titled *Libaas aur Purdah* (Dress and Purdah) at the madrassah's library also highlights this issue. The writer holds the opinion that the uniforms in private schools

[58] Dress here refers to the European style outer garment for women and girls, consisting of bodice and skirt in one piece.

in Pakistan are neither Islamic nor national. He considers it a dilemma that Pakistani children cannot go to these schools in a Pakistani dress. These schools with almost no Islamic curriculum are actually making the youth slaves to the Western thought and culture. He suggests a change in curriculum and uniform inorder to retain their identity as Muslims and Pakistanis. He also criticizes the current trend of westernized clothing of boys and girls. Considering it the parents' responsibility to inculcate Muslim identity in their children, he advises them to choose proper dress for their children (Yousaf, 2006: 34-37). This book is just one example out of the several that are read, learnt and internalized by the girls. The girls often express that their main aim is to make their lives as "Islamic" as possible.

At the madrassah all the girls wear *shalwar kameez* and *dupatta* which is the national dress of the country. It is hard to find any girl, no matter what age, with her head uncovered. The girls even five or six years in age always wear headscarves. During the school hours, the young girls who have not started their formal religious education and are studying in the preliminary classes, wear the specific colour of headscarf assigned by the administration. This step is conceived as the practical application of the knowledge disseminated there at the Jamia; that they not only teach what the proper dress is but also practice it.

Just as women who have not reached the age of puberty are exempted from Purdah rules, so are the ones who are older in age. The Quran specifically mentions this exemption:

> "Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage- there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they do not make a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest" (24: 60)[59]

On explaining this verse, Binte Dawood a senior mu'alima at the madrassah, says that "older women are allowed to leave only their faces uncovered while the other rules of the purdah continue to be applied on them. It is better for them to remain as simple in

[59] Translation by Yusuf Ali. http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch/

dressing as possible." These women she says include mostly the ones who have passed the menopause. At MJH the teachers and the students, both are young in age. The oldest woman is a lady who comes to the madrassah daily to sell home cooked food. In her early fifties, she also wears burqa outside the madrassah and covers her face. She feels very comfortable with it and does not think that she will stop wearing burqa at any point of her life.

6.1.2b From whom Purdah has to observed: The conditional and contextual nature of purdah

Purdah is conditional and contextual; it does not have to be observed all the times. The contextuality of purdah depends on five variables, sex, relationship, age, religion, and space.

The three variables of gender-relationship-age: The verse 24: 31 quoted before enlists the people infront of whom a woman may not observe purdah. The closely related men are called *mahram*-s and include all those with whom marriage is impermissible permanently as well as the husband. *Mahram* is derived from the root h-r-m which "is among the most important Arabic roots in the vocabulary of Islamic practice" (Reinhart, 1995: 187). The root meaning is something like "forbidden" or "taboo" and evokes constraint and often heightened sanctity as well. Reinhart explains that mahram "defines those family members who may associate across gender without restriction". It also defines the degrees of relation within which marriage is unacceptable: parents, siblings, foster siblings and the like." Association with these relationships is allowed due to this forbiddance in marriage (1995: 101). Elguindi identifies *mahram* as "men in a relationship to a woman defined and bound by the incest taboo" (1999: 85). The term includes her blood relations as well as relations from in-laws. A woman's mahram-s include her father, husband's father, son, husband's son, brother, brother's son and sister's son. There are some other relations with whom incest taboo applies and marriage is impermissible. These are enlisted at another place in Quran and from a man's reference point:

> Prohibited to your (For marriage) are :- Your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, Mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; foster-mothers (who gave you suck), foster-sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughter's under your guardianship, born of your wives to

> whom ye have gone in, no prohibition if ye have not gone in; (Those who have been) wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past…." (4: 23)[60]

The verse explains all the kin relations for men with whom sexual and marital relationship is forbidden. The incest taboo between a Muslim man and the above-mentioned female relationships, make the latter his mahram-s, except for the sister-in-law as marriage with her becomes legal in case of divorce or death of the sister. Reversing the relations in gender provides the list of mahram-s for women, which will then in addition to the afore-mentioned kin-relations include, father's brother, mother's brother, son-in-law and suckling (Arabic: *ra'da, raza'ah, riza'ah*) brothers. One of the sayings of the prophet explains that what is forbidden by reason of kinship is forbidden by reason of suckling/ fosterage (Al-Bukhari), further extending the list of *mahram-s*.

The rest of the men are regarded as *na-mahram*-s and strict purdah rules are to be followed infront of them. There are some close male-relatives with whom marriage is not permanently forbidden but temporarily. These include brother-in-law (sister's husband as well as husband's brother) and the spouse of maternal and paternal aunt. Marriage with any of these relations becomes legal only when the female-relative is no longer their wife that is either she has died or divorced. Purdah, according to my interlocutors, is as essential a requirement when infront of these male relatives as it is in the case of unrelated men.

Mentioned in the same verse are three categories of na-mahram who are exempted from the purdah rules. These include men "because of their disqualifying status, asexualized condition, or sexual immaturity" (Elguindi, 1999: 85). Men with disqualifying status are the male slaves and servants. This explains Binte Dawood, a mu'alima at the madrassah, is not applicable in the present times. First the concept of slavery does not exist anymore. Secondly, the society is already so corrupted that a woman should cover herself completely even infront of the servants. She says that the newspapers are full of cases where servants rape their women employers to take vengeance. Since women are

[60] Translation by Yusuf Ali. http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch/

considered as honour of the family therefore these men who cannot avenge in any other way bring harm to the family honour. It is better to keep a distance. To this Umme Bashir another senior *mu'alima* agrees and adds that this category may include eunuchs too provided he has a good reputation and does not show any interest in discussing women's body. She narrates that during the prophet's time a eunuch used to come to his house from whom his wives did not veil. One day the prophet noticed that the eunuch was describing physical features of a woman, thereafter, he asked his wives not to let him enter freely who in turn always veiled when he came. Umme Bashir in a rather firm tone suggests that women as a precautionary measure should observe purdah infront of eunuchs as well, lest they might be interested in discussing women's body.

Sexual maturity is another variable effecting the application of purdah rules. Among opposite-sex, young boys who have not yet reached the age of puberty and are unaware of sexuality are also excluded from the rule. The general age of puberty for the boys is considered as 12 years. During the present research, I hardly came across any boys with the madrassah. The only boy often seen inside the building was a three year old son of Umme Khalid, a mu'alima, who often brings him along when there is nobody to take care of him at home.

Purdah and religion: Religion is one of the major determinants of purdah. While women are supposed to cover themselves infront of all men except their mahram, they are also required to observe purdah from women of other religions. This comes from the clause "their own women" in verse 33:55. Goto mentions that "their own women" means "Muslim women" while "what their left hand possess" means "male and female slaves" (in some tafsir-s it means only the female slaves) (2004: 282). According to my interlocutors although it is better for the Muslim women to cover their faces infront of the non-Muslim women but there is no harm if they show it. However covering of the hair is a compulsion in the said case. They may reveal their face but are not allowed to uncover their heads. Although I was very curious to observe such a situation where the madrassah pupil would encounter a non-Muslim to see if they are as strict about the rule as they are in case of men but unfortunately such instance never occurred during the research period.

Purdah and space: Purdah is subject to space. While women are strictly required to cover their body including their face in all the public spaces where there are men, on pilgrimage the rule rather becomes strict the other way round. Women are not allowed to wear niqab when they are in *ihram*. They are allowed to hide their face but the cloth should not touch a woman's face. The breach of such a rule demands compensation.[61] Therefore, women do not cover their face lest they break the rule. It is interesting to note that the rule demanding that cloth should not touch a woman's face is only applicable when in the state of *ihram*. Reinhart traces the root of this term to be the same as that of *mahram*, that is, h-r-m. *Ihram* is the "state of ritual purity of one going on the greater or lesser pilgrimage" (1995: 101). It is a state of liminality; "a condition that lasted for extended period, during which he [the pilgrim] was isolated from profane activities and mundane social relations." The period of liminality which starts at designated places outside of Mecca, known as *al-miqat*, continues as long as the duration of pilgrimage. One of the important steps of this liminal condition is the changing of clothes by the pilgrim.

> "Men replace their ordinary clothing by two unsewn wraps, the *izar* (which fell from the waist to the feet) and *rida* (which covered one shoulder and the upper body). A woman also had to change her clothing. If she usually wore a face veil (*niqab*) she removed it, but continued to cover her head and hair; it was recommended, however that her head covering be long enough to fall down around her face" (Young, 1993: 291).

This recommendation for the long head covering draws its roots from the incident reported by Aisha, one of the wives of the prophet, where she depicts hiding the face on encounters with na-mahram, during the pilgrimage.

> "The riders were passing by us while we were with the Apostle of Allah in *ihram*. When they came by us, one of us let down her veil over her

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[61] "For each offence against the rules of ihram, special sacrifices are ordained, according to the offence" (Hughes, 1935: 196). I was informed that if the cloth touches a woman's face in the state of ihram a goat/ sheep has to be sacrificed.

face from her head. When they had passed on we removed it. (Abu Daud)" (Chauhdry, 1991: 102).

During a FGD, while discussing face-covering during pilgrimage, the girls seemed to agree on the point that since it is recommended to hide the face even during the pilgrimage, a woman should not leave it uncovered. Although majority of them have not been to Saudi Arabia yet they informed having heard from some relative or having read in a book, that a new type of hat is now available in there, which has a big rim and a cloth is draped over the rim in a way that it hides the face without touching it; thus, facilitating hiding of the face without violating the rules of pilgrimage. A senior student who has lived there confirmed the availability of this new hat. Another mu'alima who has performed hajj together with her husband, narrated rather amusingly that as she was very keen to hide the face she bought this hat. Unable to see properly, she stumbled twice and once she even held another man's arm thinking that he was her husband (laughs). She eventually took off the hat because it created more problems than ease. The rest of the girls just laughed at the incident and no one made any protest in favour of the hat nor suggested an alternative for covering the face; covering of the face during the pilgrimage seemed not so grave an issue for them as it is in day-to-day life.

In case of namaz, the daily five obligatory prayers of Muslims, the rules of niqab are not so strict. It is obligatory to cover the head but niqab is subject to the presence of men. The covering of the head is considered mandatory on the basis of the saying of the prophet which means that a woman who has reached her puberty and offers prayers without covering her head, her prayers are not accepted by Allah. (Abu Dawood, Book #2, Hadith: 0641) Inside the madrassah, the girls never cover their face during offering their prayers, at the same time they never leave their heads uncovered. One of the senior students while helping her junior wear the headscarf properly during the prayer explained that even when a woman is alone, she should cover her head while offering the prayers in the light of the *hadith* mentioned above. She says that purdah in the form of head covering has to be observed from the Creator as well for it is a sign of respect. Such an act reflects that during the time of prayer an ordinary place transforms into a sacred one, which demands respect manifested best through a proper dress code. As against the hajj incident narrated by the mu'alima, where she took the liberty and let her face be exposed, during a public protest by the girls of the madrassah they kept wearing

their niqab-s in the presence of the few men present there. And when it was the time to offer prayers, they prayed with their face still covered.

6.1.3 Prophetic Tradition: Institutionalization of Purdah

Purdah is also regarded as a prophetic tradition. It is believed that the prophet preached purdah observance in the light of the afore-mentioned Quranic verses. The girls informed that the wives of the prophet and other Muslim women of that period promoted complete covering for women including hiding of the face, as the proper Islamic dress code. Such narratives from the life of the prophet that indicate the time when the divine order was decreed and explain the reaction of Muslim women towards it, reflect the significance of purdah during the prophet's time. They also depict the way purdah should be observed. In the following are explained only the most frequently quoted narratives by the girls of the madrassah. The aim is not to detail the content of the narratives but to analyse the relationship between the purpose of their narration and purdah observance as practiced in MJH. The principles outlining purdah, in addition to the Quranic injunctions, are drawn from these narratives. They are also used to justify their purdah practices as the most authentic form of veiling. These traditions are important in the sense that they lay not only the background of the context in which purdah was institutionalized in the early Muslim society but also the process of institutionalization. Stowasser in her detailed study about women in Islam, argues that

> "[E]ach recorded detail [about the prophet's wives] represents a facet of sunnah-in-the-making, while their sum reflects the proliferation of categories of acceptable, forbidden, or value-neutral behaviour first debated and then promulgated in early Islamic law. This process, then, involved a dynamic spiral of mutual reinforcement of its two constituent components, that is the principle of these women's' righteousness on the one hand, and their function as categorical norm-setters on the other. This is especially clear in the traditions which deal with modesty, veiling and, seclusion" (1994: 115).

6.1.3a Protection and Absolute Seclusion:

It is believed that before the verse on veil was revealed, commonly referred to as *ayat-i-hijab*[62] by the respondents, the women of the pre Islamic Arab were oblivious to the concept of covering themselves up properly to ensure modesty. Veiling and seclusion of women was restricted to the elite class. The *ayat-i-hijab*, revealed in the 5th hijrah, has several background incidents for explanation which argues Ahmed "does not mean that they all are untrue, but, rather that these were all part of the background to the new edicts and represents the kinds of the situations that were coming to seem, to new Muslim eyes, unacceptable" (Ahmed, 1986: 683). A frequently mentioned incident in the context is that Umar Ibn-al-Khattab, a close companion of the prophet kept urging Muhammad to seclude his wives, which the latter did not do. Once, Aisha and Sawda, wives of the prophet went out to answer the call for nature. In those times, women used to go to the fields as there was no system of sanitation inside the house. Sawda being a tall lady was easily recognized by Umar who called upon her and told that he knows it's her. After that the verse on veil was revealed and Muslim women were asked to wear their outer garments when in public so that they may be recognized as believing women and not harassed by men. Umer's concern regarding the seclusion of the prophet's wives, says a senior mu'alima of the madrassah, is interpreted by the Muslim scholars as protection from the harassment by non-believer men. Abbott writes, "Umar's concern that Mohamad should seclude his wives was in order to guard, according to one account, against the insults of the "hypocrites" (a group of Medinians whose faith was lukewarm) who would abuse Mohamad's wives and then claim that they had taken them for slaves." In another account the concern for seclusion is explained on the pretext that "Mohamad's success was now bringing all kinds of visitors to the mosque….By instituting seclusion, Mohamad created a distance between his wives and this thronging community on their doorstep-the distance appropriate to the wives of a now powerful and successful patriarchal leader in a newly unambiguously patriarchal society" (Abbot in Ahmed, 1986: 682-683).

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[62] Verse 33:59, mentioned earlier in the section 6.1.2 A Divine Decree, is considered as the first verse on observance of purdah.

Another incident which reasons Muhammad's seclusion of his wives is that of his marriage with Zainab binte Djahahsh. When the prophet married her, after the wedding feast some guests stayed longer in his house, which did not please him. This incident is however, is commonly related to an earlier verse where Muslim men are commanded to communicate with the prophet's wives only from behind a screen (hijab). It also establishes that Muhammad later in his prophethood secluded his wives from other men[63]. Goto regards the *hadith* narrating this incident as "the most broadly accepted" with reference to purdah and seclusion (Goto, 2004: 7).

Purdah observance is aimed to achieve highest ranks of modesty and chastity. The girls often narrate that the prophet told his wives to observe veil even in the presence of a blind man. It is reported in one of the *hadith* that once a blind man came to the prophet when he was with his wives, Umme Salma and Maymoonah. The prophet told his wives to observe purdah in his presence. On their inquiry about purdah infront of sightless men he reasoned purdah on the pretext that they were not blind and hence able to see him. This incident, say the girls, is significant in the sense that it elucidates purdah as not only the physical dress and screening but also a code of behaviour which requires women to avoid unnecessary gazing at *na-mahram*. Purdah for them requires absolute seclusion through screening.

6.1.3b Marker of Faith:

The enthusiasm of the Muslims, men and women alike, in adapting to the rules of Islam during its initial phase, are also often referred by the girls while explaining the context of the purdah verse. The unquestioned observance of these rules is identified as a marker of obedience to the Divine Order and the prophet as well as an inspiration to follow in the present times. It is narrated that as soon as the verse on purdah became known to the Muslim women of the prophet's time, they tore part of their thick garments to cover their face without showing any reluctance. This, the girls say, depicts

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[63] Verse- 33: 53: "O ye who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses - until leave is given you,- for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs…."

the intensity of their faith reflected through unquestioned and unconditional obedience. Such obedience becomes a source of eternal salvation in the life hereafter which the respondents believe is the actual life (as explained in the chapter 5). For the girls of the madrassah this incident holds particular importance because of two reasons; one that it shows the depth of faith one should aspire and second the correct way to observe purdah. Purdah of the dress meant hiding of the whole body including the face with a thick cloth.

6.1.3c Indicator of Status:

Another oft-referred incident in the context of the revelation of *ayat-i-hijab* is the marriage of Muhammad with Safia binte Huaiy bin Akhtab. This particular incident establishes purdah as indicating the status of a woman as free. At the battle of Khyber, Safia, who belonged to a leading Jewish family, was held captive. The companions of the prophet were curious to know the decision on her future status; whether she would be declared a slave or a free woman. They believed that observance of purdah will mark her status as *hurrah* (free woman). Muhammad, who married Safia, soon after the war, pulled a veil between her and his companions, confirming her status as a free woman (Shehri: 505). This incident, on one hand, confirms the existence of purdah since olden times and on the other hand reveals that free woman of higher status observed purdah during that period; purdah then was a marker of their status also signifying their honour.

6.1.3d The all-hiding feature:

A tradition that is used to legitimize the all covering feature of the dress is one which explains that Muslim women of the prophet's time covered their heads with "jilbaab" in a way that they left only one of their eyes free. The girls at the madrassah reason the hiding of the face through the frequent narration of this tradition.

These traditions establish purdah as a marker of status; seclusion for the sake of honour; religiosity; and protection from harassment; few out of the many reasons for which the girls wear their burqa.

6.2 Purdah and the Dress

For the girls of the madrassah it is very important to express purdah through their dress code. Infact for them dress is the primary form of purdah observance. Dress code is

broadly defined by McVeigh as "rules that regulate an individual's appearance" (2005: 377). Elguindi argues that "often focusing analysis on the code underlying dress forms can prove more revealing than exploring a clothing item in material and functional terms" (2005a: 370). These rules in case of the girls at the madrassah, as has been mentioned earlier, are derived from the religious text. The text originally in Arabic is interpreted differently by different religious scholars, likewise the verses pertaining to purdah. The interpretation of the text by the Deobandi Hanafi scholars requires the girls to follow certain rules. There are two set of rules one pertaining to clothing in general and the other particularly defining the burqa. The general rules of the dress require it to be modest; which is defined as simple and non-revealing, that is it should not expose the body contours. The burqa, a long cloak with a headscarf covering the whole body as well as the face, is a compulsory component of the dress used for purdah observance. The codes of this form of dress are deduced by the Quran itself as per their interpretation of the relevant verses. A careful study shows that the girls constantly make an effort to explain this form of dress as bearing religious value. In doing so, they actually attempt to sacralize their dress. It is however important to note here that while discussing dress or other related issues, the girls sometimes refer to the Quranic verses, sometimes *hadith-s*, sometimes both and sometimes none. Also important to note here is that the veil has been an issue of considerable debate even among the Muslim scholars. While some scholars consider veil a Quranic injunction thereby vigorously supporting the covering of women from head to toe; the others do not believe in veil (Engineer, 2005: 59-68). My interlocutors fall in the category who consider veil a Quranic decree.

The girls at the madrassah explain dress and purdah in dress as separate but complementary concepts. The discussion on dress becomes inevitable while discussing purdah and vice versa. Inorder to fully conceptualize the significance of dress and observance of purdah in terms of clothing, it will be worthwhile to first discuss how the issue of dress has been generally addressed in Quran. This is important because for the girls all rules of life are steered by religion with Quran being the guiding principle. The symbolic and functional value of the dress highlighted in the Quran will help better understand the significance of clothing for the girls at the madrassah; who are aspiring to become religious scholars.

6.2.1 Dress in the Quran:

Dress or clothing has been referred to as *libas* in the Quran. Though, used rarely it carries either metaphoric or/and symbolic or/and functional value of the dress. Anwar finds the usage of the word as two-dimensional. One, the literal reference to connote "physical/ material dress and adornments" and the other is the figurative reference to dress as "covering of human shortcomings and vulnerabilities" (2004: 721).[64] Elguindi in her extensive review of the term *libas* in Quran establishes three major points. One, that it denotes dress. This denotation is based on two qualities that both of these terms share; "inclusiveness" and "comprehensiveness". The only difference is that while dress has only recently acquired these characteristics, especially in the field of Anthropology, *libas* has long been associated with them even during the pre-Islamic era by all; lay people, intellectuals and scholars alike. Second, the usage of *libas* "not only denotes material form of clothing and ornament for women and men, but also includes diverse forms of the veil and veiling. Third, it embodies an invisible, intangible realms of the sacred in which cultural ideas are relationally embedded." This she explains with special reference to the Arab Islamic culture where libas is used as a symbol for "family and gender as haven-shelter-sanctuary (all in one) – a protective shield, as it were" (1999: 69-74).

Libas strictly in terms of dress has been borrowed from Arabic in Urdu language. My interlocutors approach dress from two dimensions, cultural and religious. The society's viewpoint has been explained earlier as the more covered up the more modest[65], the religious approach to dress is discussed in detail with reference to particular verses in the Quran.

> O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment (*libas*) upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment (*libas*) of righteousness- that is the best.[66] (7:26)

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[64] She establishes this two-dimensional usage on the basis of these verses of the Quran: (16:14; 35:12; 18:31; 44:53; 22:23; 35:33)

[65] Page 2 of this chapter

[66] Translation by Yusuf Ali. http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch/

This verse categorizes dress into three types based on their functional value: dress to hide the private parts; dress for aesthetics and dress reflecting piety. Qasmi while explaining the verse states that dress here has been established as a differentiating marker between human beings and other creatures: a special gift bestowed only on the former. Wearing proper dress is symbolic of gratitude to God (2006: 169). Ahmed endorses the same characteristic of garments; a distinguishing indicator parting "civilized human society" from "animal state of nature". He interprets the second category of dress as "fine clothes" which function as a sign of "individual status, wealth and personal taste" (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994: 141). The verse also speaks about the symbolic dress; the dress of piety that requires inner cleanliness. Qasmi proposes that this can be exhibited physically by wearing "such clothes which may conform to the principles laid down by the *Shari'a*, and which may not reflect ostentation and false pride." Such a dress will reflect upon the wearer as one who is "devout" and "God-fearing person" (2006: 169,170). As against this, Ahmed finds a metaphoric meaning in the dress of piety, that is, "the state of piety" itself. Thus, on one level piety of dress may reflect wearer's "piety, modesty or religious inclination" but on the other and perhaps a higher level it is a state which is "not simply achieved by a form of dress" (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994: 141). Elguindi defines this dress of piety as one carrying metaphoric connotation of a code for "morality, respect and humanness" (Elguindi, 1999: 76). The interviews with the girls, however, are replete with reference to the function of dress as reflexive of the wearer's modesty and religiosity. Dress and piety are considered as interrelated concepts: a pious woman's clothing will always be such endorsing her piety and modesty.

Aesthetics in dress is also mentioned in the Quran. A verse from the chapter 7 states:

> O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters (7:31)

In this verse instead of libas *zeenat'ihuma* is used to connote dress. Here the worshippers are directed to wear beautiful clothing while praying. This reveals the significance of proper attiring during the prayers. In the course of the research it was observed that for the girls of the madrassah the beauty of the dress lays in its properness and cleanliness. Extravagance is avoided, as decreed in the verse. Ahmed argues that it

is to emphasize inner piety over outward appearance, that "the quality of believer's clothing is irrelevant to his spiritual worth" (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994: 141). Body and dress cleanliness are taken special care of before offering their prayers. The cleaning of the body is an obligatory ritual that has to be performed before praying. Praying is symbolic of a virtual interaction with the God. The girls informed that during the course of the study they also acquire knowledge about the significance of cleanliness while praying. This requires the place to be clean; the body and also the dress to be clean. The ritual purification of the body is symbolic of their deference to God. The routine practical lessons for praying are always preceded by short lectures on proper dress code and the significance of clean clothing while praying.

Though adornment in dress has been mentioned twice yet the primary function of dress is established as that of concealment. Milani argues that the purpose of clothing in Islam is not to "display the body" but "to conceal, to hide, and to reduce sexual enticement." She traces this significance of dress in primordial humans. The properly covered Adam and Eve were exposed to each other upon eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. "Nakedness" was the punishment for disobedience to God (Milani, 1990: 3, 4). Elguindi however, finds the term nakedness problematic when discussing the same verse. She argues that on committing the sin of eating from the divine tree, the otherwise hidden genitals are revealed which was embarrassing for Adam and Eve but not shameful. In support of her argument that the incidence of the primordial couple does not make any reference to nakedness, sex, sexuality, shame from the body or sexuality she makes reference to the following three verses. In all three she reconsiders the Arabic word saw'atuhuma as referring to genitals and not to shame/sex/sexuality (Elguindi, 1999: 73 & 74)

> Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, bringing openly before their minds all their shame (*saw'atihima*) that was hidden from them (before) (7:20)
>
> So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame (*saw'atuhuma*) became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies. (7:21) [my correction 7:22]

> In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness (*saw'atuhuma*) appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden (20:121)

Notwithstanding the problems with translating linguistic terms, it is clear that the revealing of certain body parts is considered as a sign of Divine displeasure for the disobedience. Dress is primarily conceptualized to be used for hiding/concealing of the revealed parts. Another verse particularly significant with reference to the incident of the garden of the Eden and this research is 7:27 which states:

> O ye Children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment (*libas*), to expose their shame… (7:27)

Falling into Satan's traps had its repercussion; Adam and Eve were declothed as a punishment. The research shows that any negligence in wearing of the proper dress that should hide all the body parts and the non-observance of purdah is equated with provoking Satan. Given that declothing and revealing of certain body parts is considered as a sign of punishment, it makes only sense that primary function of dress is considered to hide and conceal. It is a common belief at the madrassah that Satan (referred as *Shaytan* and *Iblis* in Arabic) is the eternal enemy of humans seducing them towards evil deeds. With reference to issues of dress, when women are not properly clothed *fitna* spreads in the society. *Fitna* in this case refers to sexual immorality which is explained in detail later in the chapter.

One of the most referred verse that concerns dress is the one where husband and wife are metaphorically referred to as dress of each other.

…. They are your garments and ye are their garments… (2:187)

For the girls this metaphoric use of dress as each other's clothing has several meanings. It, for one and most importantly, emphasizes the institutionalization of marriage. Besides it also reflects upon the intimacy of the relationship of husband and wife. This is often used by the girls to construct gender relations in marriage and emphasize the mutuality of rights of husband and wife towards each other.

6.3 Burqa: The Purdah-Dress:

Given that the main theme of the research is to investigate purdah in clothing I will first discuss Burqa as the ideal purdah dress and then the dress itself. If purdah is to be equated with dress than the primary task is to define to which category of clothing it falls into. Technically Andrewes divides dress into three categories on the basis of the way they are stitched: "tailored clothes", "flat-cut clothes" and "wrapped up clothes". The present study deals with the "flat-cut clothes" which may be defined as "garments with no shape or lines". The cloth is sewn in a way that it loosely hangs over the body of the wearer and does not make any of the body curves and lines prominent (Andrewes, 2005: 9). The dress consists of two parts: the body gown and the headscarf. A discussion of the two terms, that is, *jalabib* and *khimar*, used in the Quranic verses 33:59 and 24:31 respectively, seems indispensible for a complete and better conceptualization of burqa. The terms jilbab and *khimar* lay the guidelines of their burqa and it is interesting to note the interpretation of the terms in a way that their burqa becomes an ideal replication.

6.3.1 Jalabeeb:

The word is plural form of *jilbab*. *Jilbab* is a generic term that together with its related terms, *djellaba*, *jillaba*, *gallabiya* or *jallabiya* is used in Arabic to connote a special form of dress, worn by men as well as women (Elguindi, 2005a: 369). *Jilbab* has been discussed, although not equally as is the practice of veiling, but quite extensively due to its usage in one of the two verses concerning purdah observance (33:59). In Lane's Arabic Lexicon it is referred to as "a woman's outergarment" (1968: 440), in Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world it is translated as "a loose outer clothing or cloak" (Anwar, 2004: 721) while the Oxford dictionary of Islam includes, "shawl, cloak and wrap" under the category of *jilbab* (160). Elguindi defines it as a "long loose shirt dress" (2005a: 370). These definitions establish *jilbab* as a form of clothing that conceals the body but does not necessarily cover the head. In cases where it is defined as a head or/and face cover or a veil it is strongly opposed. For instance, as in the case of Rodwell's definition of the term as veil is disapproved with an argument in favour of *jilbab* meaning to be outer garment or wrapper (Moaddel & Talattof, 2002: 156).

Goto's extensive work analyses different religious texts with reference to veil and establishes that although the background and principle idea of the verse 33:59 has remained the same in all the Quranic exegesis from 9th to 15th century, the term *jilbab* remained open for analysis. It has been interpreted differently by the religious scholars of that period. In order to elucidate the different forms of clothing *jilbab* has been attributed to she refers to the works of various religious scholars[67] of that time and establishes that the term has been invariably defined as garment wider than the *khimar* (usually translated as a head scarf), or an outer garment (*rida'*) which covered the body head to toe, or a large cloth (called *mila'*, *milfafa*, *iza'r*). These definitions are usually followed by traditions explaining how this garment is worn. In some cases they depict "[Muslim women] covered their faces by wearing the *jilbab* from the top of their head, and showed one eye", and another explains that "[Women] tied [the *jilbab*] above their eyebrows" (2004: 281).

The girls at the jamia, in the light of these and other similar traditions perceive *jilbab* as a long wide piece of cloth worn to hide all body parts including the face. But to legitimize covering of the head and hiding of the face it is usually the verse 24:31 that is referred to. Here the word *khumur* plural for *khimar* holds particular significance. A brief description of the word is as follows:

---

[67] **For the interpretation of jilbab, Goto refers to these works**
al-Baghawi, vol. 3, p. 544 from al-Baghawi. Tafsir al-Baghawi. 4 vols. Beirut, 1987.
al-Zamakhshari, vol. 3, p. 246 from al-Zamakhshari. al-Kashshamf 'an HD aqam 'iq al-Tanzil wa 'Uyumn al-Aqamwil fi Wujumh al-Ta'wil. 4 vols. Beirut: n.d.
al-QurtDubi, vol. 13, p. 243from al-QurtDubi. al-Jammi'li AhD kamm al-Qur'amn wa al-Mubayyin li mam TadDammana min al-Sunnah wa Amyamt al-Furqamn. 20 vols.
Cairo, 1967.
Ibn Kathir vol. 6, p. 470 from Ibn Kathir. Tafsir al-Qur'amn al-'AzD im. 8 vols. Istanbul, 1984–85.
For how jilbab was worn he refers these
al-TDabari, vol. 22, p. 33 from al-TDabari. Jammi'al-Bayamn fi Tafsir al-Qur'amn.30 vols. Bumlamq, 1905–11.
al-Baghawi, vol. 3, p. 554; see above
al-Zamakhshari, vol. 3, p. 246; see above
al-QurtDubi, vol. 13, p. 243; see above
Ibn Kathir, vol. 6, p. 471; see above
al-SuyumtDi, vol. 6, pp .659–61 from al-SuyumtDi. al-Durr al-Manthumr fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thumr. 8 vols. Beirut, 1983.

6.3.2 *Khimar*:

The term refers to a kind of veil the use of which predates Islam (Goto, 2004: 287). It has been defined as women's head-covering (Elguindi, 2005a: 370), a scarf (Anwar, 2004: 721), traditional garment for the head and neck (Stowasser, 1997: 95) as well as a form of veil that covers the head and extends over the torso (similar to the cape worn by Catholic nuns) (Mahmood, 2005: 41). According to the Lane Lexicon of the Arabic language *khimar* is "[A] woman's muffler, or veil, with which she covers her head and the lower part of her face, leaving exposed only the eyes and part or the whole of the nose: such is the *khimar* worn in the present day: a kind of veil which is called in Turkish Yashmaq: a woman's headcovering" (1968: 800). In majority of the instances *khimar* is established as a head cover. Although rare but there also exist such occurrences where it is referred to just as a covering and not specifically for the head. For example Newby defines it as a "garment that covers a woman's bosom" (2002: 80). Some even refuse it as a head covering. Sawma argues that *khimar* has "erroneously" been translated as "head-coverings" or veils". According to him, the word literally means "isolation from" and may be applied to a "curtain, cover, dress, tablecloth, blanket, etc." With reference to clothing it may be regarded as "a dress, a shirt, a shawl, a blouse, etc., to cover their private parts, not their faces (2006: 359, 360). Sawma, infact establishes that part of the verse dealing with *khimar* has incorrectly been interpreted as "to draw their veils over their bosom"[68] and Quran actually is telling the women believers "not to scortch themselves, [and to] wear garments to cover their bosom" (2006: 359). [69]

Having discussed the issue in detail, it would not be wrong to say that such a translation would immediately be dismissed by the girls of the madrassah. Infact any translation showing some dissimilarity to what they believe in is rejected as being *twisted out for personal interest* or *to find easier way in religion*. The word *khimar* is believed to be a headscarf that is not *to be drawn over the bosom but to be pulled down from head over*

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[68] He refers to the famous translations of Quran by M. Sher Ali, A. Yusuf Ali, M. Marmaduke Pickthall

[69] The reason behind such striking difference in translation is that, as against the common belief among Muslims that Quran was revealed in Arabic language, Sawma tries to establish Quran as having Aramaic origin, a claim that would probably offend many Muslims.

to the bosom. In doing so it would hide the face too. Hiding of face is an essential requirement of purdah.

With this definition of Jilbab and *Khimar*; an outer-garment (be it a gown or an unstitched long, wide cloth) and a head scarf hiding the face respectively, should fulfill the requirement of purdah. But what is striking among the girls is that they all end up wearing the same type of clothing: the black all-concealing burqa is their uniform dress. In the following are discussed the various essential features of their burqa as reasoned by the girls at the madrassah.

6.3.3 Burqa- The Cover to hide:

According to my interlocutors the first and foremost function of the burqa is to hide: this requires hiding of the physical and tangible body, the dress, the adornments and the intangible but apparent beauty which for them lies in the contours of the body and the face. A part of the discussion on purdah of the dress includes the different forms of head and body coverings used by the Muslim women all over the world. On analysing these discussions it is realized that sometimes the girls may say that if the "circumstances" allow women may not cover their face. By circumstance they mean that if a woman feels protected and there is little or no chance of men-women interaction. But this viewpoint is soon rejected by the same respondent in favour of complete body covering including the face in all situations and under all circumstances, which establishes that it is the complete body covering which is preferred. There is a mutual consensus among the girls that hiding of the face is immensely important. The girls claim that they never go in public areas without their face covering. There are two reasons, one that the face is the core of beauty and second that revealing such a beauty can bring harm to the moral order of the society.

> *A woman's body is made such that it is beauty from head to toe, only hands and feet can be left open. Infact it also depends, sometimes it is better to cover them too, a woman has to decide for herself. Her whole body is awrah; she needs to cover each and every part. If she covers it all but does not hide the face then it is of no use. Because the real beauty lies in the face: face is composite of beauty (majmua al mahasin) (binte Abdullah, 20-mu'alima)*

If the world believes that the beauty is to be appreciated and displayed, the girls at the madrassah think otherwise. According to them it should be hidden. Because the very feature of the face that it is composite of all the beauty makes it the cause of tribulations as well. Binte Ahmed a 19 year old *mu'alima* explains this feature of the face:

> *See, we all here wear niqab and that ofcourse is not without reason. It may vary in style though but the purpose is to hide the face. Because we believe in it, we believe that the face is ummul fitan (the mother of all evils). People are attracted to a beautiful face. Boys see and fall in love with a beautiful face, then they seek ways to stay in touch, first they want just to talk then they want to meet, and so starts a never-ending story of love; it is not allowed in Islam. It is not allowed for men and women to have any relationship like friendship and love.*

These two most frequently referred features of the face, that is, *majmu'a al mahasin* and *ummul fitan*, render it with unmatched superiority over other parts of the body. It is the core; the whole body seems to be dominated by this primary observable part of the body.

> *The eye first catches the sight of face and then the rest of the body and not the other way round. Face is the center of the body. It is no use wearing the burqa if one does not cover the face; the locus of beauty and splendor. (umme Dost, 37-Mu'alima)*

Simmel notices this centrality of the face and reasons it on two basis, one the unity of its features and the second that the unity rests on head which is given a peninsular position vis-à-vis the body. The aesthetics of the face for him lies in this inner unity of the face. These features hold significance also because in them "the soul finds its clearest expression" (Simmel, 2004: 1-10). For the present research, it is very interesting to note that both Simmel's and Freud's concepts of beauty, though antithetical, hold importance. While for Simmel face mirrors the soul, beauty and goodness are one and reflected in the face; for Freud beauty is "sexually stimulating" and has its root in "sexual excitation" (Synott, 1993: 92-94). Simmel's concept of beauty is applicable only when purdah is observed properly, purity and piety is

reflected in the face. On the other hand when face is revealed it leads to sexual stimulation; the opposite genders are attracted to this beauty of the face with likelihood of ending up in sexual involvement. This quality of the beauty of the face; the "power" to sexually stimulate and excite is largely perceived as a negative trait by my interlocutors.

But burqa, I found is not only about concealing beauty and avoiding consequences highly disapproved by the religious teachings, it is also about covering nakedness[70]. Revealing of any part would be equated with actually making that part naked. The concept of nakedness applies to the whole body of a woman, the degrees of which vary however. Revealing of the arms is not as big a sin as revealing of the legs or wearing low necks and showing the cleavage. This gradation has its roots in the cultural code of dress. The national dress *shalwar kameez* is worn in a way that it covers the body from neck to the ankle. The length of the sleeve may vary, but the length of the pants is such that they do not show legs. The gradation of nakedness has been inferred by the analysis of passages such as under:

> *A woman's body is awrah, it needs to be covered completely and remain hidden. Every part is like a private part. Let's suppose that if I wear half sleeves it would mean my arms are half naked. But these days the girls have no shame, they even go out showing off half their legs, what a grave sin!(binte Rehan, 20-student,takhasus)*

An even more elaborative argument is the following by a young student of the madrassah who detests the prevailing style of clothing

> *I am unable to understand the purpose of clothing these days, the shirts are getting shorter, the material thinner. It seems that people are wearing clothes and yet not wearing them, are you getting what I want to say (asks me but does not wait for an answer and continues with the abomination). As if it wasn't enough to wear short sleeves that now people wear sleeveless. And they say it is because of the hot*

[73] My interlocutors equate nakedness with de-clothing or being without clothes. Inorder to avoid the problemitizaiton associated with the term, I here choose to use it in the same sense as perceived by them.

temperature, I wish they realized it will be hotter in hell. And to top that women don't bother to cover themselves with dupattas, it just hangs on their shoulders, as a noose in the neck…(binte Haris, 18-student, a'lmia)

6.3.4 Hiding ornaments

Also what is important and is included in the code of dressing is the non-display of ornaments. The exhibition of body adornments and use of tinkling jewelry that makes sound and may attract the other person is strictly forbidden. The inclusion of ornaments and adornments in the study of dress and clothing is not new in the academia, as Arthrur argues that dress cannot be narrowed down to cloth, stitched or draped, it means much more than that, including both "body supplements, such as clothing and accessories and behaviours, such as dieting, plastic surgery and cosmetics, leading to changes in body shape" (2000: 2). In another place she defines dress in terms of "clothing, grooming, and all forms of body adornments" (Arthur, 2005: 94). Such a definition of dress best explains purdah as a form of dress, which requires hiding not only body forms but also the adornments and the wearer to follow a code of conduct defined as modest by religious discourse.

Hiding of adornments has been of considerable debate in the religious texts as explained by Goto. The two terms "ornaments" and "what is apparent" used in the verse 24:31 left open for inferences, are the rootcause of this debate. Ornaments, says Goto, fall into two categories "what is hidden" and "what is apparent". The hidden ornaments are such as "anklets, bracelets, earrings and necklaces." The apparent is somewhat controversial. Al Tabari, one of the early exegetes of the Quran divides these controversial opinions into two: one, where the apparent means "clothing" and second where it refers to "face and hands (including the ornaments of that part)" and holds the latter category as more rational one. As against that Al-Zamakhshari, a grammarian and theologian explains ornaments as "jewellery, kuhl and hand dye"; "what is hidden" as "adorn parts of the body that should be covered, that is, arms, thigh, neck, head, breast and ears" and "what is apparent" as "face, hands and feet" or "the things that are seen naturally and normally" (Tabari and Zamakhshari in Goto, 2004: 288 & 289).

Such a discussion forms only a small part of the debated material studied by the girls at the madrassah. These debates are considered as "problems of *fiqh*" thoroughly researched by the religious scholars. Ordinary men/women are required to follow the rulings set by the scholars. The present research shows that the rules set by the religious scholars of the Deobandi Hanafi maslak "what is apparent" and "ornaments" include women's body and face as well as jewellery, make-up and dress. This becomes evident by their understanding of the word *jilbab*

> *We wear burqa which can be regarded as modification of jilbab; a long wide cloth that hides the whole body, the dress underneath and the face. (Binte Umer,18- Student, Khasa)*

> *Jilbab is a must, everyone woman should wear it. Any chadar that covers the body, that hides the dress, the fitting of the dress, the body, the face, and if possible the eyes too. (Binte Nasir, 18-student, A'lmia)*

This understanding of the term is conspicuous in their dress, the burqa hides their body, dress and ornaments. It is important to note that jewellery and make-up for ornamentation and beautification are seldom used by the girls. During my stay at the madrassah, I have never come across any girl wearing any make-up for beautification. This is also because it is believed *that God created human beings in perfect form which should not be altered by the use of make-up*. (FGD - students). The only make up they wear is kohl (*surma* or *kajol*) in the eyes and when used the eyes are covered with a thin cloth attached to the *niqab* (called *qumasha*). Even kohl is not used by the majority for the reason that it beautifies the eyes. What is most common is the use of henna on hands. The girls are always practicing henna designs on each other's hands; adorning the hands with beautiful designs. It would be worth-mentioning here that the use of both, kohl and henna, are explained as holding religious significance, that is, their use is approved by the religion[71]. And for that reason the girls at the madrassah appreciate their use as well. They believe that the prophet used kohl himself, hence, using kohl

[71] Use of kohl and henna are considered as *sunnah* of the prophet. Helmecke's short article in Medieval Islamic civilization provides a useful introduction (Helmecke, 2006: 177). For details on the use of kohl refer to (Bradley and Creagh, 2006:179).

means following his *sunnah*. As for henna they narrate the tradition where the prophet told a woman to colour her fingernails with henna so that her hands are not like the hands of men. In any case when hands and eyes are adorned they are definitely covered in the presence of *namahram*.

6.3.5 Simplicity:

Simplicity of the gown is taken as a logical consequence of the primary task of burqa, that is, to hide the body, beauty and ornaments. So the first remark on how a burqa should look like would be to emphasize its simplicity, something which is to hide beauty should not be beautiful otherwise it loses its significance (FGD-students). The girls believe that burqa should not be beautified with embroidery, threadwork, sequins, printed motives, coloured pipings etc. lest the dress grabs the attention of others.

> *Burqa should not be an attractive one, it has to be simple, not fancy that the people pay more attention to a woman's burqa while talking to her. (Binte Abdullah, 20 - mu'alima)*

Simplicity is also reasoned on the grounds that a beautiful garment would make people curious about the person wearing it.

> *The package has to be simple the more beautiful the package the more it will attract others and make them curious about the inside product. (FGD-students)*

The teachers of the madrassah during a FGD reflected upon the negative influence of the fashion industry on the form and style of burqa, marring its real purpose:

> *Fashion has influenced the burqas too. Once we went to buy some for our girls and we were astonished to see glittery and glamorous burqas in shapes that would reveal body contours more than conceal. The shopkeeper wanted us to buy one of those but we insisted on simple ones. He was rather surprised that we were not interested in any of them, saying that this is what is in demand these days. The ultimate design was one with embroidered roses and "love" written in the center*

of the rose, just imagine![72] (some girls started to laugh at the absurdity of the idea simultaneously touching the tip of their ears and asking for God's forgiveness [73]others just shook their heads in disapproval) Such beautification nullifies the purpose of burqa. (FGD - teachers)

But simplicity does not mean uniformity in style. The girls have little but choice to select from the different styles of *burqa* sold in the market as well as within the madrassah premises. This variation in style is subtle and often unnoticeable for an outsider. To an outsider all the girls seem to be dressed in uniform *burqas*. The two popular forms of gowns include *coat numa* (like coat) and *kalion wala* (literally means with panels but in reality is without them and is looser in form compared to the one like coat). During the time of the research this latter form, that is, *kalion wala* was more popular among the girls. (Fig. 34) Similarly there are two types of headscarves: one with the attached niqab, sewn with the scarf whereas in the other type the scarf and the niqab are separately worn (Fig. 34). While in the case of gown the kalion *wala* was in vogue; but in case of headscarf it was just a matter of personal choice. Some liked the niqab attached to the scarf while others liked it separate. The separate niqab is of two types, one with just a single layer of cloth to hide the face and the other with double layers; the thick cloth to hide the face and the thinner layer to hide the eyes. This thinner layer is called *qumasha*. The girls preferred double layered niqab with *qumasha* and often hid their eyes when outside the madrassah (Fig. 34). The fabric used for burqa is mostly georgette or another synthetic cloth. The key requirement is that the fabric should be opaque. The gown and the headscarf are always of the same material. Such fabric is preferred because it hangs loosely over the body and does not cling to it. Also the time and effort required to iron such fabric is considerably less, once ironed it does not need to be re-ironed until the next wash.

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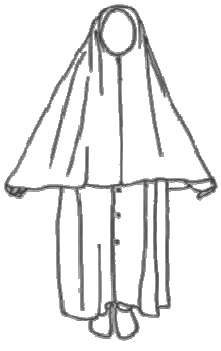
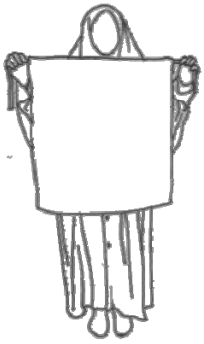
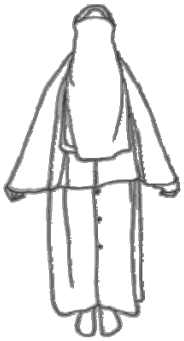
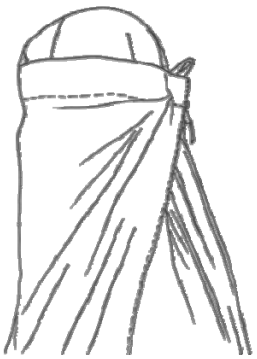
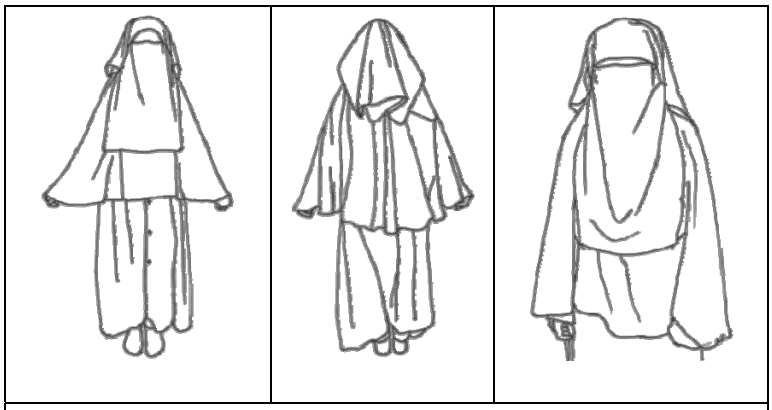
[72] Embroidery of terms such as love on an adult girl's clothing would be disapproved by the society in general too.

[73] It is a common practice, when the girls hear something that is disapproved by the religion they ask for God's forgiveness and mercy in Arabic and sometimes also touch the tips of the ears which symbolizes the same. Such an act is not only common to the girls of the madrassah but also the society in general.

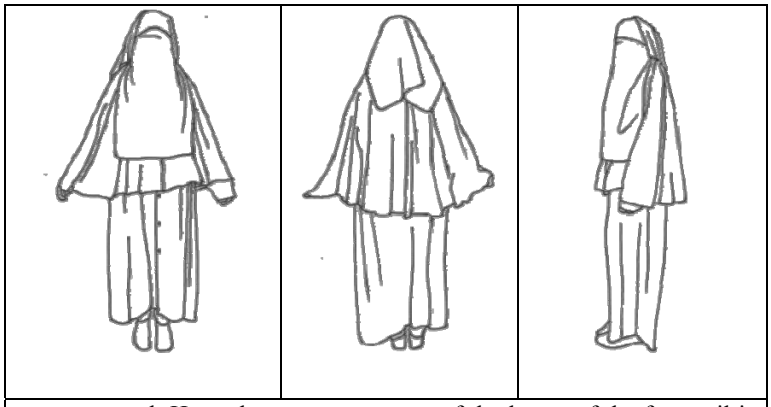
Figure 34: The Process of Donning Burqa (courtesy: Irene Bregenzer)

		
The black gown is worn over the rest of the garments.	Then, the black khimar (headscarf) is put on and fixed in place under the neck.	The face veil, a double or triple layered square cloth, is adjusted

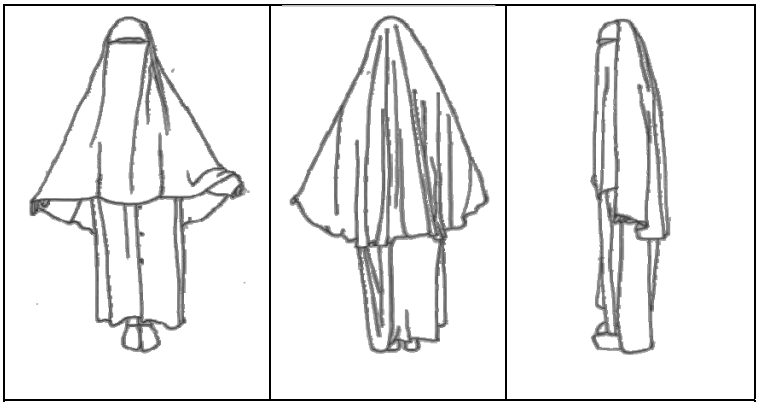
		
… put in front of the face…	… and tied at the back.	The dotted line depicts the slit in the *qumasha*. One layer is pulled back to uncover the eyes. In case of a triple layered face veil, two layers are first pulled back to uncover the eyes and then one of the translucent layer is dropped back to cover the eyes.



Version 1: The three piece black burqa- the gown (*abaya*), the headscarf (*khimar/ hijab*) and the face veil (*qumasha*). The face veil can either be worn with the eyes left uncovered..



… or covered: Here, the wearer puts one of the layers of the face veil in front of the face to cover the eyes.



This is a different version of a full body covering. The *khimar* and the face veil are one piece garment that is put over the gown (*abaya*). The face veil is buttoned up in the presence of namahram to cover the face.

6.3.6 Black: The Chosen Colour

The most significant contributor to the uniformity in dress is the black colour of their burqa. The explanation of opting black colour is complex: it is not compulsory but preferable; preferable to the extent of compulsion. The gown has to be loose and in a dark and dull colour, the darker the colour the minimum the chances are of identification or revealing the body forms. The findings reveal that the discussion on black colour always begins with the general statement that *it is not compulsory to wear black colour* followed by value-oriented choice for the colour. The preference of the black over other colours is reasoned on various grounds. It has religious significance for them and is considered as the chosen colour of the *sahabia-s* who used to wear black *jalabeeb*.[74] It has practical value with the general belief that no other colour hides the body so well as the black colour does. But these are not the only reasons given. There are several others associating the black colour with group identity: it reflects association to a particular ideology, depicts group affiliation and renders uniformity. Black is preferred over other colours on the basis that such a dark tone minimizes differentiation within the group and that uniformity brings group solidarity. The preference for black reflects preference for similarity over difference. The administration did not choose black colour without an aim. The aim of the madrassah is to produce religious scholars who are easily recognizable among the masses. Keenan argues while discussing the special dress of people associated with the church "….it is functional to the wider society and not only to the Church, that a professional religious identity is symbolized in special dress modes 'set apart' from ordinary secular clothing" (Keenan, 2006: 120). The madrassah administration has a similar aim to set apart the religious from the secular or the worldly. The difference between the present research and Keenan's argument about the Church is that for the girls at the madrassah it is the responsibility of every Muslim to express their religious affiliation through sartorial expression and not just the religious scholars. The principal of the madrassah justifies the black colour saying:

[74] No Quranic reference or hadith is provided to support this belief.

The army always has a uniform dress, so does the police. The purpose is that they are easily identifiable when among common people. Their uniform is their identity. Our black burqa is our uniform and our identity. We want to be recognized as true Muslims.

On individual's level, the uniformity of dress and colour hides the identity while on the level of the group it renders identity. The preference of black colour is often reasoned on similar ground by the students. Binte Faisal explains

Dress marks an individual's identity. Black gives similarity to our dress and distinguishes it from the rest. Just as a policeman is required to wear a uniform to be recognized as such among ordinary men, the Muslim women should dress up in a way that they are recognized as ummat i Muhammadya (the people of Muhammad). We should make an effort not only to be Muslims but to appear Muslims too. I personally favour the similarity in dress because it will then become a symbol of Muslim women's identity as followers of the prophet on collective level, which gives sense of strength (binte Faisal, 23-student, Takhasus)

Interestingly enough these are not the only characteristics associated with this colour. Black is believed to be beauty enhancer. Wearing black makes a person look attractive. This aspect of the colour emerged during informal conversations and as one of the basic reasons to cover the face. During the discussions on significance of black, the girls always showed a preference for other afore-mentioned reasons. They never referred to black as enhancing beauty. Once, while watching the day scholars wearing their niqab before leaving the premises, a student remarked:

You know what I think that the black colour makes even an ordinary face look beautiful. Imagine, if these girls go outside without covering their face will they not attract men? (Follows another girl) I think so too, such is the magic of this colour!

On another occasion a mu'alima who never leaves her eyes unveiled remarked somewhat similarly:

I choose to cover my eyes and that too always. I have realized that the black colour makes the eyes prominent and attractive and I do not want

people to stare at my eyes. With eyes begin all evil, besides I feel uncomfortable if someone seems paying extra attention to my eyes. (binte Umer, 18-student, khasa)

The sight at the reception after school hours provides significant data on observational level with reference to purdah. The girls pay great attention to their dress and always wear their burqa as well as niqab and *qumasha* to hide themselves completely, before leaving the madrassah. Their deep concern for their attire reflects the value they associate with this dress. Besides it also provides visual information about the technicality of the dress, that is, how it is worn.

Here it would be unfair to ignore the prevalence of the commonality of black-coloured burqas across time and space in the sub-continent. The black colour of *burqa* is not a feature particular to MJH only. Several studies suggest that black or/ and white have always been the dominant colours of the two popular styles of burqa in the region. (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999: 77; Srivastava, 2003: 177; Schimmel, 1980: 110, Jeffery, 1979: 152). Wilkinson-Weber explains the two forms as follows: the white burqa is "made of one piece of cloth from the head down with eyeholes and a gauze "visor". The black burqa consists of a "coat" and a "cape" which has "an attached veil that can be lowered over the face" (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999:77-78).

These studies, the present research and my observation as a keen member of the society establish two points: one that the burqa is not worn by the girls of MJH only but also by other segments of the society and madrassahs of all the different schools of thoughts. Among the other segments, especially in the urban settings black is not the only colour worn. Burqa is available in different colours usually dull, pastel or dark and various styles. The form of the burqa has undergone considerable change; the present form is heavily dominated by the Arabic style *abaya*, a long gown with a headscarf and niqab. The niqab however is not a compulsory part of the burqa except in the case of madrassahs. Second, that the girls affiliated with MJH or any other madrassah in the country wear only black burqa with the exception of Al-Huda International School.[75]

[75] Alhuda International Welfare Foundation is a registered NGO which is active in the promotion of Islamic education and welfare since1994. www.alhudapk.com

Wearing of the black burqa in Pakistan connotes either one or a combination of these several images, a madrassah student, a fundamentalist, a conservative, a religious or pious woman, an inhabitant of the rural area, to enlist a few.

6.4 Purdah *Shara'i* versus Purdah *Urfi*

The legitimization of burqa through religious texts makes it the most authentic expression of purdah observance through dress. However, since the society in general does not observe purdah in the same way as the girls at the madrassah, it is interesting to note how a discussion on purdah always brought up the comparison between purdah *urfi* and purdah *shara'i*. The significance of such a comparison for the girls is obvious from the fact that not a single instance; an interview, an informal conversation regarding purdah or a FGD went without this comparison. The comparison is always brought up only to show the inaccuracy of purdah *urfi* against purdah *shara'i*.

Purdah *urfi* is practiced by the society at large and lays more stress on maintaining a social distance between the two genders and following a code of etiquettes that allows limited interaction between them. The primary function of the dress according to purdah *urfi* is considered as covering of the whole body or most of the body with no specifications about the cut and style; it is commonly termed as *dil ka purdah* (purdah of the heart). Generally speaking, purdah in Pakistan imposes restrictions on women so that there is a "formalized separation of women from the world of men". Although not all women observe the restrictions imposed by purdah yet many of them adhere to its inherent values "for example, that a woman preserves her family's izzat (honor) by not mixing with unrelated men and by not wearing revealing clothes, a woman who does these things acts outside the traditional parameters of respectability" (Weiss, 1986: 98 & 99).

It is these widely-pervasive inherent values that the girls at the madrassah term as purdah *urfi* which is considered as inauthentic by the girls of the jamia. It is important to note that the girls often perceive purdah of the heart on two levels: on the literal level, they argue that heart is an organ inside the human body and is already covered with flesh, bones and skin. Metaphorically it signifies the purity of intention, which is described as avoiding all those actions that may seduce the other gender and to keep a distance. My interlocutors believe that purdah of the heart holds a secondary position

compared to purdah of the dress. Although the girls are aware that the purdah of heart in general refers to this metaphoric connotation yet they often mention it in its literal sense to reject the idea as being an absurd one.

> *People[76] say that it is actually purdah of heart that is necessary which is not true, there is no such thing as purdah of heart, nobody has ever seen the heart. Purdah has to be of something which is not hidden, of something that needs to be covered and not of something that is already covered, like heart. (FGD-students)*

> *They[77] say purdah of the heart is necessary and burqa is not important I have one question for them that if purdah of the heart is all that is required then why is the society morally corrupt. It clearly shows that such a concept does not exist. Purdah of the heart does not make any sense, heart is already covered with skin, flesh and bones. (binte Bilal, 20-mu'alima)*

> *Purdah of the heart means to avoid breeding over evil thoughts. The primary purdah is that of the dress then the eyes, and then to control one's thoughts and not think about the other gender with sexual interest (binte Moeen, 18-student, takhasus)*

As against purdah *urfi*, purdah *shara'i* for the girls literally refers to the form of veil defined by *shari'a*, the Islamic legal system and developed by the Islamic schools, the proprietors of Islamic knowledge. Since purdah is believed to be a religious obligation it has to be followed as is explained and practiced by the religious practitioners. What is particularly significant in this context is that the girls believe *shari'a* and *shara'i* purdah as static concepts; any opinion that is different from theirs is nullified as unauthentic.

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[76] People refers to all those who do not believe and observe the same type of purdah in dress as they do.

[77] Refers to the same

6.5 Underneath the Burqa

Equally interesting is the diversity of their dress underneath the burqa as against the uniformity of the black cloak. This dress is guided by codes that rather define what should not be the feature of a dress: including it should not resemble that of the non-believer; women should not dress up like men and vice versa; the dress should neither be too tight nor see-through to reveal the contours of the body. The girls say that these rules are also derived from the religious text, mostly from the *hadith-s*. The two oft quoted *hadith-s* in this regard include the following:

> The prophet cursed men who dress like women and cursed women who dress like men (Abu Dawood: Book 27, Hadith 4086)

> Aisha narrates, "Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr (that is, Aisha's sister), entered upon the prophet wearing thin clothes. The prophet turned his attention from her and said, "O Asma, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her except that she displays parts of her body except this and this," and he pointed to her face and hands. (Sunan Abi Dawud: Book 32 no. 4092)[78]

Elguindi groups the various dress related *hadith-s* under four broad themes: "(1) bodily modesty which pertains mostly to men in worship; (2) averting distraction in worship, (3) moderation in daily life, (4) distinguishing the identity of the Muslim through aversions from certain forms of dress (hair, colour, etc.)." These *hadith-s* she argues mostly pertain to the dressing of men. The first two themes concern worship, where men are required to dress up modestly and not wear such colours or patterns that may distract their attention during the prayer. The third category instructs to avoid extravagance in clothing and men are forbidden to wear silk and gold while women are allowed. The fourth theme is to retain Muslim identity by avoiding wearing of such colours and forms that resemble that of the non-believers and people from other religions. A recurrent theme in these *hadith-s* is instruction for wearing opaque clothing

[78] This hadith is *mursal*, i.e., not all the narrator's versions are available. It has been narrated by Khalid bin Darik from Aisha and there is no proof of his having met her (Engineer, 2008:104-105)

(2005b: 80-81). Albeit they are addressed to men, for the girls of madrassah, the *hadith-s* concerning dress hold equal relevance for women's clothing providing a guideline for their dress code.

The dress underneath the burqa also has to be "proper"; it has to be "modest" and "distinguished in terms of gender and religion". It is interesting that the dress underneath is not much different in form from the generally prevalent dress pattern in the society.[79] The limited choice of colour of burqa against the unlimited choice of colours for the dress underneath is a conspicuous and striking feature. Inside the madrassah, which is their private space, the girls wear all sorts of colours and shades, pink, blue, red, maroon, green, etc. whatever they choose. Often they would remark on my dress too and I somehow became accustomed to hear that "I wear very dull colours which do not suit my age". The girls also showed concern about beautification of this inner dress with matching laces and colourful embroideries. Often they discuss their dress; the desire to buy one that they saw in the market, or the details of the one they received as gift, seeking and giving advices of how to get it stitched, which neckline is in fashion etc. But even for this inner dress aesthetics and fashion was sort after in a way that it does not negate the "decent" dressing, decent as perceived by them. At the time of the research it was fashion to wear short shirts with pants narrow at the end. This was not considered as an appropriate dress to be worn:

> *You see our dress, we do not wear short shirts like everyone does these days. Girls seem to have lost their sense of shame. The other day I was at the railway station and was ashamed to see most of the girls wearing short and tightly-fitted shirts with half sleeves; the shorter the length of the shirt as well as the sleeve the more fashionable people think it is. Fashion should not be blindly followed; people should be concerned about their honour and the life hereafter. (Binte Nasir, 18-student, A'lmia)*

[79] In Pakistan the national dress is popular across the country with only a negligible fraction of the female population wearing the western type of clothing.

So while it may appear the dress underneath has no codes to be followed in reality it does. Women are required to be "properly" and "decently" dressed and so are men. The national dress is considered as the best dress for both men and women; for women it is to be covered by burqa in public places.

6.6 Categorization[80] of the dress

The girls always say that black colour is not "the" colour and burqa is not "the" dress yet they confirm that they wear "only black burqa" in public places. The dress underneath reflects a wider range of choice but it is also guided by certain rules. The discussions on their dress reveal an underlying code and establish that all the various forms of dresses, their own and that of the others, may be categorized under four broad headings; preferable, acceptable, partially acceptable and absolutely rejected. Preferable may be defined as a dress that is replication of the one worn by the girls at the seminary; under the category acceptable, fall all those dresses that fulfill the necessary criteria of purdah, including loose outergarment, covering of the head and face. It does not necessarily involve the use of black cloth or the same style of gown, headscarf or the face covering as theirs; in short it may vary in style and colour. Partially acceptable includes wearing of shalwar kameez[81] with a long, wide dupatta covering the head, in rather pastel and not so bright colours. And absolutely rejected includes all those form of dresses that bear any resemblance to western dress or that are perceived as glamorous or modern by the society at large and that which reveals the body contours. It is important to note here that a change in the context may elevate the partially acceptable dress to the acceptable or rather preferable, as one of the respondents narrates:

> *After high school, my mother went to stay in England. There she saw Pakistani girls wearing skirts, she explained them that this type of dress does not fulfill the requirement of our religion. Her lectures were very*

[80] This categorization was not clearly stated but has been deducted by the researcher on the basis of their opinion about women's popular dressing, western dress and specially the attitude towards the researcher's own dress.

[81] National dress of Pakistan, a long shirt worn with baggie pants and a long broad piece of cloth that may or may not be used to cover the head.

effective; they encouraged retaining one's identity in a foreign land and the girls then started wearing shalwar kameez. The purpose of dress is to cover, I don't think there is any western dress that fulfills this criterion, either they are too short or too tight (binte Omar, 18-student, Khasa)

A rather junior student of the madrassah also rejects the types of dresses she perceives as western in favour of the national dress:

What type of Islam is one following if one wears pant shirt. No man should wear pant shirt and woman, never. It is an unIslamic dress. We should wear shalwar kameez (the national dress), it is the preferred dress and covers the body very well. In pant shirt the shape of the body is very obvious. (Binte Mubeen, 16-student, aama)

Another student highlights the significance of simplicity in dress. A simple dress is considered as non-inviting and is acceptable.

A woman in my village always wore nice clothes but whenever she had to go to the bazaar she changed them and wore something simpler sometimes even not so clean. It did not make sense to me at that time. But now that I am in the madrassah and I am aware of how inviting womens' clothes can be, I really appreciate the wisdom of that ignorant woman of the village. (Binte Moeen, 18-student, takhasus)

6.7 On donning Burqa: the social process of veiling

Donning burqa is a social process involving various stages of transition; of shifting identities; putting up with family and social pressures and the eventual construction of a particular kind of identity. This process involves a number of phases: acquaintance to a new form of clothing, learning the intricacies of the new dress, internalizing the learning and eventually adapting and making the new dress a compulsory as well as a permanent part of one's clothing. The girls during the process of changing their dress code experience implicit and explicit pressures; when in the madrassah the pressure is to accept and adapt burqa as the correct form of dress while on the other hand there exists family and social pressure to avoid such a strong sartorial expression of purdah observance. In adapting to this new form of clothing the girls associate themselves to

their new group and partially dissociate with their previous ones. The experience of the process is not identical for all the members; given that the girls come from different backgrounds; social, financial, educational and religious; they experience the process of donning burqa differently. The analysis of various case studies help categorize and group the variety of sartorial transition experiences under three broad headings: gradual and stepwise adaptation; gradual but radical adaptation; immediate and radical adaptation and immediate with minor changes in dress form. These case studies also reveal the varied responses of their immediate social circle to the change in their dress code: appreciated but not emulated; appreciated as well as emulated and partially accepted. The following case studies will help in better understanding of the social process of adapting to burqa.

Case Study 1:

> *I started to wear niqab two years before coming to this madrassah and after I took a course from Alhuda school. I was allowed to wear any type of clothes, even the western ones. I think it is human instinct, people get attracted to that they do not have or they have not experienced, so I felt attracted to purdah somehow. It did not happen overnight, I read extensively about purdah and when I was convinced of its essentiality only then I started. Initially I only covered my head with trendy headscarves. It just happened one day that I wore niqab while in the market. I still remember my brother got furious, he did not like it at all and even scolded me. But my parents are very open allowing their children to do what they want and wear any type of clothes even the western ones. They never put any restrictions regarding dress. Ah! (suddenly remembers as if she has missed something) but yes there is a problem, when we go to our family home in the village, there it is not possible to wear niqab in front of my cousins. Nobody in my family wears niqab, it is hard to convince them that one needs to cover even when with the closest relatives. I discussed the matter with my seniors here and they say it is ok if I do not wear burqa I can just wear a big*

chadar and infront of cousins I take ghoonghat.[82] *I enjoyed wearing niqab. When I started everybody at the university was surprised, some made fun even called names like ninjas but then there were others who appreciated. I enjoyed the experience, really. I feel amused when my aunts ask what was the need of covering at such an early age, probably they are worried about my marriage prospects. But I know I am on the right path and nothing bothers me. I really enjoy niqab, the sense of privacy and protection that it gives can never be comprehended until practiced. (binte Faheem, 23- student, takhasus)*

Case Study 2:

Since I am pathan I used to cover my head, but I wore only hijab (the headscarf), did not know about niqab then. When I came here, I did not start niqab immediately, it took me sometime to cover my face and wear the burqa. I felt kind of embarrassed, every girl here wore burqa. There was something within which kept bothering me. Once I started, I was satisfied, that I am also fulfilling the order of Allah and his prophet. Although I know that "niqab" is looked down upon by the people in general but that is not important any more. First I wore niqab, for two three months and then I started wearing burqa. I wear it all the time, but not when I am with my family members. The thing is we already live in quite a segregated system so it does not really matter. (binte Ahmed, 19- mu'alima)

Case Study 3:

"I was very modern[83] *before I joined the madrassah. My neighbour's cousin used to study here, she wore gown, I somehow liked it and started wearing it just for experience's sake. My family used to make fun of me,*

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[82] *Ghunghut* is a regional appellation of veil practiced in some parts of the sub-continent. *Ghunghut* is to pull the cloth worn on head forward to obscure the vision of the face (Tarlo, 1996: 160). In her study of the Gujrati village, Tarlo defines *ghunghut* as a "form of deference and respect performed by women largely to men (ibid)

[83] As explained earlier, modernity as a concept carries negative connotation

they could never imagine I could change. I was very emotional then, not only did I start wearing the gown I also decided to join madrassah. My family did not approve, however, respecting my interest they let me. I liked the life here, I was eager to learn, and eager to practice what I learnt. Before I only knew about religion here I realized it, I felt it. People think that religion makes you leave the world, it does not, it just makes one live for religion. They get surprised when I accept their invitation to celebrations and festivals, they don't understand that my burqa does not forbid me to participate in life. I like my burqa, it has made my life simpler and easier. Unlike other girls, neither am I occupied with trivial questions of what to wear or how to look attractive nor do I feel deprived that I don't have enough. (binte Inaam, 22-mu'alima)

Case Study 4:

I was rather young, about 12 years when I started wearing burqa. In the evenings I used to go to my friend in the neighbourhood. Once when I was coming back to my place a boy asked me if I liked him and that he wanted to have a relationship with me because he found me pretty. I, then, realized that why purdah is emphasized in the madrassah, it really is the face which causes all such troubles. Had I covered my face it would have not happened, I felt very angry and guilty as well. I started wearing burqa from the very next day. All my friends wear niqab too but my cousins do not. My family appreciates it, they know we are religious minded, my cousins listen to me when I tell them about Islam. They think there's an unusual serenity in our home. I think it is only because we are religious. (binte Abdullah, 20-mu'alima)

Case Study 5:

I joined the madrassah because my family wanted me to. My family is very religious but not strict about purdah. I did not observe purdah for one year after enrolling in the madrassah. I was nervous about it then, always thinking what would my friends think when they see me in this black burqa. And while I was in madrassah I felt embarrassed because I

was the odd one out. Also because I was not practicing what I was learning, all the books reflected upon how important it is for woman to observe purdah to earn respectability, I felt ashamed. Nobody here ever forced me to observe purdah, but without burqa I looked different and stood out amongst them, I felt bad and confused. I did nothing good during my first year here. And then one of my friends and a cousin, we three girls decided to start wearing burqa. We thought we cannot persuade people to become religious until we ourselves look religious. I am not confused any more. Now I look different when I am with my friends but I feel proud because my burqa reflects my religiosity (binte Osman, 20-student, a'lia).

Case Study 6:

I did not like anything when I came to the madrassah, the food, the dress, nothing. But my mother insisted that I stay atleast for a few months and if I do not like it then I can always leave it. I stayed as a hostelite. I did not want to change my dress by wearing this black burqa. The girls in my class and the teachers all knew that I did not like it. They were never angry with me. My teachers were infact sympathetic towards me and gave me extra attention. They would often bring me interesting books to read about Islam and women, the value of women's dress in Islam and status of women in Islam. It did help, I was convinced eventually and started to wear burqa. Now even when I am with girls I keep my head covered. When I look at my past I can actually see that how my cousins and men in the neighbourhood were attracted towards me and my friends. I observe strict shara'i purdah, I just cannot tolerate someone gazing me. The good thing is my cousins like it very much, I think they realize it too that it keeps us all away from many evils. I feel secure from the fitna of cousins. I feel it keeps me away from many evils. My cousins are happy as well that I observe purdah infront of them too. They respect me, they think I am strong enough to practice what I believe in.(binte Naeem, 20-student, a'lmia)

Case Study 7:

> *For me burqa was no problem. I was used to it before coming to madrassah. Everybody in my family wears abaya and we wear niqab outside the home. The only thing I had to make efforts about was to cover my face infront of my cousins and my brother in law. Although I was convinced of its benefits still it was a bit difficult. My brother in law does not mind that I cover my face in his presence, it is my sister, and she does not like it at all. She was very angry with me. In the beginning she even stopped talking to me. Now she talks but is always satirical about my purdah. I do not know if she does not understand it or does not want to understand. She always asks what harm her husband can bring and why do I think that he will be interested in me when he actually loves his wife. I am very patient when she is angry, it is just religious duty that I should do whether she likes it or not. (binte Javaid, 21-student, A'lmia)*

These case studies reveal that donning burqa is a social process by which the girls achieve a kind of profound spiritual self-actualization. Various kinds of pressures are exerted during this social process leading them to adapt to the new dress, the burqa. These include, peer group pressure, environment pressure, and pressure from learning of the discourse on purdah. The internalization of the discourse learnt leads them to form a specific sartorial ideology; an ideology that lays out principles for what is regarded as the right kind of dress. It is because of this internalization that the girls start to feel embarrass for not wearing the burqa. The purdah-oriented environment of the madrassah and the uniform burqa worn by the girls further add to this feeling of discomfiture which is only relieved upon wearing the burqa. Peer group pressure also includes the compassionate behaviour of the girls towards the non-observing student and regular reminders about the right kind of dress, as in the case of binte Naeem. Joseph argues that "normative behaviour within the culture re-affirms loyalty to the group and can be evidenced by wearing of a uniform type of the attire" (Joseph in Arthur, 1986: 4). The wearing of the burqa indicates complete integration and loyalty to the new group.

Given the fact that the girls altered their dressing soon after coming to the madrassah, it was interesting study to note how their families reacted towards this radical change. The diversity in reaction owes to the diversity in dressing and varied degrees of purdah observance in the region and among people from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds. While Binte Faheem who comes from a modern family, burqa was strongly disapproved by her brother in case of binte Abdullah who belongs to a "religious-minded family" it was deeply appreciated. Moreover, Binte Faheem's aunts' disapproval of purdah on the basis that it would decrease her marriage prospects shows how for some people purdah is a disapproved form of clothing for some people. The case studies also indicate how purdah is considered as a hindrance in participating in social activities which binte Inaam believes is a false notion.

The case studies also reveal that while for the girls, purdah observance in the form of burqa means profound religiosity; it is not comprehended similarly by their relatives. In a few cases purdah seemed rather offensive and challenged the trust in different relationships. For example in case of binte Javed, her sister did not approve that she covered her face infront of her husband, who is brother in law of binte Javed and thus *namahram*. Her sister believed that her face-covering indicates her distrust in her brother in law. It is interesting to note that her brother in law does not feel the same, so she continues to observe purdah from him despite her sister's disapproval. Binte Faheem too finds it hard to convince her family of the importance of the face-covering in front of cousins who are *namahram*. Binte Ahmed who comes from a family where strict codes of purdah are followed, also does not cover her face among the close *namahram* relatives. In such cases in order to avoid conflict within the family, the girls compromise and substitute burqa either with a *chadar* or by avoiding coming into contact with *namahram*.

The most significance aspect of these case studies is that they reveal that purdah is not a static concept and carries different meaning for different people. However, it is interesting to note that for the girls of MJH purdah is indeed a fixed concept; a decree that is ordained by religion and reasoned for its symbolic and functional value.

6.8 WHY

This section elucidates the rationalization of purdah by the girls on various grounds, including religious, social, cultural etc. It also reveals the symbolic value and practical significance attached to the observance of purdah by them.

6.8.1 In obedience to the Divine Decree

"Our aim in life is total submission to God"

As purdah is considered to be a divine obligation, its observance is regarded as obedience to God by the girls at the madrassah. Here it is important to note their conception of action in this world. According to them, Islam is a complete way of life thereby every action is judged in the light of religion. Action is explained as having two components, the action itself and the intention behind the action, the judgment involves an analysis of both. A good action, they believe promises reward in the form of *sawab* while a bad action is considered *gunnah* receiving punishment *saza*. All actions are graded: some are compulsory others recommended and some forbidden. Bayman explains in detail the gradation of action in Islam along the continuum with allowed (*halal*) on one end and forbidden (*haram*) at the other. There are five grades of actions; obligatory or mandatory (*farz*); recommended (*wajib*); neutral (*mubah*); disgusting (*makruh*); and forbidden (*haram*) (2003: 74). Hodkinson explains them a further with the consequences entailed. He also divides actions into five grades with slight difference to Bayman's division: *Farz* or *wajib*; a duty the omission of which is punished and the doing rewarded; *mandub* or *mustahab* the doing is rewarded but the omission is not punished; *jaiz* or *mubah*, that which is permitted; *makrooh*, disapproved by law but not under penalty; and *haram* an action punishable by law (Hodkinson, 1984: 36). The research shows that purdah is regarded as *farz*, an obligatory commandment by God who has created everything. The girls often attempt to establish a logical connection between the Creator and his rulings.

> *Those who make rocket, or an aeroplane only they know how thick should the body be, what material should be used, what width, what length, only the manufacturer knows what is required to make a product. We human beings are manufactured by God and in His book He has*

ordered women to observe purdah. We must fulfill our religious obligations. Women are created as such that they should cover, if they do not they will suffer. (Umme Kashif, 24-student, khasa)

Human being is like a machine, and like all machines have a manual, we have a manual too, it is Quran. If the manual is not properly followed it ends in malfunctioning of the machine (binte Rizwan, 19-student, a'lmia).

Using analogies of manufacturer and manual for God and Quran respectively, the girls rationalize purdah. In order to avoid the consequent suffering and malfunctioning entailing disobedience as has been mentioned in these quotes, the girls cover themselves. Moreover, *farz* is regarded as an obligatory action with no room for expiatory atonement.

Performing earns Divine gratification and brings reward and negligence provokes Divine resentment and leads to punishment (Binte Osman, 20-student, a'lia).

With this conception of purdah the girls on observing it experience a sense of doing that is good and avoiding that is bad. Purdah so perceived becomes a virtue of women. Just as the most common answer to what is purdah is that it is religious obligation, the most common answer to why it is observed is *because it brings feelings of inexplicable inner happiness*, *contentment, and satisfaction* (a recurrent quote from the interviews). The findings suggest that the girls anticipate religious merit (*sawab*) for observing purdah in the life hereafter. The higher the merits the more likely are the chances of going to the heaven. The highest reward, the girls believe, is that God will come to show Himself to the veiled woman in the life hereafter.

On the day of Judgment all the people will go to see God, but Allah will come Himself to the veiled women; what can be a better reward than this. One should observe purdah keeping this reward in mind. (binte Dawood, 25-mu'alima)

In paradise everything will bring happiness but nothing can match the sight of the Creator. Those who are veiled will be blessed with Allah's sight all the time. The more one sees namahram in this world the lesser

the time will be given to see Allah. It is just a few seconds of worldly pleasure that one has to leave. (Binte Faisal, 21-student Takhasus/ Binte Faheem,23-student, takhasus)

The sight of the God is promised in the hereafter (Calverley & Pollock [ed.], 2002: 896)[84] but the evidence of such a reward as mentioned by the girls, where the God comes Himself to the veiled women and that the veiled women will be able to see Him all the time, is absent in Quran. Rippin analyses the verses where God's face is mentioned and establishes that they reveal "[T]hat it is humans who search for or who are promised the "Face of God", that face is available and, what is more, people want to know of its presence. "Face", it may therefore be said, is intimately connected to an expression of the will of an individual, the need for human being to seek God" (Rippin in Neuwirth, 1998: 300). The girls at the madrassah are aware that these rewards are not mentioned in the Quran. However, they inform that it is learnt by them through the lectures delivered on purdah at the madrassah.

Not only is this yearning for reward that inspires them to observe purdah, equally contributing to the practice is the feeling of not committing the sin. Corollary to this is the idea of avoiding the Divine punishment by observing purdah. The girls believe that they are not only avoiding the Divine punishment themselves but are also keeping others away from being sinful. Non-observance is considered as a sin for two reasons: one that it is deemed as *an explicit rebellion to God's order* (recurrent quote from the interviews) which the girls say is an act beyond their imagination. One of the senior mu'alima explains this using analogy of master/servant relationship with that between God and his creation. She terms the analogy as an *aqli daleel* (rationale or logic) rationalizing obedience. These analogies are very important as they provide a sense of how ideas are transmitted to the students and rationalized on the basis of common sense:

The relationship between man and God is hierarchical. The creator has the supreme authority. It is just like when we employ servants in our

[84] The book records the much debated issue of the sight of God in detail during the medieval Islamic times.

house we do not tolerate if they are disobedient. We always think that our orders are final and they should obey them. How can then God tolerate disobedience? If we do not listen to His commandments it means we are trying to establish that we are on the same level, astaghfiruallah (means seeking forgiveness from Allah) (shakes her head in resentment) (umme Bashir, 46-mu'alima).

Another important reason for observing purdah is that in doing so they are preventing themselves and others from what they call as *badnazri*. The term is rather hard to translate; the best translations could be glancing/ staring/ gazing the other gender with sexual/ seductive intention that is disapproved by the religion. The argument is rooted in the Quranic verse 24:31 where men and women both are required to lower their gaze and women to cover themselves in the presence of *namahram*. The argument is built by my interlocutors as such that requires women to cover or hide themselves when among *namahram*, gazing at the other gender is not allowed, therefore when women reveal themselves they allow men to see them, thus making both sinners. However, they believe that the degree of sin varies with women causing the sin are held more corrupt. In non-observance she commits two sins, one denying the order of God and second attracting men. However, the sin of man is single who just looks at the women and that too because she has not covered. Non-observance is termed as *gunnah* (sin) which will be punished. The consequent punishment is varied: wrath of God (Umme Bashir, 46-mu'alima), curse of the prophet and God (binte Moeen, 18-student, *takhasus*) the torment in hell (Binte Naeem, 20-student, a'lmia) or like every other sin non-observance of purdah will be punished too in the life hereafter (binte Abdullah, 20-mu'alima).

Purdah is then a virtue of a woman whereby she maintains her morality and that of the *namahram-s*. The conception of purdah as virtue is not limited to women; it is interesting how this female virtue is extended to the male members of her family. Men are considered as responsible for their family; providing for their material needs as well as accountable for their moral upbringing. Women are responsible for observing purdah but in cases where they are careless, it is believed to be a man's duty to regulate purdah rules in the house and ensure their proper observance. This responsibility renders him

power and relative supremacy over the other gender. The following figure illustrates purdah observance as obedience to the Divine Decree.

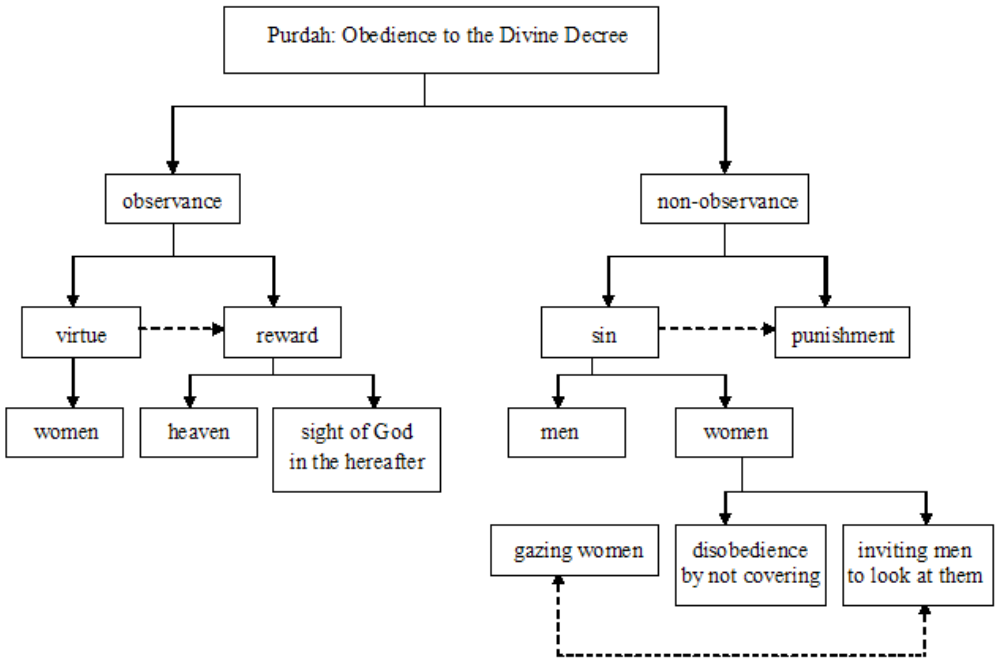

Figure 35: Merits and demerits of observance and non-observance of purdah

6.8.2Emulating the Noble Women in Islam:

"Our role models are the prophet's wives"

Closely related to the notion of obedience is the concept of emulating the women perceived as the noblest ones in religious history. They include the women from the prophet's family as well as ordinary Muslim women of his time called as *sahabia-s* (literally means companion of the prophet). As explained in the section "Purdah: A prophetic tradition", when purdah was decreed the Muslim women of the prophet's time tore away parts of their garments to cover their heads and faces. This act of theirs is distinguished and idealized as the true spirit of following the religion; an example to be followed. The wives of the prophet in particular and the women of the prophet's time in general are the role model of the girls at the jamia and their emulation is reckoned necessary in order to attain the highest levels of piety and religious purity. Stowasser comments on the depiction of prophet's wives as exemplary women in the *Hadith* literature:

> A large segment of the Hadith depict the Mothers of the Believers as models of piety and righteousness whose every act exemplifies their commitment to establish God's order on earth by personal example……Indeed, the traditions on the women's personal comportment, dress, performance of ritual and worship, and the like must largely be read as para-(legal) texts in that their intended meaning is normative, not descriptive. Each recorded detail represents *sunnah*-in-the making…."(1994: 115)

These themes of the prophet's wives as exemplary figures for the Muslim women and their traditions as *sunnah* to be followed, are resonant in the present research. Binte Naeem feels proud of keeping the Islamic traditions alive. She has set the life of the prophet's wives as her ideal and thinks that it is the duty of every Muslim woman to emulate them:

> *My heart is content. I feel very happy that I am the source of keeping Quranic decrees and the sunnah alive. I feel lucky that I came here and learnt about these noblest of noble women. It would be a shame if I do not follow their footsteps after knowing the details of their life pattern; what they did, how they did and why they did. For me my religion comes first, for every Muslim woman it should come first. We feel pride in following the popular actresses but we feel ashamed of doing what umhat ul momineen (mother of the believers) did, isn't it a shame? (Binte Naeem, 20-student, A'lmia)*

With reference to purdah as a religious obligation its non-observance is considered an explicit rebellion to God, with reference to prophetic tradition its non-observance is equated by the girls as an attempt to put one's self on a higher altar compared to the women in the earliest times of Islam; the women who are considered as the most pious and religious. Such a comparison reflects their perception of non-purdah-observing Muslim women as having a reduced moral and religious status. The girls believe that just as prophets are persons who an ordinary follower should not try to equate with, the prophet's wives are women that no woman should try to make comparison with but only follow. They always rationalize observance of purdah on the basis that if prophet's

wives who were the most innocent and the most religious of all Muslim women observed purdah what keeps ordinary Muslim women away from it.

> *The prophet asked his wives to observe purdah. He even asked them to observe it in the presence of a blind man. We stand nowhere in piety compared to the wives of the prophet. If they did it we should be observing it even more strictly. By not wearing burqa are we not trying to show that we are better than these women or we have more self-control. But we need to think seriously on the matter if it is by any chance possible (shakes her head in negative). They are from the chosen ones, we can never be able to come to their level. (binte Javed, 21-student, a'lmia)*

Whether or not the purdah decrees are limited to the prophet's wives is an inevitable extension of this discussion. The girls emphasize on the egalitarian feature of purdah as an obligation for all Muslim women irrespective of their financial and marital status. In advocating purdah they negate all such claims that associate purdah with the prophet's wives on the basis of their superior status in Islam as has been suggested by some studies suggest that veiling was a privilege of the prophet's wives (Usmani in Engineer, 1996: 99; Strowasser, 1994: 90-91; Ahmed in Keddie, 2007: 23). Engineer argues that "[I]n fact the prophet's wives had a special status and had to observe certain stricter rules to distinguish themselves from others" (Engineer, 1996: 99). The girls at the madrassah do hold that the prophet's wives have a special status in Islam. They are regarded as *umhat ul momineen* (mother of the believers) but reject the idea that veiling is not an obligation for the ordinary Muslim women. Contrary to the argument of Engineer, they believe it is actually the ordinary Muslim women who should exercise stricter form of purdah given their weak moral character and less self control compared to the wives of the prophet. Also the present society is more corrupt compared to the period of the prophet, thus, requiring women to observe stricter purdah.

6.8.3 Modesty, Respect and Respectability

"Modesty is the real asset of women"

Showing obedience to the divine decree and emulating the noble women of the religion characterizes the girls with religiosity that demands modesty in dress. Modesty for

them is achieved by two essential features of their dress: the covering up and simplicity, the society's perception about the modesty as has been explained earlier in the chapter which shows a similar connection between modesty and dress patterns, that is, the more covered up the more modest. If modesty is taken as synonymous to the *haya* then the centrality of this concept in Islamic tradition is evident from its repeated occurrence in *Hadith* as a significant aspect of faith. The oft-quoted *hadith-s* with reference to *haya* by the respondents include two from Sahi Bukhari[85], one that "*haya* (modesty/ shame) is part of *iman* (faith)" and the second can be interpreted as "if you do not have *haya* you can do whatever you want". While religious moral commitment requires haya/ modesty in the dress of both men and women (Daly, 2000: 137), however, the respondents consider modesty (sharam/ haya) the real asset of a woman. Mahmood also notices the centrality of *al-haya* (translated as shyness, diffidence, modesty) for the women involved in the Egyptian mosque movement and terms it as "the most feminine of Islamic virtue", "a virtue that is considered necessary to the achievement of piety" by her respondents (Mahmood, 2005: 155). Binte Bilal a junior mu'alima at the madrassah, believes in an inseparable relationship between piety of religion and modesty in dress:

> *It is not possible to separate modesty and religiosity, if one is religious one he/ she is modest too and if not then he/she is immodest and not religious. What do you think a woman would be blessed if she offers her prayers, fasts during Ramadan, does all that is required of religion but does not cover, no, it's not like that. Modesty in clothing is a pre-requisite for prayers. How is it possible that it is not required otherwise in life? (20-mu'alima)*

Modesty is closely linked to the notions of shame and honour. Modesty in clothing is essential to avoid feelings of shame while its observance is woman's honour. Umme Khalid, another mu'alima at the madrassah talks about modesty and shame as symbolic clothing and wants all women to be wrapped up in them. For her modesty also reflects

[85] One of the four authentic books that records the sayings and actions of the prophet.

innocence. She shows concern about women's clothing in the society and feels ashamed to see women in revealing dresses:

> *The real asset of the woman is her modesty. It is her honour. I wish all women realize that and all women are wrapped up in modesty (sharam o haya ki chadar). I was at the airport the other day, I felt so ashamed to see the girls in strange dressing. They do not mind showing off their body. It was embarrassing to see how men were staring at them. I was angry at men but more than that I was angry with women for not covering, as if they don't know anything. I was also concerned about my innocent daughter who though young wears a scarf, mashaAllah. (a phrase often used by the women in appreciation of some action or deed). I do not want her to see such shameful dresses. (umme Khalid, 26-student, a'lmia)*

It is not only Umme Khalid who is concerned about women's clothing in general, the recurrence of these feelings of embarrassment in all the three FGDs conducted further emphasizes that modesty is closely linked to the notions of shame and honour. For the girls of the madrassah it is important that all women are modestly dressed up, not only for their own sake but also for the sake of other women. During one FGD a girl commented in a rather poignant tone to which the others nodded in agreement:

> *We feel so embarrassed when we are not properly covered but feel nothing lesser when other women wear inappropriate clothes it leaves us with a feeling of deep shame.*

It is interesting to note here the way body contributes to the notion of universal or global sisterhood. Just as negligence on their part to hide their body causes embarrassment so does the negligence of other women, they are often referred to as "sisters" who are careless in dressing or who are not aware of the consequences of non-observance of purdah. Likewise, purdah-observing women are a source of pride not only for themselves but also for their "sisters" who are conscious about veiling.

The girls also establish a close link between modesty and respectability; modesty when well guarded earns women their respectability. Modesty in dress symbolizes their high moral standards and religious conditioning and efforts to maintain them. In doing so

they believe that women avoid judgement from others on the basis of their sexuality, beauty, status etc. The only variable to judge purdah-observing women is their moral character. Also for the girls, purdah leaves such as an impression on men that they are awed by the chastity and modesty of their character which is symbolically and visually communicated through the observance of proper dress code. Their dress communicates reservation which helps them to maintain the desired distance between the two genders. The conveyance of such sartorial messages, the girls believe give them authority to control the communication with the other gender. Interestingly, purdah then as a "gendered dress"[86] helps rid women of their gender and convenes their mobility in the men's world. In her study on purdah in South Asia, Sitara Khan notes that

> "Quintessentially purdah is the covering of women's bodies to make them asexual…….[T]his means the more covered-up a woman is, the more 'respectable', and this varies from one culture to another and from one context to another in the same culture. To be taken seriously and for their opinions to carry the same weight as men's, their bodies must be concealed." (1999:39)

Modesty is also about respecting. This has three extensions, respecting God by observing modesty in dress while praying as explained earlier; respecting elderly people and maintaining respect of one's family by being modest. Majority of the girls informed that they have learnt through their early socialization the importance of covering one's head in front of elderly people and being modest in dressing for the sake of the honour of one family. At the same time they acknowledge that after having adapted to the *shara'i* purdah system they are even more aware of the connection between modesty and respect. Few studies on purdah also reflect that covering one's head is symbolic of paying respect to people older in age (Jeffery, 1975; Mandelbaum, 1988). Jeffery in her study of purdah among the women of Nazimuddin shrine states "there are certain people, particularly elders, to whom 'respect' must be shown by

[86] A term used by Barnes and Eicher in Dress and Gender: Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts (1992: 20)

covering the head……The requirement to cover the head is more strictly observed with respect to men, particularly older kinsmen" (1975: 101).

Binte Omer who comes from the rural Punjab region does not remember any instance when she went infront of any of her close relatives, men as well as women, with her head uncovered except once; and for that she was severely admonished by her mother. For her it is a custom taken for granted, obvious and established.

> *Going bare headed infront of the elders is like showing them disrespect and I would never like to do it, no girl in my village does that. In my family my mother is very particular about this issue. Once I rushed to meet my grandfather who lives in another village. I was so excited to meet him that I forgot to cover my head. My mother called me in immediately and scolded me for being bai-sharam (without shame). I was angry in the beginning but then I understood her point, it's all about showing respect to them. (Binte Omer, 18-student, khasa)*

The girls believe that the modesty of women not only earns them respect but also their family. Women are regarded as *khandaan ki izzat* (honour/ respect of their family). In order to protect this honour she should abide by the rules of *chadar aur chaar diwari* (literally means the shawl and the four walls and refers to the practices of purdah and confinement of women to the private sphere of home). Mandelbaum explains that gender relations in South Asia exist as purdah-izzat duo. Purdah which he argues is observed as veiling and seclusion of women is deeply inter-connected with men's honour (1988: 2). Shaw shows a similar link between purdah and honour in Pakistan and states "The honour (*izzat*) of a family depends to a large extent on the behaviour of its women, especially its daughters. Respectable female behaviour is linked with the observance of purdah" (2000: 163). The girls at the madrassah believe that women should give special attention to their dress because it reflects their concern for their parent's honour (*maan baap ki izzat ka khayal*). Women, it is believed are representatives of their family. Any negligence in their clothing will lead to people gossip about them which will damage the family's reputation. Modesty in dress then becomes protection from being talked about. Binte Rehan, a student, explains that:

No one will speak that this woman is wearing such and such clothes, everyone will say that so and so's daughter and so and so's sister was wearing improper clothes or behaving inappropriately. (Rehan, 20-student, takhasus)

6.8.4 Privacy and Protection

"Modesty: we protect it, it will protect us"

The girls at the jamia believe that the women who guard their modesty are in return guarded by it. This raises the question how observing purdah or being modest protects a woman and against what. Purdah for them is a symbolic shield which protects them against several evils and keeps them away from the moral corruption pervasive in the society. It protects them from men's gaze and from being harassed. It is believed that women if not properly covered are vulnerable to the aggression of male sexuality which cannot be easily controlled. Papanek in her extensive study on Purdah in Pakistan notes the vulnerability of women and purdah as providing "symbolic shelter" against "sex and aggression which are clearly recognized as being part of the human condition but difficult for the individual to control" (1971: 518-19). Wilkinson study reflects preference for burqa on similar grounds. Her respondents believe that the concealing feature of burqa helps them "keep their honour" and averts "the attention of unrelated men". She also borrows Papanek's concept of "symbolic shelter" to explain the protection through the all-concealing burqa (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999: 78-79).

Purdah hides the femininity of the woman. The student's of the madrassah conceptualize woman's body in way that is typical of patriarchal societies. Batky explains that "[I]n contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand before his gaze and under his judgement. Women see their bodies as seen by another, by and anonymous patriarchal Other" (Bartky, 2003: 34). During one of the FGDs, a student narrated an incident highlighting the much prevalent harassment in the society which according to her could be best countered by purdah.

I once heard on radio a survey was being conducted in which men were asked the reasons for increased occurrence of women's harassment, most commonly done either by following them or by calling names.

Majority replied because they adorn themselves, if they are simply dressed and veiled why we would do so. See, all men are the same, when women are dressed up glamorously they think they have done it for men, women have to be very careful if they do not want men to bring any harm to them .

Burqa not only hides their femininity but also gives them complete anonymity and just as hiding femininity has its benefits so does anonymity. For the girls of the madrassah the benefits of anonymity are several; an important one being protection for all those women who don burqa from being harassed. This is argued on the grounds that the male members of the burqa clad women are particularly conscious of their conduct when among women wearing burqa. Women are considered as *izzat* of the family so while unrelated women may be harassed by some men the related ones are respected and their respect taken care of by the same.

I have learnt through my personal experience that my burqa not only protects me it saves all purdahdar (purdah observing) women. My cousin who is young often goes with his friends to the markets crowded with girls. He and his friends have fun staring at girls and teasing them, which ofcourse is a bad habit but many young boys do the same. He told me once that his friends ask him why does he lower his gaze and act respectful towards burqa clad women and he says he fears lest his baji[87] *is among them (binte Inaam, 22-mu'alima).*

For binte Faheem the feature of anonymity gave her confidence to speak up for her rights. Being a shy girl she always found it hard to talk to men. She noticed a change in herself the day she started wearing the burqa. The mere fact that her identity is concealed and she is not judged by it, she feels is immensely liberating. It also gives her the confidence to move in the male-dominated public sphere. Her identity concealed

[87] A term of respect used specifically for older sister or older women.

her femininity hidden; the burqa gives her strength to communicate[88] with the opposite gender on an equal level.

> *Women are supposed to act meekly in public. A good woman is presumed as one who does not speak a lot, nor does she speak in a loud tone. I was like that, too shy and easily scared by men. But I remember how I could fight for my right with the clerk in our college the day I wore my burqa. The clerk was very rude, did not do his job and often spoke so loudly that the girls dared not argue with him. I wanted some information regarding exams and he was talking on phone, I tolerated for 10 minutes but then I got so infuriated that I literally had a fight with him. He was surprised and so was I, I could not imagine myself speaking the way I did; it was only because I was wearing my burqa. He did not know me and could not do anything against me. Since the day I have started to wear burqa I feel as a changed person, brave and strong. (binte Faisal, 21-student, takhasus)*

Closely linked to anonymity is the notion of privacy. The girls believe that the private sphere of home is for women while the public sphere is for men. In order to be able to move about in the public sphere while keeping their privacy they observe purdah. This is evident from the analogy presented by Umme Bashir between privacy of a house and that of a woman's body. She explains that the windows of house, which is a private sphere, are often kept closed lest the outsiders to peep in. Similarly burqa keeps the privacy of a woman's body from being gazed and judged by others (46-*mu'alima*). Daly in her study of the practice of purdah among Afghans notices a similar function of burqa or chaadaree which "provides a sense of privacy or purdah as women move freely from the private to the public and maintain privacy when in public" (Daly, 2000: 138).

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[88] Communication with the opposite gender is not appreciated. However, in cases where it becomes inevitable the girls believe their burqa liberates them from gender biases and enables them to speak on equal grounds.

While the overall covering feature of this type of dress gives protection, its simplicity is believed to symbolize renunciation of material life. The relationship between religious symbolism of clothing and anti-materialism is not new. Materialism is frequently brought in contrast to spiritualism. Often, religious discourse categorizes clothing in a way that it is considered as either a positive or a negative marker of a person's identity. Tucker notices that in Christianity wearing of rough clothing is a positive virtue whereas brazen and expensive clothing is a negative one (2000: 254-255). The girls believe that the simplicity of their dress renders them with strength to combat the material world which according to them is far from the Islamic values. Unlike the other women of the society the simplicity of their dress keeps them from being occupied with the trivial concerns of dress; what to wear and not to repeat the same dress in functions, following the latest fashions in clothing and likewise. Quite seldom fashion has been metaphorically referred to as a battle to fight against. The girls do not appreciate the current waves of fashion. The glamorous styles of burqa and head scarves are considered as a "propaganda" of the "others"[89] to kill the real purpose of purdah:

> *It is saddening that in present times everybody wants to follow fashion but not religion. I know girls who cannot wear head scarves in schools, they are not allowed to, imagine in an Islamic Republic. We have freedom to follow all the inappropriate types of fashion but not to follow the religion. FGD 3 page 3*

For the girls at the jamia burqa as a symbol of religiosity is characterized by the faith in one's belief and is reflective of one's strength of character. Binte Dawood is satisfied with her simple attire. She feels happy in following religion and believes that this has helped her acquire strength to deal with the pressures of the material world. Although she considers that these pressures are intense and attractive yet her burqa enables her to overcome them, leaving her satisfied and content in the end. For her the burqa symbolizes renunciation of the material life and it does not matter if people perceive it as backward.

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[89] These others have been explained in detail in the Identity construction section of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

I feel satisfied and happy; actually the feeling is inexplicable. I feel strong despite all the pressure from outside, by the society and this widespread modernity which is in fact vulgarity. The materialistic world is lucrative and attractive, yet my purdah helps me to fight against it. The fact that notwithstanding this pressure I am observing that which is religiously correct, contents me. It does not matter to me if people think I am backward and conservative. I feel pleased for all those sisters who are abiding by the principles of purdah, I know what they go through, fighting each day with the materialistic world. I pray that we sustain this behaviour. (23-mu'alima)

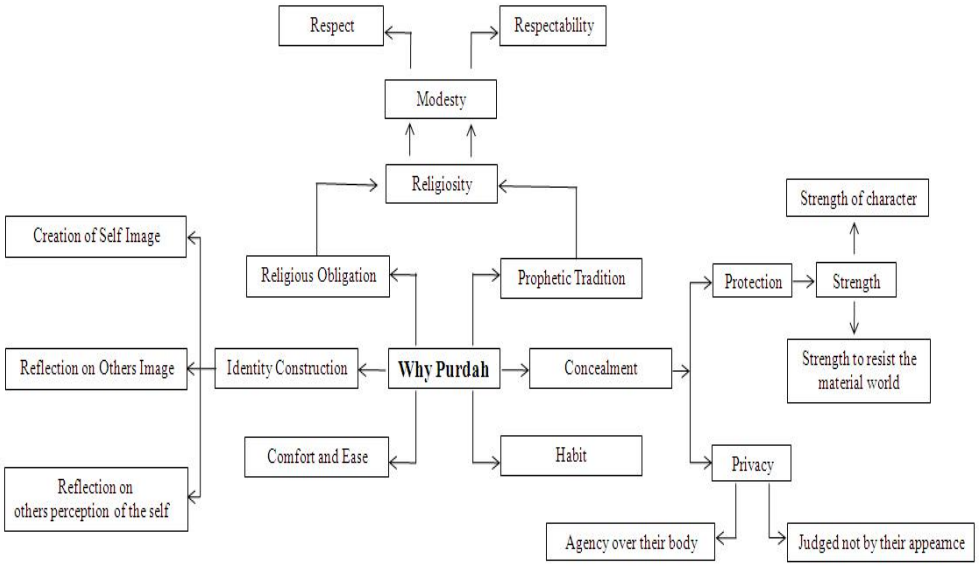

Figure 36: The rationale for observing purdah

6.8.5 Avoiding Fitna

"Prevention is better than cure"

"To avoid *fitna*" is one of the most common reasons given by the girls of the jamia for wearing burqa and observing purdah. Fitna has been translated invariably: it refers to "sedition"; "strife"; "commotion" (Hughes, 1935: 129). It also means "trial or testing,

temptation; by extension, treachery, persecution, seduction, enchantment, or disorder resulting from these things" (*Fitna*, Oxford Dictionary of Islam: 87). Rosen traces the roots of the term fitna as meaning "to tempt, fascinate, seduce, enthrall" and argues that although "the Arabic term fitna translates well as "chaos", but its resonance goes in rather different directions than the English translation" (2008: 30). In the context of the present research "female engendered fitna", a concept brought forth by Goto, is particularly useful (2004: 292). The negligence of purdah on the part of women is taken as cause of inevitable fitna in a society while its observance is perceived as a *precautionary measure* to avoid it. For the girls of the madrassah *fitna* is primarily embedded in a woman's beauty and body. They refer to *fitna* as moral corruption in the society. In the context of purdah it includes disapproved relationship with *namahram*; vulgarity in women's dress and woman's body in itself.

My interlocutors describe *fitna* as a process. It starts with *behaya'i* (literally means without shame/ vulgarity) in dress consequently leading to *behaya'i* in conduct. Immodesty[90] in dress leads to men taking unnecessary interest in women which eventually results in promiscuous relationship between the two. The sexual attraction of men for women is considered as innate and unavoidable. Women's body is referred as a fitna in itself. This conception, the girls inform, draws from the *hadith* which identifies women as the greatest fitna. The prophet said and it is interpreted as "After me I have not left any affliction more harmful to men than women"[91]. Given the sexual attraction of men for women is difficult to control, the girls believe that the responsibility of maintaining the social moral order of the society falls heavily on women thereby requiring them to observe purdah properly. This is reasoned on two grounds, one that purdah is a divine instruction and it is believed that disobedience to any religious decree leads to disruption and chaos and second to overcome the fear of fitna. Mahmood notes that "while women and men are both urged to discipline their sight, behaviour, and thoughts so as to prevent the stirring of illicit sexual passions, it is women who bear the primary responsibility of maintaining the sanctity of relations

[90] The concept of modest dress has been explained earlier. It means covering of the whole body including the face, immodest dress is thereby one which reveals any of the body parts or body contours.

[91] Sahih Bukhari. Book 7. Volume 62. Hadith 33

between the sexes. This is because the jurist Islamic tradition assumes that women are the objects of sexual desire and men the desiring subjects, an assumption that has come to justify that "women should "hide their charms" when in public so as not to excite the libidinal energies of men who are not their immediate kin" (2005: 110). It is also interesting to note here that while Barlas and Goto note that the all-covering *jilbab* symbolized the moral decay of the society the girls of the madrassah believe that purdah helps to avoid the society from moral decay (Goto, 2004: 281, Barlas, 2002: 56).

> *It is not the fault of men, if I reveal my body and let my dupatta hang loosely on my shoulders it will spread many evils. It will lead to moral corruption in the society and I will lose my respect. But If I observe purdah as ordained in the Quran then I am doing good not only to myself but actually contributing to the welfare of the society. (binte Naeem, 20-student, a'lmia)*

The worst moral disruption is *zina,* that is, illicit sexual relationship between men and women including both fornication and adultery. The girls believe that due to the concealing feature of the burqa men lose their interest in women, and sexual immorality is prevented.

> *Purdah is very important, it is not only responsibility of a woman but also her need. Men will not find any interest in looking at her. And a purdahdar (purdah-observing) woman out of her modesty never stares at a man. I think purdah saves from many evils. It saves form flirting around with the other gender. The whole thing starts with the eyes; a man sees a woman and he likes her then he approaches her. They start talking to each other and then dating and finally they end up doing that is the greatest of all sins, zina (fornication/ adultery). Let us suppose they do not indulge in sexual relationship and stay as friends, even that is haram (forbidden). (binte Jamaal, 22-student, a'lmia)*

The interaction between *namahram* men and women is prohibited and the relationship between them is considered illicit. The girls categorize *Zina* into different types. They believe each part of the human body is capable of committing *zina*. When unrelated

men and women interact, each level of interaction and physical contact is actually regarded as a type of *zina*. This again is based on the following *hadith* from the Sahi Bukhari book of *hadith-s*:

> "The son of Adam has his share of *zina* decreed for him, and he will commit that which has been decreed. The *zina* of the eyes is looking; the *zina* of the tongue is speaking; the *zina* of the ears is listening; the *zina* of the hands is striking; and the *zina* of the feet is walking. The soul wishes or desires and the private parts confirm or deny that."

It is interesting that in the female engendered fitna it is only women who are the actors, the men are passive subjects; their action is only a reaction and seldom talked about. Purdah is a precautionary measure to avoid this sexual objectification and consequent victimization of women. The innate nature of men's passion is taken for granted and not to be blamed. Women are the cause of *fitna* as well as the victims; the afflicters and the sufferers. It is the woman who leaves her purdah and attracts men. These men then lose their interest in their wives, as the girls put forth, *one woman's fitna destroys another woman's home*. Home is considered as a woman's sanctuary; which is preserved by the preservation of the institution of family. Purdah strengthens the institution of family which Caeser argues "to Islam is the cornerstone and the mainstay of the community" (Caesar, 2003: 165). The foundation of family rests on marriage, commonly referred to as *nikah*. The term *nikah* literally means "sexual intercourse". As a legal term it "denotes the situation resulting from a contract entered into by a Muslim man and a Muslim woman, which legitimizes cohabitation and sexual intercourse between the singers of the contract in the eyes of God and their co-religionists" (Virani, 2007: 59). Talking about the significance of marriage in Islam, Caesar argues that it "serves to emphasize the great significance attached to family life as a force for unity in Islamic society" (Caesar, 2003: 166). The research establishes Caesar's propositions regarding the role of marriage and family in Islam. The girls believe that marriage is desirable by religion. To substantiate the argument they quote the *hadith* where the prophet is reported to have said "Whoever is well-off, let him marry, for he who does not marry is not one of us". Another similar *hadith* in this context is interpreted as "Whoever can afford to marry, let him do so, for it is more effective in lowering one's gaze and keeping ones privates chaste. Whoever, cannot do this should fast, for it has

the effect of restraining lust". Any relationship between the two sexes, which is not bound by *nikah* is deemed as strictly forbidden. Purdah, according to the girls is a precautionary measure to avoid any disruption to the system of marriage, the institution of family and the consequent immorality. Purdah so conceived, helps keep solidarity in the society.

6.8.5a Reflections on their Ideal Society: a society without *fitna*

The girls emphasize the essentiality of purdah in present times, which is often referred to as "*fitnay ka dor*". A very interesting connection is drawn between the tribulations/ disruptions caused as a consequence of modernity. It is a general trend in the madrassah to treat secularism, modernity, and materialism as complementary concepts, leading to an ultimate collapse of social morality. Hence, any factor conceived as promoting any of these concepts is avoided to level of considering it *haram* (forbidden by religion), television being one such example. Their attitude towards technology is interesting. The current drive for owning gadgetry, the girls believe, is reflective of the materialistic attitude of the society. The desire for material things is not appreciated and is also considered as a *fitna*. As explained earlier the girls, at the madrassah consider this life only a transient phase leading to an eternal life. The desire for material things shows an individual's concern for this life which would consequently lead to reduced interest in religion and negligence in fulfilling ones religious obligations as most of the time will be consumed by the use of such gadgetry. It is because of this pervasive discouraging attitude towards technology in the madrassah that girls try minimal use of their mobile phones in front of others who are not their friends. It would be significant to mention here that generally the girls are not allowed to keep mobile phones with the exception of senior students and teachers.

The discouraging attitude towards technology does not imply complete abandoning of its usage. The girls believe that all those things which are more harmful than beneficial should not be used. So out of the most commonly used electronics including television, radio, mobile phones and the widespread usage of internet it is only the television the use of which is considered as *haram*. The girls reason it on several grounds; one that it is not allowed to see a *namahram*; second that taking pictures is considered as forbidden in Islam; third that television is promoting modernity. TV is often referred to as TB; the metaphoric usage of television to contagious tuberculosis is self-explanatory.

It is the culture of modernity spread through television which is considered as contagious and spreading *fitna*.

> *TV is TB, it breeds many sins. People watch TV only because of these fashionable and modern women shown on it. I think it exhibits women in the most abhorrent ways. If there is cable television then one has the opportunity to watch foreign channels, which are full of vulgarity. Even if that is not always, still often it is so. There is a possibility so one should avoid it. Computer is different it is not an absolute curse as one can make use of it in a positive way as well. With TV I see no benefit, why should I watch something when I see no use. (Binte Faheem, 23-student, takhasus)*

The concept of modernity as perceived by the girls also makes an interesting study. Modernity is synonymously used as westernization. It refers to the emulation of western style of living and dress. Women's inappropriate clothing[92], gender equality, breaking of the family structure is considered as the worst outcome (*fitna*) of modernity and westernization process and is heavily targeted upon. The girls consider that the society needs reformation, it is not completely religious; women do not observe purdah and people in general are the followers of the "Americans" and the "Jews". They believe that modernity and the westernization which is gaining popularity is actually the root cause of women's disempowerment and religion helps to emancipate them by giving them their due respect and status.

> *The West may be technologically advanced but morally it has gone back to the age of ignorance. Western culture allows men free access to women, they have made women legal for men, whenever whoever wants to use her, uses her for pleasure and then throws like a tissue, I say this because, they take no responsibility, give no protection consequently there is no satisfaction. Islam on the other hand considers women precious and to be looked after, first by father, once married then by the husband. She doesn't have to worry about shelter (home) food clothes*

[92] As has been explained earlier, Western-styled clothing is considered as inappropriate.

and these are the basic necessities of life, which Islam has provided for. (Binte Abdullah, 20-mu'alima)

The attitude, of the girls towards West in general and the status of women there in particular, reflects a stereotypical image. Most of them have never been to any Western country yet claim to be well read about the western societies. These books that provide them information demonize western values and cultures as negative trends that should be combated against. It is the conspicuous presence of women in the public sphere which is particularly spoken against.

> *The west took all the respect a woman has, it took their honour, their real task is to stay at home, take care of it, their husband and their family. The West showed the way to vulgarity, nudity and materialism. Women are no longer safe and secure. Western women are helpless and hopeless, they cannot concentrate on their real job. By bringing the women out in the world, the west actually has created many problems for them. Everybody thinks of them as easy women, as their personal property. I don't think it can be counted as freedom of women, it has just reduced their value, you find their pictures everywhere even on the toffee wrappers. Isn't it better to stay at home than to be displayed on a toffee wrapper? (Binte Faisal, 21-student, takhasus)*

While Western societies are demonized, countries like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan under the Taliban rule are idealized. This demonization and idealization is on the basis that the former causes *female engendered fitna* and the latter curbs and controls it. Umme Bashir who had lived in Saudi Arabia for a long time admires that purdah is officially controlled by the government.

> *In Saudi Arabia where culture is guided by the religion everyone wears abaya. It has been made compulsory by law that women must properly cover themselves which includes covering of the head. I have seen even the foreign non-Muslim women wearing abaya when they come to Saudi Arabia or atleast a headscarf. It is essential that all the Muslim countries make rules for purdah so that every woman is veiled. (Umme Bashir, 46-mu'alima)*

During one of the FGD, the girls praised Taliban rule in Afghanistan for upholding the religious doctrine as supreme authority. It is believed that women were respected and well-protected under the Taliban regime. One of the girls informed, that she once read in an article about the implementation of *shari'a* law by Taliban in a magazine available in the madrassah. It reported that the law proved to be a major deterrent to control crimes such as theft and stealing. The Taliban, in order to evaluate the effect, put bricks of gold in the public places. There was not a single case of theft because of the severe punishment, that is, amputation of the hand. This and several other similar arguments reflect that for the girls an ideal society is one where law is guided by religion and *shari'a*.

Engineer points to the two most common and incorrect assumptions about *shari'a*. These he argue are held by those who are not "well versed in the origin and development of the *shari'a*" and are encouraged by the "conservative *ulema*" (religious scholars). One it is "totally divine" and that second that it is "immutable". He argues that "the *shari'a* did not come into being all of a sudden; it went through a tortuous process of evolution over the centuries; and, secondly, it never remained static…" According to him the principle of "*Ijtihad* (literally exertion), i.e., creative interpretation and application of Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in the face of new circumstances" makes *shari'a* rather a dynamic concept (Engineer, 1992: 6). Given this mutability of *shari'a*, it can be inferred that for the girls an ideal society is the one where *shari'a* as interpreted by the Deobandi Hanafi scholars is implemented. The fact, that the *shari'a* rule in Iran[93] is not considered by them as an authentic rule further supports this argument.

6.8.6 Identity Construction: Creation of the self image-reflection on others

The religious moral "Us" and the modern ignorant "them"

Physical appearance holds immense significance for the girls. Dress being an important component of physical appearance is reflective of an individual's character. It plays a vital role in "visual communication" which, argue Barnes and Eicher, takes place even

[93] The girls donot consider *Shi'a* as true Muslims; Iran being a *Shi'ite* state is not acknowledge as an authentic Islamic state.

before the "verbal" one to establish if communication is possible at all (1992: 1). According to the girls communicative power of dress has two significant dimensions; one that it is stronger impact than the verbal one and second that appearance compliments the verbal communication. It is important to "look" religious in order to be able to preach religion. The special attention given to the dress also owes to their belief that dress and appearance entail value judgment by the viewer.

> *When a person talks about religion people see his/ her dressing; people see if the appearance is in line with what he/ she is saying. I started wearing burqa not only because I thought it is right but also because I realized that appearances leave a deeper impression than the words. When I am clad in my gown it says a lot about me. Besides I could not preach purdah until and unless I observe it myself. Nobody will take me seriously if I don't. Would it not be shameful for us to talk about purdah and not practice it. (Umme Khalid, 26-student, a'lmia)*

The way dress and identity are co-related is attention-grabbing. The girls regard their dress as reflective of their identity; as religious, moral, modest and chaste, and take "pride" in wearing it. The consideration of their dress as religious is always accompanied by a reflection on the "others" dress. It builds up a case for oneself against the imaginary "other". As explained in the previous chapter, the imaginary "other" forms a very important part of their worldview. They construct their identity against it. In case of dress, the imaginary others include all those women who do not abide by "their" rules of purdah. Their dress leads to the formation of "pious" and "moral" "us" against "modern" and "immoral" "others". This reflects hierarchy in identity where their identity stands superior to the others identity.

> *The unveiled are actually influenced by this widespread modernization and liberalism. I feel sympathetic towards them. I feel sad for them, for they are not even aware of what evil they are spreading. Allah gave the prophet, the pain for his people, we are the heirs of this pain. We, the religious scholars are heirs of the prophet. Something pinches from inside, and I pray that Allah shows them the right path. We can force our close relatives but with others one has to be polite. (Binte Dawood, 23-mu'alima)*

For the girls, dress is a marker of identity on various levels: individual, group, organizational. A sense of unity is created via dressing and clothing, where the dress of "us" is differentiated from the "others". A senior mu'alima explains that the aim is to construct a unified identity, a communistic one, where the foundations of community are basically religious. Dress in this way becomes a tool that conflates individual identity with group identity. It sets the rules for inclusion and exclusion in the group. The research establishes that for the girls of the madrassah, the group boundary set by dress is rather flexible. The circumstances under which a particular dress is worn is one variable affecting this boundary. The other variable is the relative similarity to their ideology of dress along with its function and symbolism. Thus, if a woman's dress conceals well, covers the head and is not fashionable it is appreciated despite the margin of improvisation that it requires. Most of the students hold an opinion similar to that of binte Faheem:

> *We feel very happy to see our sisters wearing niqab. Even when we see a girl wearing a head scarf it makes me feel good, she is atleast trying to be religious and modest. (23-student, takhasus)*

The construction of identity also involves the perception of others about one's self. This can be best explained using the notion of "symbolic interaction"; "a two way interaction between "appearance management and appearance perception". If the message conveyed by the wearer does not correspond to the one perceived by the observer, the "intended messages" lose their meanings (Kaiser in Shirazi, 2000: 115). The girls presume that transmissions of messages in case of the burqa clad women divide the general opinion about them into two; positive and appreciative and negative and discouraging. In case of the positive opinion the appearance perceived corresponds exactly to the appearance managed and a burqa clad woman is considered as pious, modest and the one who abides by the rules of religion. The girls suppose that this opinion is rare. They reckon that often their dress is negatively interpreted as "conservative" and "backward" by the society at large. A recurrent comment in this context is

> *People think we are backward, just because we study in a madrassah and wear burqa.*

It is important to note here that the students is doubly targeted; firstly, because burqa in general is negatively perceived as a symbol of backwardness. Secondly, the participation of the burqa clad girls of the madrassah in public protests contradicted the generally established theory of purdah and seclusion. The purdah-seclusion theory relegates women to the private sphere of home. Mohiuddin explains that in a Pakistani society "there is a barrier between "private space" (i.e. the home), which is defined as a woman's world, and "public space" (i.e., the rest of the world), which belongs to men. This inside-outside, private-public dichotomy is maintained through the institution of purdah". Besides seclusion, purdah also involves "restrictions on women's mobility" (2007: 255). Thus, in a purdah-oriented society, women's participation in public sphere is news and burqa clad women's participation is exceptional news. At the time of the research, the increased protests by the girls against the government policies lead to an increased news coverage. Most often their burqa was targeted upon. Some even accused the administration and the girls of Jamia Hafsa for diminishing the image of the burqa.

> "What has happened is that we have killed the spirituality, the burqa has lost its soul and what we are left with now is a whole lot of sound and fury. But what is even worse is the fact that we have made a laughingstock of something that is already the object of popular criticism in the west. The burqa has made quite a journey in a rather short span of time. It was respectable, admirable even at some point in time. But it was a reality foreigners couldn't comprehend. It then metamorphosed into something creepy, especially when hordes of women dressed like that were let loose on the streets of the capital ……" (The News 2007d).

6.8.7 The Scientific Justification:

The scientific rationalization of purdah by the girls is particularly interesting. While purdah being a religious obligation holds supreme importance however the recurrence of scientific justification for its observance reflects their effort to establish the essentiality of purdah for all the women given its utilitarian function. Quite often the girls mentioned having read *once*/ *somewhere*/ *somewhere but they cannot recall where* that the latest scientific research shows that purdah protects the beauty of women. The

scientific justification explains the process of beauty deterioration resulting from the non-observance of purdah:

> *The unveiled women are not aware that even the science proves that when men look at them, there are emitted such rays which deteriorate their beauty. And if you notice you will find that the women who cover themselves bear innocence as compared to those who beautify themselves for men using make-up. (binte Abdullah, 20-Mu'alima)*

> *Science shows that there are emitted rays from namahram which severely effects women's face. She loses the radiance and beauty. I have heard it and also read it in some book. It is not necessary that it happens, but there is a possibility. We have to keep in mind all the possibilities and try to avoid them. (binte Babar, 20-mu'alima)*

Binte Naveed explains in detail as to what happens when a *namahram* sees a woman's face.

> *I have read somewhere (thinks for the reference but could not recall) I do not remember where, but that the latest research establishes that it is better for women to cover their face. It is like this when you see someone you either think positive or negative. When man sees woman he derives pleasure (carries sexual connotation). Negative rays are emitted which are not good for a woman's beauty. Otherwise too it is highly beneficial, you are not exposed to the sun and do not get tanned or sunburns. (binte Naveed, 20-student, a'lia)*

Attaria's book *Purdah aur Jadeed Science* (Purdah and the Modern Science) is an interesting example illustrating the way religious scholars sometimes coerce a link between the scientific researches unrelated-to-burqa to rationalize its use. The purpose of the book is to endorse purdah observance as a religious obligation simultaneously suggesting its scientific significance. The writer, rather vaguely builds up an argument

using unrelated-to-burqa scientific researches[94] as emphasizing the wearing of burqa and covering of the face. She refers to the research of some doctor Nixon Davis, a spiritualist expert who has proved through experiments that human gaze leaves either a positive or negative impression on the nerves, brain and hormones of the body under the gaze. She uses this research to establish that when a man looks at a woman other than his *mahram*, either generally or particularly with sexual desire; it disrupts the complete hormonal system. Eventually there are poisonous secretions that upset the whole body system (Attaria, 2006: 61). At another place she builds up the argument for the covering of the face albeit for different reasons as articulated by the girls. The face, she argues, is created by God as perfect beauty that requires special care. Being fragile, the face is affected the most by climatic changes and seasonal variations. She then refers to the "European experts" who assert protection of face against climatic changes to avoid various diseases. With this as foundation, she builds up an argument in favour of covering the face with a scarf or a piece of cloth which would then act as a sun block and provide safety against harmful ultra-violet rays. She continues to argue that according to the modern medical science if women do not use a *dupatta* or a scarf to protect their face against sun and sunlight they can be inflicted with numerous diseases. In the end, she enlists a number of diseases most of them skin-related (ibid: 79-80). Although the girls did not mention this book, however, having discussed the matter in detail it can be concluded that such rationalizations of purdah that confirm their form of purdah as the best one are always appreciated disregarding the way the thesis is built and the argument presented.

6.8.8 Burqa: Comfort in Clothing

An important reason for choosing burqa is that the all hiding feature required of women's clothing is best provided by burqa. More than often the girls would compare burqa with *chadar* and showed a preference for the former. They argue that out of their personal experience they have learnt that burqa is easier to carry and unlike *chadar* one

[94] An interesting point to note that the book does not provide any detailed references to these modern scientific researches. At some places the names of scientists, institutes and hospitals carrying out related researches are mentioned but without any publication details.

does not have to bother about it once it is worn. The gown is all buttoned up, the scarf and the niqab are tied as shown in the illustrations (Fig. 34).

Umme Dost believes that although their burqa is not match to the *chadar*/ *jilbab* of sahabia-s but the comfort in wearing and carrying burqa makes it a good alternative.

> *It is easier to wear burqa. Burqa is developed to emulate purdah in the olden times. Then stitching was not known so women had to wear a long and broad piece of cloth. Although burqa has no comparison to the chadar of sahabia-s but it is difficult to maintain, so burqa is a good substitute. (Umme Dost, 37-mu'alima)*

It would be interesting to document my personal experience of wearing burqa for the illustrations. My experience depicts that it is not that burqa is a comfortable dress to wear rather it is the continued use of the dress that makes it a convenient dress. I wanted to present through illustrations the process of donning burqa. For that I had to take pictures of the process, to send it to my friend who agreed to make the illustrations. Since the girls refused to be photographed I decided to wear it myself. In the absence of any experienced help, I realized that it took much more time and effort to properly wear the same burqa that the girls take only a minute. It helps to establish that it is because of the familiarity with the dress and its continued use that the girls find burqa a comfortable dress to wear.

Burqa, which is worn over the clothes could make the wearer feel hot during the summer when the temperature raises as high as 45 degree centigrade but interestingly enough the girls would never mention discomfort in wearing the burqa. What they do mention is that they do not feel hot wearing their burqa even during the summer. They believe their faith in their clothing does not let them feel the heat. Wilkinson-Weber in her study of burqa learnt a similar experience and states

> "The *burqa* is worn over a woman's ordinary clothes and wearers get very hot, especially in the summer months. But women did not speak of burqa as a terrible burden. Because it allows a woman to go outside while taking the protection of her house with her….burqas are regarded as liberating" (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999: 78)

6.8.9 Burqa: A habit:

The research establishes that not only the girls believe in the symbolic and utilitarian aspects of burqa but they actually internalize this form of dress. As a result of this process of internalization they initial learning of burqa as the ideal dress for a Muslim woman is later emphasized as their own belief so much so that it becomes a compulsory and permanent part of their clothing. Once the all hiding burqa is internalized, the girls feel ashamed if any of their body parts or body contours are revealed. Carver argues that modesty and comfort in dress lead to its continued use and that "it is practically certain, however, that after the habit of wearing clothes once developed, their absence would produce a feeling of shame (1974: 175). Burqa for the girls becomes their *adat* (literally means a habit/ a custom) soon after it is adopted. Wearing burqa for them outside their home is as important as wearing clothes is for other people. For the girls the burqa becomes the dress while the dress underneath a part of the body. Just as is the case with any other habit, they find it hard to leave their burqa at any point of time for any reason. Umme Khalid expresses her feelings without burqa:

> *I have been wearing burqa for seven years now. I have become so accustomed to it that without it I feel as if I am wearing nothing. I once wore a big chadar to the market instead of burqa and although it concealed me well, I missed my burqa. I had a strange feeling that everybody was observing me because I looked different (smiles at her own thought) despite the fact that I knew nobody even knew me. I don't know but I somehow cannot even think of leaving home without it (Umme Khalid, 26 – student, a'lmia).*

> *Once you start wearing niqab, it's difficult to take it off, the real asset of women is "sharm" and "haya" and niqab helps to preserve it (modesty) (binte Kashif, 24 – student, khasa)*

The wearing of burqa is an unconscious response to the internalized rules of dress. Any divergence from the rules requires the girls to employ conscious efforts. They mention as feeling uncomfortable on encountering situations where they had to either reveal their face or part of their body despite knowing the fact that it is not a sin. For Binte

Ahmed the most important part of her burqa is the niqab. She is used to hiding her face in public. When she turned eighteen she had to make her identity card and felt *extremely nervous* while taking off her niqab for the photograph. She finds it hard to explain why she felt nervous although she was with her father and that she knew she was not doing a sin.[95]

Wilkinson-Weber (1999) and Jeffery's (1979) ethnographic studies in the region provide evidence of burqa being identified as a habit by the wearers. Although Wilkinson study speaks strictly of chiken embroiders in Lucknow and reveals that although the burqa rules are different, the strong influence of *adat* is similar to that experienced by my interlocutors. Wilkinson-Weber describes *adat* as both personal and community attachments" and argues that "adat cannot simply be abandoned, since it is ideologically intertwined with personal comfort and security and group integrity" (Wilkinson, 1999: 80). Jeffery's ethnographic study of purdah among the pirzada also reflects on internalization of purdah and purdah as a habit of the wearers. (Jeffery 1979).

6.8.10 *Zaroorat k taihat*: the way out:

The expressions *zaroorat k taihat* (in case of need) and *rukhsat* (literally means farewell/ departure) refer to the concessions given by religious scholars for certain actions that are otherwise not allowed for a purdah-observing woman. It is like a permit for the women allowing them to show their face or to move about in the public spaces[96] or to work for a living which is otherwise a man's job. This permit is based on two variables: the necessity and urgency of the matter and the intention of the doer. The variables render relativity on the basis of varied circumstances of a purdah observing woman allowing her to justify the action otherwise prohibited. Further categorization splits the actions into two categories: the unavoidable thus allowed and the avoidable but allowed. Under the category of unavoidables fall such actions as revealing of one's face for the purpose of identification, for example, photographs showing face for passports and national identity cards, witnessing in a court, or revealing face or body

[95] The section *zaroorat k taihat* explains situations where unveiling is not considered a sin.
[96] The section purdah and mobility provides a detail account of purdah restricting women's mobility

parts to a male doctor[97] in case of an illness. In such cases revealing is not considered as a sin. All the girls interviewed who are eighteen years of age and above have national identity card with their pictures on it. Although a few did mention their preference of the older system over the new one[98] when women had a choice between a thumb impression and a picture. The avoidables concern mostly matters related to mobility of a woman and not revealing of the face. The research confirms Stowasser argument with reference to women's employment, that "necessity represents extenuating circumstance. Even the spokesmen of conservatism now agree that in emergency situations the Muslim women may work abroad, provided that she behaves with all modesty and also returns to domestic life as soon as the emergency has been taken care of" (Stowasser, 1997: 101).

6.8.11 Constructing Genders:

The discussion on purdah reflects upon the process of gender construction; their perception of an ideal woman; and her role in the society. It is interesting to note that just as purdah is legitimized as a religious degree so is gender constructed often with reference to the religious text. The question, why purdah is essential for women, is responded with an interrogative statement "where does one put one's valuable things?" followed by an instant reply "you hide them". The girls believe a woman is a valuable asset for the family. Their value is defined by their relationship to the men of the family. Woman as a mother is highly respectable[99], as a daughter and sister a man's honour as wife she complements him. The consideration of woman as a "precious thing" and her innate weakness requires that she should be taken care of. The two oft-quoted *hadith-s* with reference to the delicacy and weakness of women include: one where the prophet compares women to glass and the former's weakness to the latter's

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[97] Although it is preferred to go to a female doctor but if there is none than going to a male doctor is allowed.

[98] The new system of National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) was established in March 2000. It introduced the Multi-Biometric National Identity Card Project to replace the paper based Personal Identity System of Pakistan.
http://www.nadra.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2

[99] One of the sayings of the prophets emphasizes that the right of the mother is three times the right of the father.

fragility. And the other where the prophet compares women to a human rib which is delicate and crooked and should not be attempted to straighten lest it might break. This is to connote biological weakness and emotional sensitivity. The *hadith* about the rib is rather controversial. Sikand explains that it is widely used to "justify the argument that women are derived from, and hence biologically inferior to men and that they are also inherently "crooked" (Sikand, 2006: 650). The girls of the madrassah, however, interpret it as reflective of emotional sensitivity of the woman. The inherent weakness of women is also expressed through the frequent use of the terms *naqis ul aqal* (deficient in intellect) and *naqis ud deen* (deficient in religion). Roald believes, and the present research confirms, that the main reason for this conception is probably because of the following *hadith*:

> Once the Messenger of God went to offer the Eid prayer. He passed by the place of the women and said: 'O women, give alms as I have seen that you women constitute the majority of the inhabitants of Hell.' They said: 'Why is it so, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intellect (*aqal*) and religion (*din*) than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you.' The women said: 'What is deficient in our religion and intellect, O Messenger of God?' He said: 'Is not the testimony of a woman worth half of that of a man?' They answered in the affirmative. He said: 'This is deficiency in her intellect. Is not that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?' They answered in the affirmative. He said: 'This is the deficiency in her religion' (Roald, 2001: 131)

The girls do not consider women's weakness as a negative trait, it is interpreted as emotional sensitivity which is balanced by men's rationality. It is believed that women and men are created differently, each in accordance to the functions and duties assigned to them. Ash-Sharawi, a leading Egyptian scholar, explains that this *hadith* mentions "the fact that women are created in a certain way which is in accordance with the social role that God has destined for them". He also emphasizes women as created emotional while men the rational beings (ash-Sharawi in Roald, 2001: 132). The girls believe that the *hadith* does not insult women it rather clarifies, as ash-Sharawi notes, "the nature of

the women from the side of creation….woman's creation makes a woman's emotions master her. And this is not a short-coming, but it is a distinctive mark which is in accordance with her function in life" (ibid).

My interlocutors believe that the strong-weak and emotional-rational dichotomy establishes that women of the family are responsibility of the man; who is the head of the household. Gender is constructed as a weak woman in need of protection of a strong man and as rational man earning and providing for the needs of women. He is also responsible for keeping up the moral values in the family. Gender construction strictly divides labour between men as breadwinners and women as managers of the private sphere of home. Just like a woman's value is attached with her status as a mother, daughter, sister or wife so is man's; the best being the one who takes care of his family well. The relationship between man and woman is hierarchical which is rationalized on the basis of the Quranic verse 4:34 "Men are the protectors and maintainers (*qawwamoona*) of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means."

The Arabic word *qawwamoona* is derived from *qawam* and has been translated variedly as protectors and maintainers/ caretakers/ incharge[100]. The girls at the madrassah interpret the term as *hakim* (ruler) which grants men superiority and authority over the women. This sovereignty of men reflects their strong belief in patriarchal system which according to them is the best system to hold. This system entails private-public sphere dichotomy as well as the division of labour. The private sphere of home is woman's domain while the public sphere outside the home is men's area. Men are the breadwinners while women are responsible for child bearing and rearing. Her responsibility is considered no less than a man. It is believed that if men and women play well their designated roles, it will contribute to the smooth functioning of the society. The girls strongly oppose the current trend of *women fighting for equality*. According to them men and women can never be equal and although they have equal rights over one another; man enjoys higher status compared to woman. The girls favour

[100] These translations are from Yusuf Ali, Mohammad Asad and Pickthall respectively. http://www.islamicity.com/QuranSearch/

the notion of equity against equality, corollary to which is the concept of complementarity against competition.

The private-public dichotomy extends far beyond bread winning and child rearing and bearing activities. It also associates professions, sports and a wide range of activities to either of the gender rendering them stereo-typicality. For instance teaching is considered as perhaps the only suitable profession for women. The others include, tailoring, embroidering, crafting and activities that are in most of the case done within the house. Although the girls show a fondness for variety of sports activities, they exclude swimming, racing and cycling as an inappropriate one negating the rules of purdah. All the activities are gendered for example driving a car is not appreciable but acceptable whereas riding a bicycle or a motorcycle is neither. During one of the FGDs, on the issue of girls riding bicycle or motorcycle, the girls remarked: *Would she (a purdah observing woman) not look a cartoon on a bike clad in her burqa.* This shows that burqa demands certain demeanour and following of a specific code of conduct.

Gender construction is rather an ambiguous phenomenon; it is constructed dually. Women are considered as weak and taken care of at the same time women's sexuality is strong to which any man can easily fall a prey. It is believed that women are among the three ordeals of men, which are recognized as *zan* (women), *zar* (wealth) and *zameen* (land). These are the most treasured possession of men, vulnerable and require protection. It is these that men fight over; the first quarrel among the primordial human beings is believed to be over a woman. Women with their weakness are worthy of respect positively contributing to the society; with their strength are condemned and considered as *fitna*, a threat to the proper functioning of the society. In other words a weak woman and a strong man contribute positively to the society while a weak man and strong woman (one who does not observe the purdah rules) lead to its disruption.

The conception of purdah as held by the girls elucidates it as a notion bearing symbolic and functional value for the wearer. What else is revealed through the interviews are the varied extensions of purdah discussed in the next chapter.

7 THE PURDAH EXTENDED

7.1 Gendering the space: Purdah and Architecture

The architecture of the madrassah bespeaks of the strict purdah environment within. Various features including the frosted windows with curtains, the central courtyard, the separate rooms for male lecturers, the canteens with rotating windows and the meeting rooms with bars separating the men and women section; all contribute to ensure that the madrassah is a private space for women which is not to be intruded by the other gender. Schimmel notes purdah observance manifested in architectural structure is common to societies where the seclusion system prevails. She notes that purdah in Muslim architecture is reflected in various ways: "the women's quarters form a separate section or are located in the upper storey; houses often have an inner courtyard or small backyard where women can walk or sit without being observed by non-family members. Often, a special door allows female visitors to slip into the women's quarters without being seen" (Schimmel, 1992: 65).

In MJH, The various purdah-oriented architectural features emphasize seclusion through screening and curtaining. The entrance to the madrassah with the opaque curtain hanging and the sign reading "entrance for women" is a site not new for many of the Pakistanis (Fig. 37). Marker explains the inter-relationship between purdah and space in a Pakistani society and states that, "in urban centres women are segregated at work, travel to and from work in separate sections in public transport and are covered in purdah clothing at all times. There are separate wards in hospitals, and schools and colleges are segregated, as are religious and marriage ceremonies" (Marker, 1989: 98-99). Given this context it is a common site to find signboards that indicate gender segregated

Figure 37: Separate entrance for women at MJH

spaces. In the segregated Pakistani society a woman's madrassah is obviously considered a feminine space. The logic behind such signboard in an already secluded and gendered space of MJH is to ensure that male visitors and chaperons do not enter the madrassah even by mistake.

Inside the madrassah the opaque curtains hanging from balconies is a common sight (Fig. 38). They serve two purposes: prevent the rooms from intense heat during the summer and provide screening from male masons and workers. The central courtyard is again a familiar architectural feature, albeit an older one, for many belonging to the purdah region. It provides an external environment to the girls within the private sphere of the madrassah. Mandelbaum notes that purdah observance is complimented by the architecture segregating the women's space from the men's, within the sub-continental region: "Adherence to purdah is simplified by the layout of the dwelling" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 4). He further explains that "Indian women carry out the domestic work in the courtyard or inner rooms that men may enter only to make meals or perform chores. Speaking specifically of Muslim women, he states that they keep strictly to their own part of the house (the zenana); larger Muslim houses have a room at the front for entertaining visitors that the women do not enter; their space is in the courtyard (Mandelbaum, 1988: 4 and 80). The courtyard is a gendered space, providing women with an "open" and "usually sunny" space to carry out many of their activities simultaneously protecting them from the "gaze of outsiders" (Shaw, 2000: 76). Within the madrassah the second and the third compound are constructed along a central courtyard, each utilized differently. In the first compound there is a small green square in the middle of the courtyard. It provides girls an open green space to sit around especially during the winters. There is one open kitchen to the left side of this courtyard where girls can cook their meal. At a short distance are also water reservoirs for drinking and performing ablution. The courtyard of the second compound is used for holding lectures. Given the large number of students and comparatively insufficient number of classrooms, often lectures to four different grades are delivered here simultaneously. Extra-curricular activities are also often organized within this courtyard.

Figure 38: The opaque curtains hanging at different places at MJH

It is within the courtyard of the second compound where the canteens with rotating window are constructed as pragmatic solutions to ensure strict purdah observance on unavoidable encounters with the other gender (Fig. 39). These canteens open to the road side where the regular street vendors sell vegetables and fruits. They are appreciated on the basis that they fulfill the grocery requirements of the students within the premises. The girls place money on the window together with a piece of paper with the list of things they want to buy and rotate the window. Sometimes they just say out loud what they require. The street vendor in return places the required things and rotates back the window. The girls find these canteens as facilitating their purdah requirement. Similar rotating windows are also found in the first compound of the madrassah, connecting it with the men's office. These are used to transfer small things, for example books, from outside into the madrassah without men entering it.

Figure 39: The rotating windows

The small windows in some class rooms adjoining to the male lecturer's room are renovations in the architectural structure to meet two contradictory requirements; the observance of purdah and the need to learn from specialized male lecturers. It is mostly

to the senior classes (*takhasus*) that male lecturers deliver lecture to. Although not very sophisticated, some classrooms are also equipped with the microphone system so that the lecture delivered from the other room is clearly audible to all the girls.

Figure 40: The window connecting the lecture hall to the male lecturer's room

The layout of the visiting rooms for the girls to meet their male relatives perhaps offer an example of the strictest ways of purdah observance. Two tiny rooms are connected through a small window. The male relative of a girl enters the room through the male entrance. The logic behind the construction of these meeting rooms is that the male relative of a girl is *mahram* only to one particular girl while *namahram* to the rest of them. The girls consider it as a perfect arrangement for meeting their relatives without creating inconvenience to their other colleagues who would have to veil if their relatives come inside the madrassah.

Figure 41: The visiting rooms with connecting windows

The closed architecture of the madrassah provides the girls with freedom of movement within. However they are not allowed to leave the madrassah premises unless

chaperoned by a *mahram*. This opens up discussion for purdah as a system restricting women's movement outside the private sphere of home.

7.2 Purdah and Mobility:

The ideals of purdah require women to stay at home, explain my interlocutors and endorse the argument by quoting the following verse from the Quran addressed to the prophet's wives:

> And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless. (33:33)

This verse like all the other verses on purdah is faced with two controversies, one that it is addressed to the prophet's wives hence, cannot be generally applied to all the Muslims. Barlas argues that "[T]he Quran suggests that this exception is a function of the fact that his [the prophet's] wives "are not like any of the (other) women". "Presumably, as the prophet's consorts, they were required to be role models for the entire community and therefore carried a greater moral responsibility. As such, the Quran holds them to standards of behaviour it does not require of others" (Barlas, 2002: 124). Secondly, the use of the word *qarna* (translated as "stay quietly in your homes) has called for debates among the scholars. One point of view is that the "Quran placed this restriction on the Prophet's wives because they were not permitted to remarry after his death". Some scholars explain the term *qarna* as *qirna* meaning "have dignity and serenity" (ibid). Kaukab Siddique argues that that "the Quran could not have required the prophet's wives to be sequestered in this way since it commands them to *udhkurna*: to mention, teach, spread God's Words which required their presence in the public arena; nor did the Prophet himself confine his wives to their home" (Kaukab (1990) in Barlas, 2002: 124). For the girls these verses although addressed to the prophet's wives hold equally for all the Muslim women. Women's participation in the public sphere is not forbidden but discouraged. It is believed that women when engage in the public activities it is most likely that their primary function of child bearing and rearing is adversely affected. The permissibility of movement depends on the nature of function

that has to be performed and demands the assurance of segregation of genders. It also defines the distance that can be travelled by a woman alone. If a woman travels beyond 77 km she has to be accompanied by a *mahram*. Women are not allowed to travel alone, let alone live without a *mahram*. However, it is interesting to note that the larger population of the madrassah come from far off places and therefore take up their residence in the madrassah. Living alone without a *mahram* in another city is by no means permitted by the purdah system. The, girls justify their boarding on the basis that their purpose is noble, that is, acquirement of religious education which is an obligation. Equally interesting is the fact that none of the students/ teachers residing in the madrassah is married; this is in contradiction to the conception that the primary task of women is bear and rear children. Those who are married commute daily to the madrassah. The students of the madrassah while discussing purdah and mobility during a FGD, justified their residence in the madrassah as following:

> *It is the need of the day if parents cannot afford to send their girls to schools, this is the best solution. Besides girls are living with girls. They are not intermingling infact they are not even in communication with any man. We are not allowed to step outside the madrassah until accompanied by a mahram. It is important that girls receive education. Their training is necessary for the training of the next generation. They need to know issues related to religion, especially the faraiz, e-g namaz etc. It is beneficial for the girls to stay here and learn religion because when they will go back they will be able to teach their community. Some of them may open their own madrassah or tuition center for girls. Women can go to such places where there is strict segregation of sexes and men and women should not freely intermingle.*

The extract reveals that financial constraints to send one's children to the madrassah, is one justification; while essentiality of learning but in a gender segregated space is another. The following extracts reveals yet another reason; the lack of madrassah within the vicinity:

> *It is allowed to live far away from their homes because government does not fulfill their responsibilities. There aren't enough madrassah for*

learning and sometimes a madrassah in the vicinity lacks the quality of education.

Purdah and mobility is a complex issue: movement in the public sphere involves two categories of activities: obligatory like the acquirement of religious education and non-obligatory activities which can further be divided into leisure and non-leisure ones. The former includes such tasks as grocery, picking and dropping one's children to school, earning to financially support the family etc. It is preferred that these activities are performed by the men of the household but women are allowed to carry them out if need may arise. Like purdah of voice demands restricted speech, purdah of mobility demands restricted movement. Women must not roam about in the public area for leisure and without "genuine" purpose. The opinion about leisure activities is divided among the students; while a majority considers activities as dining out and visits to the parks as unnecessary activities that purdah system does not permit; a minority believes that these activities are part of life that should be and can be carried out without breaking the purdah rules. However, they all prefer not to travel alone. The girls report that while they are not allowed by the madrassah administration to leave the vicinity without a *mahram*, at home too, they follow the purdah rules. Even while travelling for a short distance they prefer to take their younger or older brother along or a woman who is older in age.

What makes the study of purdah and mobility particularly interesting in case of Jamia Hafsa is the frequent involvement of the girls in the public sphere; each public activity is authenticated by providing justification from religion. For example engaging in social work during the time of earth quake is considered as a noble task. The girls argue that if need may arise that demands women's contribution on the community level, her mobility is justified. The girls explain:

Purdah has never been a hurdle in our way. We always did what is approved of religion. Often we participated in social work. When there was an earthquake in 2005 we went to hospitals in groups. Teams were made and these teams went to the earthquake-ridden area. Married couples were sent to far off places (FGD-students and teachers)

The participation of the girls in the protests against religion-related government policies were so intense and conspicuous that they formed part of the news; their burqa often was a central theme in these news often approached critically. Not only were the girls referred to as "a black brigade" (The News 2007b), "burqa-clad stick-wielding women of Jamia Hafsa" (ibid), "burqa-clad, baton-wielding" (Dawn 2007b), "the vicious extremist clerics and their danda-wielding burqa-clad students" (The Post, 2007a) "Jamia Hafsa's burqa brigade" (The Post, 2007b) carrying a negative connotation of their image, but also, in some cases their involvement in such activities had been subject to explicit criticism. This criticism argued that their involvement in the public sphere contradicts the notion of purdah-burqa-seclusion. Haq criticizes the students of the madrassah stating:

> "The occupation of the Children Library by the women students of Jamia Hafsa has not been in keeping with the Islamic Injunctions. When some believing women supplicated to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) how could they earn the blessings of Jihad when they were not allowed to take part in it, the Prophet (PBUH) replied that by staying back at home they would earn these blessings. Hence the baton-wielding burqa clad women students should have a stayed back in their hostels and should not have taken part in the occupation of the library or otherwise brandished their batons" (The Nation: 2007a).

Qazi's narrative is yet another article reflecting a disapproval of MJH's protests. She questions the public activities of the students of Jamia Hafsa which seem to contradict the formative function required of burqa:

> "About two years ago, I met a woman who had joined Al Huda….. The woman was covered from head to toe in a black but heavily embroidered burqa….she asked me why I too didn't wear a hijab. I didn't know what to say to her at first. Then I said that I believe in modesty but I'm not ready to don the veil. She looked upset. "You women, you think you are so liberated you have become like men, she said, scoffing, "You are out on the streets wearing whatever you find 'comfortable'. A woman's place is at home……/Later when I saw the women of Lal Masjid hopping about out on the streets of Islamabad, I thought of her. I wished

> I could call her and ask her if running around on the streets with sticks is allowed, especially since it is being done behind the requisite veil. Since I am not authority on Islam, I am depending on my memory, which if it serves me right reminds me that the veil is a physical manifestation of a very spiritual aspect of Islam. I was told that we are supposed to guard our gazes and that this kind of modesty can manifest itself in anything that covers a person (be it man or woman) enough to keep them out of harm's way or save them from the 'evils' of society. What has happened is that we have killed the spirituality, the burqa has lost its soul and what we are left with now is a whole lot of sound and fury" (The News, 2007d).

Having read and discussed these articles with the pupil of Jamia Hafsa I was explained that for them purdah is of utmost consideration always well thought out before any activities in the public sphere. The girls opted for public protests against government policies only when they saw that there is no concrete action from their male colleagues, argues a senior student. After the occupation of the Children's Library, during a regular madrassah function, the girls enacted a skit which revealed how students rejected various forms of protests, including a long march on the streets and sitting infront of the parliament, for purdah considerations. The occupation of the Children Library, located in between the madrassah and the mosque seemed to serve the purpose best; it would mean extension of their purdah space and a forceful protest. For the girls of the madrassah it is important for any activity to be carried out in the public sphere; that purdah should be observed by wearing burqa; that special care is taken about segregation of sexes and; that the logic for the activity is justifiable with reference to religion. In the absence of any of these three conditions, an action receives their strong criticism and is considered unIslamic. It is for this reason that their public protests were justifiable whereas the International marathon race held during the same period not. The mixed marathon race received strong criticism not only from the students of Jamia Hafsa but also from religious political parties over women's participation in the event. A student explains:

> *It does not suit an Islamic state to hold such events, it's not allowed in the religion. Rather it is the height of shamelessness; men and women*

running together! Astaghfirullah (an Arabic term that means seeking refuge from God. It is also used as an expression of showing disapproval of something)

This and various other similar explanations for declaring the mixed marathon unIslamic show that apart from gender segregation, purdah has a formative function to perform; defined as a function "in which dress forms the body and prompts it to act in a culturally appropriate manner" (Andrewes, 2005: 3). This formative function forbids women from running infront of men and several other behavioural expressions, the pivotal ones that emerged in the interviews are discussed below:

7.3 Corollary Constraints:

Purdah is not restricted to the tangible expressions of dress and architecture. As has been discussed previously, purdah urfi *refers* to the social containment of purdah and forms an important part of the socialization pattern of people belonging to the purdah zone. Under this heading I will go a step further and discuss the constraints of purdah that are mentioned almost always by my interlocutors during discussions on the topic. In all its various manifestations; tangible or intangible, the concept of purdah suggests total segregation of the two genders and often dependency of women over men. The rules for controlling segregation are intricate; they minutely regulate the behaviour and constrain mobility. The rules primarily include guiding gaze, speech, mobility and participation in the public sphere. The restraints on gaze is again explained as a divine injunction drawn from the same verse that suggests purdah in the dress, that is, verse 24:31, where both men and women are ordained to lower their gaze. Although women's dressing is prioritized over all the other forms of purdah, the girls also emphasize the forbiddance of gazing the other gender. Binte Moeen, a senior student at the madrassah, explains how gazing is sinful:

When you look at someone once it is ok and will be forgiven but the next gaze is a sin and the third one, destruction. (Binte Moeen, 18- student, takhasus)

The girls almost always narrate an incident either from their personal experience or their peers' or an article that they have read in some book or magazine to discourage breeching of any of the rules and forms of purdah:

Once a religious scholar came to deliver a lecture. When he was leaving a girl who was curious to see him, peeped outside the window, soon after she suffered from severe headache. She kept saying that it is because she ignored the Divine order (Binte Moeen, 18- student, takhasus)

Always quoted in this context is a *hadith* in which the prophet tells Ali, his cousin and son-in-law not to cast the second glance as it is impermissible. Calefato argues that the gaze is significant because it leads to "irreversible situations, signaling the passage to a state in which everything seems final". Looking is both changing the world and the others, and being changed in turn by their gaze" (Calefato, 2004: 63). Among Muslims vision is a fraught issue. The Quran ordains to both, Muslim men and women alike, to cast down their eyes (verse 24:30). For Muslims, the transgression of the limits set by God actually starts with "looking" (Bouhdiba (1998) in Ring, 2006: 148). Calefato explains that "being Muslim" actually means "controlling your gaze and maintaining a rigid divide between male and female". The gaze in Islam means "perversion of the eye, its interdiction, its zina, just as the word is the zina of language, physical contact the zina of hands and walking in desire the zina of feet" (Calefato, 2004: 64).

It is to avoid this gaze and the consequent probability of zina that leads to a rigid divide between male and female. It is deemed inappropriate to enter the private space of the other gender without prior notification. Taking the case of the madrassah in particular, men are not allowed to enter its premises at all. In special cases when men must enter, for example during the research period the madrassah was being renovated and masons often had to enter in the second compound. Before they could enter there was always an announcement on the loud speaker asking the "sisters" to observe purdah, consequently the girls either wore their burqa or went inside the rooms so that masons could pass through. Not even the male lecturers teaching at the madrassah are exempted from this rule. The girls observe complete purdah incase of an encounter with them.

Gender segregation of space is an intrinsic feature of the purdah zone: both the public sphere (Marker, 1989) as well as the private space of home (Mandelbaum, 1988) are divided. Mandelbaum explains the division of the space within the house: "men and women often live, for the greater part, in separate places. They sleep in separate rooms or on separate sides of a hut; they relieve themselves in separate fields or location; they

sit apart at all social or religious occasions" (Mandelbaum, 1988: 4). Given these widely-prevalent rigid rules of segregation, it is not surprising that the girls of the madrassah insist that women's private space should not be intruded even by the related men without a prior cautioning.

> *There are etiquettes for everything, even to enter the house and they must be followed. Even a mahram must make some indication of his arrival, either knock or cough so that the women inside know that he is coming. He should not enter directly into the women's room. (binte Bilal, 20-mu'alima)*

The insistence on etiquettes before entering the female space is because purdah observance sets certain norms of bodily comportment in the presence of the other gender that requires prior signalling. It is considered inappropriate to lie down or to sit in a relaxed reclined position infront of men, including the relatives (except the husband). Similarly to cover one's head infront of elders is a sign of respect. A prior signal, a cough or a knock, before entering the female space provides women with some time to comport themselves in accordance to the set norms. Finally the interaction also has rules to be followed; the voice has to be kept stern the communication to the point. Quoted in the context is the following verse from the Quran which is addressed the wives of the prophet:

> O Consorts of the Prophet! Ye are not like any of the (other) women: if ye do fear (Allah), be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire: but speak ye a speech (that is) just (33:32)

Although addressed to the wives of the prophet this verse is applied to Muslim women in general and explained in a sense that considers women's voice as *awrah*; hence, included in the purdah code are restricted speech; stern voice and reserved behaviour.

> *Men and women are not allowed to have friendship. They are not supposed to sit and chat for the sake of fun and pleasure, however, if there is a need they can talk to each other. In such a case a woman should keep firmness in her voice so that she is not misinterpreted as an*

"easy" or "lose" woman. If a woman talks with softness that is likely to seduce men and cause evil thoughts in his minds.

Another girl explains that only in the case of emergency women are allowed to talk to *namahram*. Stowasser in her explanation of this particular verse states that "[I]nspite of the specific wording of 33:32, then, interpreters have agreed that by this verse all Muslim women have been forbidden to use that "soft, effeminate [manner of] speech of the prostitutes" (or else, "that mellow tone of voice reserved only for the husband")" (Stowasser, : 171 footnote: 76). This brings into discussion the interaction of the students with their male lecturers and colleagues. It is seldom that the girls get a chance to interact with their lecturers or colleagues and while with the former the speech is marked with great reverence with the latter it formality and reservation are the significant characteristics. In explaining the stern voice Binte Bilal clarifies that

The sternness in voice should not be misinterpreted as arrogance in behaviour. It depends on the relationship too, a teacher has been granted a very high status in Islam, we learn from him, thus, obviously we do not talk with him as we would with an ordinary man. We try to carry a tone which is neither stern to offend him nor too soft to disobey the religion. We are very respectful, respect that is appropriate for this relationship. It is only that a girl's voice as well as speech should not convey wrong signals (20 – mu'alima)

It was during the occupation of the Children's Library that the girls from the madrassah and their male colleagues from the adjoining mosque were often met with physical encounter. In these cases both men and women lowered their gaze and passed each other without exchanging the routine greetings. Only when the girls saw the *mohtamim* or the *naib mohtamim* of the madrassah they exchanged greetings. Upon inquiring, the girls explained that although the men are their colleagues but are not personally known to them therefore it is not necessary to talk with them. Purdah requires them not to indulge unnecessary talks with any man even if he is their colleague; the exchange of routine greetings falls in this category too. While the *mohtamim* and his brother the *naib mohatamim*, are incharge of the madrassah, taking care of their daily needs therefore it is their moral duty to offer respect to them by saying the greetings. The girls

report that even with their closest relative they avoid sitting in mixed gatherings and indulging in unnecessary discussions.

A noticeable feature of interaction rules set by the purdah norms is the avoidance of using first names. The girls introduce themselves either in relation to their sons if they have one or their fathers using prefix *um* (mother) with the son's name in case of former and *binte* (daughter) with the father's in the latter. The girls believe that it is because of purdah that all the women mentioned in the Quran have been done so without their name except Maryam, the mother of Jesus. In his book *Bahnon sai Khitaab* (Address to the Sisters) Maulana Tariq Jameel a famous contemporary religious scholar also reiterates purdah of the name. He stresses that in Quran except Mariam all women are mentioned in relation to their husband, including, Pharaoh's wife, Noah's wife, Lot's wife. He rationalizes the face veil on the basis that when God even keeps the name of a woman veiled how is it possible that He allows her to unveil her face. "A Muslim woman's name is *haya* (modesty), her name is purdah" (Jameel: 473-474). Generally speaking, Milani's description of avoiding the use of women's name in the purdah-observing Iranian society also holds true to a considerable extent for the Pakistani society: "Propriety demands the omission of woman-her body covered, her portrait undrawn, her life story untold. Just as in the Quran no woman other than Mary, mother of Jesus, is referred to by name, traditional men would prefer not even to mention their women's names infront of strangers. A woman's proper name is improper in public. Disclosure of her identity is an abuse of the privacy, while her minimal exposure is accepted-infact for the long ideal-norm" (Milani, 1990: 4-5). In a Pakistani society it is uncommon to reveal a woman's name in public but equally uncommon is the use of prefixes *um* and *binte*. These terms have been borrowed from Arabic and although part of the language, they are rarely used. The use of these terms in the madrassah reflects the interest to uphold its purdah values and to promote the use of Arabic language, which they deem necessary for every Muslim culture.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: Burqa-The Social Fact Internalized

The most notable feature of the girls studying at the madrassah is their uniform dress which is an expression of religion worn religiously. The present study attempts to provide an emic perspective to the observance of purdah and consequent peculiarity of the dress worn by pupils therein. The use of the black gown with its appendages, the simplicity demanded of dress; and the forbiddance of public display of ornaments in the absence of any formal instructions about institutional uniform, reveals it not only as a learned behaviour but also what is termed as "social fact" in the Durkhemian sense, i.e. facts which are "distinguishable through their special characteristic of being capable of exercising a coercive influence on the consciousness of individuals" (Meštrović, 1993: 86).

Hurwitz argues that "[B]y appearing in combinations (outfits) and in contexts, the individual items convey meaning through their juxtaposition more than through unique characteristics" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993: 111). In presenting burqa as a social fact the present study fully realizes the essentiality of studying the dress alongwith the context within which it is worn. The context of purdah also includes details as "connections to age" or "gender", its "role as socializing agent", its "place in history", "role in social change" and the "varying illusions they convey to varying audiences" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993: 111)[101]. The placing of purdah in religious texts forms an integral aspect of this discussion, since purdah is considered as a divine decree and burqa as its most authentic expression. It, thereby discusses burqa as a dress in relation to the environment prevalent at the madrassah that leads to a better understanding of this particular form of dressing. MJH is initiated with the purpose of disseminating religious knowledge among the female strata of the society. As an educational institution it has rules that cultivate a certain mindset and regulate the activities of its pupil. These rules operate on both levels; the visible and concrete rules as well as the non-visible covert ones, mainly exercised through teaching of the desired interpretations of the religious

[101] Leeds-Hurwitz enlists the various aspects that form context, with reference to the various works on bow-ties. These aspects are important to study all the various types of dresses.

text; making available only the preferred academic and literature for serious and leisure reading; and in the form of peer-group pressures. The direct as well as the indirect pressures are meant to reiterate the correct way of living, that is, in accordance to the *shari'a* (as interpreted by them). Durkhemian social facts are characterized by "coercion", "coercive power", and "coercive influence" (Meštrović, 1993: 86). In case of MJH it is these rules that exert coercion to emphasize *shari'a*. It has been explained in chapter 6 that the madrassah acts as a total institution in the Foucauldian sense. It works on the docile bodies of the girls increasing their utility and exercising control by demanding obedience.

Durkheim explains that social facts have two dimensions, the social and the psychological. On social level coercion is the essential component; on psychological level they bear "compelling", "constraining" and "obligatory" influence. "Essentially, social facts are psychologically experienced as habits" and "imply a sense of permanence" (ibid). The direct and the indirect rules of MJH established as social facts carry a similar influence on its pupils consequently leading to their internalization by the girls and extensively altering their worldview. The existent notion of purdah is one such social fact, perhaps the most visible and notable of all, that is internalized as a concept that must be reflected in material form; through the visible accoutrement of the all-wrapping gown and the headscarf. Their new dress reflects their newly learnt perceptions of the sartorial requirements demanded of religion. The correct form of dress thus becomes the burqa through the process of internalization. Perceived as the proper dress code it exercises control on the body and disciplines the behaviour, gestures and expressions.

The black burqa is internalized as having several meanings, symbolic significance and functional utility. The interpretation of purdah observance as obedience to the Divine decree lies at the forefront for the girls who aspire to become "better Muslims" to say the least. The materialized purdah for them is an expression of their ardent religiosity. To depict one's faith through material forms is not a new concept. Kennan and Arwick argue that materializing religion is a practice common to all the different "sects, cults, new religious movements, denominations, world faiths" "[A]rticles of faith of the mental and constitutional sort are complemented by articles of faith of the material and sensory sort"; (Keenan & Arwick, 2006: 1-2). For Arthur "[D]ress is the most obvious

of the many symbolic boundary markers used by conservative religious groups" (Arthur, 1999: 1). At MJH it is a common belief that the complete adherence to materialized purdah incurs God's pleasure and non-observance provokes God's wrath. While the former promises high rewards and redemption, any failure would lead to severe punishment in this life and the life hereafter, which is considered to be eternal. Parsons explains that the process of internalization that is "a process of social learning" is characterized and inspired by rewards and punishments (Parsons, 1968: 18-19), that being confirmed at the madrassah. The justification for purdah is heavily bounded by desire for rewards and avoidance of punishments. Not only this but purdah as dress is sacralized and glorified as a prophetic tradition, the emulation of which leads one to acquire a higher status in terms of religiousness and morality. Sacralization of dress has been observed in other religious communities too, for example, among the Amish and Mormons "the form and function of items of everyday dress are derigeur because of the religious beliefs and commitment of the wearer" (Hamilton and Hawley, 1999: 31).

Aurat naam hi purdah ka hai (woman means purdah) the most-frequented justification to purdah is reflective of the fact that at MJH purdah and its material expression in the form of burqa is considered as an essential feminine virtue. The advantages of this virtue are double-fold; the individual benefits derived thereof are extended to the stability and prosperity of the moral functioning of the society. In chapter 6 it has been explained how purdah is explained by the girls as a sign signifying the various attributes of purdah. Covering of the body is chiefly defined in terms of modesty. Modesty as a major feature of veiling has been explained by Elguindi as well in her extensive work on veil (Elguindi, 1999). In case of MJH modesty is considered as an essential female attribute and a derivative of religiosity; there seems to exist a causal relationship between the two. It is emphasized that those who are religious should be modest hence observe purdah in the form of body concealment. Modesty reflected through purdah observance helps the wearer earn respect in a given culture and reflects respectfulness for those older in age; two features of purdah resonating in the works of Jeffery (1979), Mandelbaum (1988), Sitara Khan (1999).

Purdah or the broader notion of veil is vested with concepts such as modesty, chastity and respect and to preserve them insists on gender segregation as Agarwal notices that the purdah ideology which works in the form of physical containment of women ("the

veiling of women" or "the gender segregation of space") as well as their social containment ("the gendered specification of behaviour"), functions to restrict male-female interaction. She argues that despite the variations among region, religion, caste, class and circumstance purdah observance is frequently rationalized in terms of "izzat (family and personal honour), female chastity and modesty, the need to control female sexuality, and so on" (Agarwal, 1994: 299). She further argues that such an interpretation of purdah leads to a general belief that "women who observe the norms are chaste and good and those who transgress them to be of questionable moral character" (Agarwal, 1994: 301). These norms are internalized by the girls at a very early age and generally require no "external policing" (ibid). At MJH, an institute located within what Mandelbaum terms as the purdah zone, similar rationalizations form the basis of the purdah ideology, albeit with an emphasis on religion and the physical containment of woman. And once internalized as the correct form of dress it is controlled by the individuals themselves without external policing.

Gender construction at MJH has its roots in the principle of biological determinism; "a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing in turn profound psychological, behavioural and social consequences" (West & Zimmerman, 2002: 5). In the madrassah this division is legitimized by religion. Gender is constructed in a way that women's sexuality needs to be protected and controlled. Burqa through concealment provides what Papanek terms as symbolic shelter against "sex and aggression which are clearly recognized as being part of the human condition but difficult for the individual to control (1971: 518-519). On the other hand burqa to control women's body is embedded in the justification that "women's bodies are pudendal, hence sexually corrupting to those who see them; it thus is necessary to shield Muslim men from viewing women's bodies by concealing them" (Barlas, 2004: 54), a claim derived from the classical exegesis and strongly opposed by some academics including Barlas (2004) and Mernissi (1987). Classical exegesis is heavily revered at MJH. The girls indulge in what Barlas criticizes the conservatives for, that is, "sacralizing the works by early Muslim commentators and to universalize what in the Qur'an can be shown to be specific" (2004: 55). As explained in chapter 6 that it is actually the interpretation and explanation of the related verses on purdah in Quran that

leads to their distinct style of purdah, the *shara'i purdah*. These interpretations are not girls' own interpretations rather they are learnt as found in the classical exegesis.

Having internalized this form of gender construction and conception of women's sexuality, my interlocutors find in the constraining features of purdah benefits for themselves and for the society. The present study confirms Mernissi's argument that "the seclusion is seen by Muslim women as source of pride". While Mernissi's study shows that among the traditional Morrocons seclusion of women is considered "prestigious" and "privilege of women married to rich men" with harems "the ultimate form of seclusion" as the more prestigious (Mernissi, 1987: 142), for my interlocutors the stricter the form of purdah the more prestigious the status of the woman albeit not for the economic reason rather for religious ones.

However, the western reaction to women's seclusion proposes a contrary argument. Hirschmann argues that women's seclusion alongwith its gendering aspects has led to a "fairly universal" "western reaction" to it as an "inherently oppressive practice" resembling "domestic violence" (Hirschman, 1997:467). This she explains is perhaps because the western notion of "feminism" and "freedom" may not be applicable in the Eastern context. These notions have thus failed to see veil as a tool of manipulation and power used by the women in the East (Hirschman, 1997). The present emic perspective of purdah is in line with Hirshmann's argument. In seclusion the girls of the madrassah find empowerment; to make individual choices for themselves and to participate in the public spaces for the sake of betterment of the society, for instance occupation of the Children's Library by the girls of the madrassah. What is important for them is the legitimization of the action by religion. Religious knowledge brings with it power. The girls believe they exercise authority over their bodies by choosing to conceal once they learn and internalize the legitimization of purdah by religion. Despite opposition of their families and the public in general, as revealed in the individual case studies in chapter 6, the girls continue to cover themselves in burqa making little compromises only in the case of strong opposition from the family. However, these compromises are also made on their own terms, in the light of solutions offered by their seniors in the madrassah who are believed to be more knowledgeable.

Quiet interesting is the fact that the unveiled women is as stereotyped within the madrassah discourse as a veiled one is in the western one, a notion termed as "counter

stereo-typing" by Tarlo (2005: 13-14). The "feminist imperialism"[102] and the "Western civilizing narratives of the Muslim women as the ultimate victim" (Moallem, 2005: 168) are heavily criticized by my interlocutors. Paradoxical to the feminist notion is the generally prevalent view that considers the unveiled women not only as non-religious but also as victims of modernization and westernization. The research shows that a dichotomy between the veiled-traditional-religious-good-moral versus unveiled-modern-non-religious-bad-immoral is created by the girls while rationalizing purdah. They explain the social fact of burqa as not being a new introduction but one that always existed in the society and started vanishing after the Western influence increased. In following the West and adopting modern ideas the girls fear that the society is losing its identity as Muslims. Various works on purdah reveal that during the colonial times the emphasis on purdah increased immensely as the bastion of culture to avoid modernization and western influence (Minault, 1986; Jain, 2008, Ring, 2006). At the same time the works on purdah reveal that it is not and never was a monolithic concept within the purdah zone cutting across region, religion, class and circumstance (Agarwal, 1994; Mandelbaum, 1988; Papanek 1971). In presenting the ethnography of purdah observance in madrassah in relation to the wider society, the present study shows that burqa is adopted in the madrassah to construct a distinct identity as "the moral veiled us" against the "immoral unveiled them". The girls upon entering the madrassah immediately recognize this distinction and till the adoption of the new dress, the black burqa, feel their identity being questioned. Entwistle notes that "in the presentation of the self in social interaction, ideas of embarrassment and stigma play a crucial role and are managed in part, through dress" (2001: 48). As is evident from the case studies in chapter 6 that feelings of embarrassment had an important role to play in the girls' decision to don burqa. This embarrassment sprung for two reasons: the guilt

[102] "Global feminists' concept of women as a unified category victimized by a transnational history and transcultural patriarchy is no less problematic than its fundamentalist counterpart. In this literature, metaphors of pain and suffering identify a victimized body of women, who are cast as oppressed regardless of their place within complicated networks of power relations. It is through the compassionate and voyeuristic gaze of Western feminists at the suffering body of "the other"- the mutilated body of the African woman, the burning body of suttee, the veiled body of the Muslim woman, and the constrained body of the Chinese woman- that the need for a global sisterhood is created. This position is not peculiar to the second phase feminism (Daly, 1978; Dworkin, 1974) but persists as a privileged site of feminist imperialism" (Moallem, 2005: 167-168)

for not following properly what is being taught and the feelings of not having integrated into a group where everyone else wears the burqa. Thus, wearing of burqa is infact a sign of group membership. Although the girls insist that they wear burqa out of their personal choice, much later during the field work when I had established a deeper rapport I was informed that prolonged non-observance of purdah would lead to expulsion of the student. A senior *mu'alima* believed that while it is unlikely that a girl does not end up wearing burqa given the intense and convincing teaching of the madrassah but if such a case occurs the girl would be expelled from the madrassah. The reason given is that the madrassah trains students to become religious scholars, who are to be role-models in the society. If they do not follow the proper dress code it makes only sense to disallow them to study in the madrassah. However, the girls seldom talk about the strictness likely to be imposed by the administration in case of non-observance.

The research also reveals that burqa as a social fact is a compulsion to be followed only by the members of the group; the group includes all those who study and work in the madrassah. An outsider like me is exempted from the rule. So while much later during the fieldwork, the girls would often express their desire to see me wearing the proper religious dress and their conviction that one day I would realize that burqa is the correct form of dress, I was never forced to wear it.

The madrassah and its activities can be termed as Islamic Activism which is broadly defined as "the mobilization of contention to support Islamic causes" (Wiktorowicz, 2004: 3). Islamic activism regards Islam "as a complete system, a body of ideas, values, beliefs, and practices encompassing all spheres of life" (Clark, 2004: 14)). The girls of the madrassah identify themselves as Islamic Activists, defined as "a Muslim who attempts to re-Islamize society by encouraging individuals to practice Islam in daily life and to bridge the perceived gap between religious discourse and practical realities" (Clark, 2004: 14). He/she aims to "extend and apply Islam beyond what is commonly regarded in liberal political thought as a private realm and into the public realm" (Clark, 2004:14).

MJH associates itself with a strand of the Sunni School of thought, Deobandi Hanafi, that had its origin "in the late 19th century colonial period of India's history" (Metcalf, 2002: 1). The Deoband movement in all its varieties has one common feature "an

overriding emphasis on encouraging a range of ritual and personal behaviours practices linked to worship, dress and everyday behaviour". These are deemed central to *shari'a* as interpreted by the Hanafi reasoning (ibid: 2). Deobandi Movements, in their attempt to implement *shari'a* represent what can be termed as "traditionalist Islamic Activism" (ibid: 4). Metcalf argues that these movements "have many goals and offer a range of social, moral and spiritual satisfactions that are positive and not merely a reactionary rejection of modernity or the West" (ibid). As has been explained earlier, the primary aim of MJH is to disseminate knowledge about the *shari'a* and to encourage its integration in all the spheres of life for a better spiritual and moral existence. Although MJH as a movement did not emerge as "a reactionary rejection of modernity or the West", however, this rejection forms an integral part of their movement. It is believed that infiltration of Western values leads to a neglect of the religion which is perceived as a complete way of life in itself.

In educating the female strata, MJH administration claims to have envisioned a deeper benefit. The madrassah inculcates a certain religious identity and constructs gender in a way whereby it is believed that in their roles primarily that of mothers, as well as of sisters and daughters, women can play a major role in spreading awareness about religion and in wiping off the moral corruption from the society. In considering women as transformers of the social and moral setup their subjectivity is acknowledged. This points to an important characteristic of this movement termed as "[A]gency-conferring" by Ahmed (2006: 71). The agency is derived through the moral duty ordained on every Muslim. The girls often mention that to command right and forbid that is wrong (*Al-amr bi'l ma'ruf wa'l nahy 'an al-munkar*) is the primary duty of every Muslim which can be carried out properly only after acquiring the knowledge of the religion. In case of MJH it is the combination of the moral duty ordained by the religion and the observance of veil that confers them with agency to spread awareness about the religious obligations, to combat the influence of the Western culture and the consequent moral decay of the society.

The cultivation of a religious self through internalization of the discourse which demands obedience to the transcendental will and sub-ordination to the male authority seems to be problematic with reference to the notion of empowerment and agency. Mahmood in her work on Egyptian Mosque Movement is faced with a similar problem.

She finds the "normative subject of feminism as desirous of freedom from relations of domination" problematic to study women engaged in "patriarchal religious traditions such as Islam" (Mahmood, 2001: 203). Her comprehension of agency to describe the women involved in the Mosque movement holds equally true for the present study. She expands the use of agency so that it "is understood not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of sub-ordination create and enable" (2001: 203). The present thesis is in keeping with the findings of Mahmood concerning the Egyptian Mosque Movement (2001: 2005) and Winkelman's study of Madrastul Niswan (2005); the cultivation of a pious and religious self is considered as the ideal. Islam is perceived as a complete way of life and following it in all spheres of life brings prosperity in this life while salvation in the afterlife.

This cultivation finds its strongest expression through purdah observance. The present thesis elucidates the functional and symbolic aspects of purdah. Using an emic approach it is an attempt to better understand a rather misunderstood subject. Mahmood argues that in order to be "able to judge" in a "morally and politically informed way", it is "important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important" (2001: 225). Purdah as practiced in the madrassah confirms Papanek's proposition that "[D]espite its forbidding appearance, it can be considered a liberating invention, since it provides a kind of portable seclusion which enables women to move out of segregated living spaces while still observing purdah" (Papanek, 197: 520). The research validates theories that consider it as a strategy to exercise power within a given context, as an identity marker and last but not the least as representation of modesty, privacy, resistance and social control that upholds sexual morality (El Guindi 1999; Hirshman 1997; Papanek 1971). In doing so the research also calls for a broader conceptual and theoretical framework to explain the varieties of relationship between the dressed body, self, and moral agency as existing in various cultures.

Epilogue

Several incidents[103] during and after my field work testify to a shift of strategies. Aiming at the dissemination of what the girls of MJH believed as right, and at the prevention of what they held to be wrong. This shift moved on a continuum of fairly restricted to outrageously extended political agency, while forms of concrete resistance by the government against their activities were largely absent. What started as an educational institute disseminating religious knowledge thereby ended up as a politically active group "purge[ing] the city of evil deeds" (The News 2007a). The ultimate establishment of the *shari'a* court by Maulana Abdul Aziz, the imam of the Red Mosque, to enforce the *shari'a* law triggered off a series of consequences which eventually led to the demolishment of the madrassah. The establishment of the *shari'a* court and militant activities of the students that challenged the writ of the state met immense criticism by the public. By contrast, military action and the consequent deaths of numerous innocent girls earned great sympathy for MJH and Red Mosque residents by the general public. The government as well as the clerics were both held responsible for this tragic fate. The government received much criticism for its earlier "soft approach" that "emboldened" (The News, 2007d) the maulvis of the Red mosque, and for then taking such an extreme action, as Naseem comments:

> "The tragic end of this unhappy episode, involving the loss of many young and innocent, if misguided, lives, the exact number of which will remain a mystery, is the result of a conflation of number of policy, administrative and intelligence failures on the part of the present and predecessor regimes" (Dawn, 2007c)

In early April 2007, the Imam of the mosque Maulana Abdul Aziz announced to have set up a *shari'a* court in the mosque comprising ten *muftis* (judges) who would enforce *Shari'a* law within the area. The government was warned of suicidal attacks in response to any attempts to close this court. Soon after its establishment a fatwa was issued by

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[103] On field incidents have already been discussed under the heading 4.2.3 A Controversial Public Stand while post field event chronology is briefly presented here.

the court against the then tourism minister, Nilofer Bakhtiar whose pictures were published in the newspaper hugging a parachute trainer. The government in the same month blocked the mosque's website and radio station. In June 2007 students kidnapped six Chinese women and a Chinese man running a massage centre within the capital, declaring it to be a brothel and therefore un-Islamic. They were released soon after, but the tension between the government, the Red Mosque and MJH got worse. In July 2007 the government launched a siege against the seminary. During the 8-day long siege several attempts to reach reconciliation between the government and the mosque's administration failed. On July 4th 2007, Maulana Abdul Aziz tried to escape, disguised by wearing a burqa, but was caught by the rangers. Later he was heavily criticized in the news during several days, for impersonating as a woman. His wife who was accompanying him was also arrested. The siege ended on 11th July 2007, with the death of Ghazi Abdur Rashid, brother and deputy of Maulana Abdul Aziz, and many other casualties whose number went up into hundreds of people.

Later in 2008 the Supreme Court passed an order to rebuild the madrassah. CDA's briefing on Jamia Hafsa reveals that it will rebuild the seminary in accordance with the original plan passed in 1988 with plot of 205 sq. yards allocated for the purpose.[104]

Upon my visit to MJH during the second phase of fieldwork I found emptiness: where once stood a double storied huge building with thousands of students studying religion and engaging in Islamic activism, there now was a vast lot of plain land bearing no sign of that past. That empty space certainly reminded nobody of what had happened here. Is it really necessary to forget, in order to make a fresh start? Or is it better to memorize the misfortunes of a past in order to build a better future?

[104] The chronology of events is established using news articles from the three leading national newspapers in English, Dawn, The News and The Post.

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Glossary

A'lim	Religious scholar
A'qliaat	Rational thinking
Abaya	A long gown worn together with a head scarf
Adat	A habit/ a custom
Ahadith	The sayings of the Prophet
Angraiz	Anglistic
Aqal	Intellect
Aqli daleel	Rationale or logic
Astaghfirullah	An Arabic term that means seeking refuge from God. It is also used as an expression of showing disapproval of something
Attiyat	Donations
Aurat	Woman
Badnazri	Glancing/ staring/ gazing the other gender with sexual/ seductive intention that is disapproved by the religion
Baisharam	Without shame
Baji	A term of respect used specifically for older sister or older women
Baymazhab	Without religion
Bazaar	Market
Behaya'i	Vulgarity or being without shame
Binat i Ayesha	The daughters of Ayesha- one of the wives of Prophet Mohammad
Biradari	Extended family

Chaddar	An ankle-length shawl that covers the wearer completely, though the face and eyes can be left exposed
Chadri	Sheet, mantle, cloak
Chamman	Garden
Chunri	Stole
Coat-numa	Like coat
Dars i Nizami	Curriculum developed by Mullah Nizem al din Mohammad
Darsgah	Place for learning
Dastarkhwan	Cloth spread on floor for dining
Deen i fitrat	A religion supporting nature
Deeni	Religious
Deeni ilm	Religious knowledge
Dunyavi ilm	Worldly knowledge
Dupatta	A two-metre-square scarf, drapes over the shoulder and usually covers the head
Farz	Obligatory or mandatory, a duty the omission of which is punished and the doing rewarded
Fatwa	Notification or authoritative legal opinion; with reference to Islam it means religious ruling
Fiqh	The Islamic jurisprudence
Fitna	Sexual immorality; it refers to sedition, strife, commotion. Girls at madrassah refer to *fitna* as moral corruption in the society
Fundaq	Arabic word for hotel, the canteen
Ghair-muqallid	Non-follower
Ghalat	Wrong

Ghunghat	To pull the cloth worn on head forward to obscure the vision of the face
Gunnah	Sin
Hafiza	Literally Keeper, guardian, protector. A female who memorized Koran
Hakim	Ruler
Halal	Allowed, Permissible
Haram	Forbidden, an action punishable by law
Haya	Shame
Hifz	Literally means to protect, to guard or to preserve.
Hijab	A square piece of cloth, usually 1x1 meter to cover the head; the headscarf
Ibaadaat	Plural of Ibadat meaning prayers
Ibadah	Prayer
Iblis	Satan
Ibtidaya	Primary or elementary
Ihram	State of ritual purity of one going on the greater or lesser pilgrimage
Ijtihad	Literally exertion, refers to creative interpretation and application of Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence) in the face of new circumstances
Ijtihad	Exertion
Ilm ul hadith	The science of *hadith*
Ilm-ul-tajweed	The science of Quranic phonetics
Iqamati	Residential
Ishq	Love

Islamiyat	Islamic studies course taught in all schools in Pakistan
Izar	A piece of cloth that falls from the waist to the feet
Izzat	Honor
Izzatdar	Respectable
Jaiz	Legal
Jama'at	Literally means community with reference to school it means grade or class
Jihad	Holy wars
Kajol	Kohl
Kameez	A kind of shirt worn commonly in Pakistan, normally it lengthens till knees.
Khairat	Charity
Khateeb	A person who delivers the sermon
Khimar	Usually translated as a head scarf
Koran/*Quran*	Religious book of Muslims
Ladeenyaat	Without religion
Lal Masjid	The red mosque
Libas	Dress or clothing
Mazhab/Madhab	Literally religion, here refers to sectrarianism
Majmua al mahasin	Composite of beauty
Makruh	Disgusting, disapproved by law but not under penalty
Maktab	School
Mandub	The doing of which is rewarded but the omission is not punished
Manqulat	Transmission

Masjid	Mosque
Mata'm	An Arabic word for restaurant, used for the free mess in MJH
Mazhabi	Religious
Mu'alima	Female teacher
Mubah	Neutral, permitted
Mufti	Male expounder of Islamic law capable of giving *fatwa*
Muftia pl. *muftiat*	Female expounder of Islamic law capable of giving *fatwa*
Mujtahid	One who practices *ijtihad*
Muqallid	The followers
Musalla	Raised platforms
Mustahab	The doing of which is rewarded but the omission is not punished
Mustashifa	Dispensary
Mutawasita	Middle
Nafsa nafsi	Materialism and individualism
Najaiz	Illegal
Napaak	Polluted
Naqis ud deen	Deficient in religion
Naqis ul aqal	Deficient in intellect
Naqis ul aqal	Having faulty intelligence
Odhni	A head scarf that is used for the *ghunghat*
Oola	The first, The intermediate stage
Paak	Unpolluted
Pirs	Sufi/ saint/ spiritual guide

Purdahdar	Purdah observing
Qawwamoona	Their protectors and maintainers. It is an Arabic word derived from *qawam* and has been translated variedly as protectors and maintainers/ caretakers/ incharge.
Qumasha	A thin cloth attached to the *niqab*
Radd	Refutation
Rida	A piece of cloth that covers one's shoulder and the upper body
Roti	A kind of Bread
Rukhsat	Literally means farewell/ departure, refers to the concessions given by religious scholars for certain actions that are otherwise not allowed
Sadqat	Charity for the well-being of the giver
Sahaba	Companions of Prophet Mohammad
Sahabia	Female of Sahaba
Sahi Sitta	The six famous books of *hadith*
Sahih	Right
Sanad	Certificate
Satr	Literally means hidden, in the light of *shari'a* with reference to purdah and dress it means those parts of the body which must be covered
Sawab	Religious merit
Saza	Punishment
Shalwar	A kind of loose pants worn in Pakistan
Sharam	Shame
Shari'a	The Islamic legal system

Shawaal	The 10th month of the Islamic calendar
Shaytan	Satan
Sunnah	Normative practices of the prophet Mohammad, the prophetic tradition
Surma	Kohl
Tabligh	Conveying, especially conveying shari'a-based guidance
Tablighi jama'at	A group of preachers
Tafseer	The exegesis of the holy book
Tahqeeq	Research
Tajweed	Literally means "to improve" or "to make better". With reference to Islam it is the art of recitation of Quran, the holy book with proficiency
Takhasus	Highest degree at Madrassah
Takhasus fil fiqh	Specialization in Islamic jurisprudence
Talibaat i Islam	The female students of Islam
Taqlid	Literally meaning "imitation", refers to the "unquestioning acceptance of established schools and authorities
Ulema	Plural of *a'lim*; the religious scholar
Uloom-al-naqalliya	Transmitted sciences
Uloom-aqalliya	Rational sciences
Umhat ul momineen	Mother of the believers
Ummat i Muhammadya	The people of Muhammad
Ummul fitan	The mother of all evils
Ustaad	teacher

Ji	suffix used for respect
Wajib	Recommended, a duty the omission of which is punished and the doing rewarded
Wu'zu/Wu'du	Ablution
Zakat	Alms
Zameen	Land
Zan	Woman/ Women
Zar	Wealth
Zenana	Female part of the house
Zina	Illicit sexual relationship between men and women including both fornication and adultery

Appendix

جامعہ سیدہ حفصہؓ اور اس کی شاخیں

نمبر شمار	نام مدرسہ	فون نمبر
1	جامعہ سیدہ حفصہ رضی اللہ عنہا، جی سکس، اسلام آباد	051-2874313 051-2277313
2	جامعہ سیدہ سمیہؓ، الفلاح مسجد G-7/3-2 اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا مفتی صلاح الدین صاحب	051-2828636 0333-9508919
3	مدرسہ سیدہ فاطمۃ الزہراءؓ، 9/4-I مکان نمبر 192، گلی 38 اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا احسان الحق صاحب	051-4446207 0300-9569066
4	مدرسہ سیدہ ام کلثومؓ، سیری چوک، بہارہ کہو اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا محمد شعیب عباسی صاحب	051-2232756 0300-5331151
5	مدرسہ سیدہ سودہؓ، محلہ عثمانیہ نئی آبادی بہارہ کہو اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا خالد محمود علوی صاحب	051-2232936 0300-5541106
6	مدرسہ سیدہ رقیہؓ، (ویلی روڈ) بنی گالہ، اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا محمد اقبال صاحب	051-2612469 0300-5318542
7	مدرسہ سیدہ ماریہ قبطیہؓ مکان نمبر 150 چک شہزاد، اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا محمد افضل صاحب	051-2241130 0303-6550256
8	مدرسہ سیدہ خدیجۃ الکبریٰؓ متصل مسجد مہدیہ F-8/2 پارک روڈ، اسلام آباد (مولانا مفتی محمد فاروق صاحب)	051-2282313 0333-5260808
9	مدرسہ سیدہ ہاجرہؓ (نئی آبادی) ترامڑی ناظم : بھائی محمد حنیف صاحب	051-4318691 0320-4902090
10	مدرسہ سیدہ خولہ بنت ازورؓ، گولڑہ، اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا جاوید اختر صاحب	0304-5300506
11	مدرسہ سیدہ خدیجۃ الکبریٰؓ، چانوشیل میانوالی ناظم : مولانا محمد موسیٰ صاحب	0302-5202197

کرنٹ اکاؤنٹ نمبر 2-1422 مسلم کمرشل بینک F-7/2 اسلام آباد

قربانی کے مسائل پوچھنے کے لئے رابطہ فرمائیں

مفتی عبدالکریم صاحب : 0300-5146723
مفتی احسان الحق صاحب : 0301-5234563

جامعہ فریدیہ اور اس کی شاخیں

نمبر شمار	نام مدرسہ	فون نمبر
1	جامعۃ العلوم الاسلامیہ الفریدیہ ای سیون اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا طارق سعید صاحب	051-2654813 0333-5210118
2	مدرسہ زید بن ثابتؓ مرکزی جامع مسجد (لال مسجد) اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا یعقوب طارق صاحب	051-2277313 0333-5395375
3	مدرسہ سیدنا عمرؓ، جی الیون قہری اسلام آباد ناظم مولانا حبیب اللہ صاحب	051-2214908 0333-5361478
4	مدرسہ رحمۃ للعالمین، پی ڈبلیو ڈی، لوئی بھیر، اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا شفیق الرحمن صاحب	051-5819317 0300-5142797
5	مدرسہ سیدنا عثمان بن عفانؓ، چک شہزاد، اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا عبدالقدوس محمدی صاحب	051-5383207 0300-9569780
6	مدرسہ سیدنا طلحہ بن عبید اللہ، سیری چوک بہارہ کہو اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا محمد شعیب عباسی صاحب	051-2232756 0300-5331151
7	مدرسہ معاذ بن جبلؓ، بہارہ کہو اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا قاری محمد انور صاحب	0300-9794810
8	مدرسہ سیدنا صدیق اکبرؓ، حسین روڈ بنی گالہ اسلام آباد ناظم : مولانا محمد اقبال صاحب	051-2612469 0300-5318542
9	مدرسہ عبداللہ بن غازی پستی عبداللہ روجہان ضلع راجن پور ناظم : بھائی ابو اسامہ صاحب	0722-705702 0302-5325900
10	مدرسہ سیدنا علی المرتضیٰؓ، (کراچی ہائی وے) روجہان، راجن پور ناظم : بھائی ابو اسامہ، رابطہ: مولانا محمد یعقوب صاحب	0333-6197679
11	مدرسہ سیدنا طلحہؓ علاقہ کچہ، روجہان راجن پور ناظم : بھائی شان محمد	0333-7367090
12	مدرسہ سیدنا طلحہ بن عبید اللہؓ محب باٹھ، مردان ناظم : مولوی محمد اشتیاق صاحب	0321-5824052
13	مدرسہ سیدنا عثمان بن عفانؓ، گاؤں اخگرام، دیر بالا ناظم : مولانا حبیب اللہ صاحب	0333-5361478

کرنٹ اکاؤنٹ نمبر 3-1812 برائے زکوٰۃ، صدقات مسلم کمرشل بینک آبپارہ اسلام آباد

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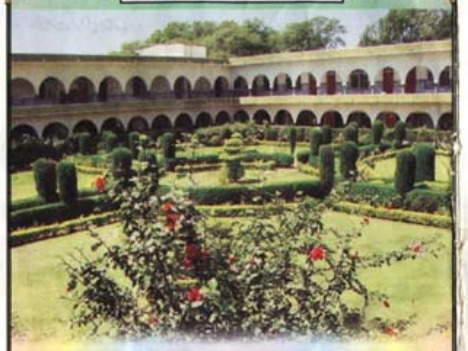

جامعہ فریدیہ ای سیون اسلام آباد

جامعہ سیدہ حفصہؓ جی سکس اسلام آباد

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ACADEMIC RECORD

Class / Degree	Institution / University	Major Subjects	Session
PhD	University of Vienna	Social and Cultural Anthropology	2005-2010
M.Sc.	Quaid I Azam University Islamabad	Cultural Anthropology	1998-2001
B.A	University of The Punjab	English Literature, Economics	1996-1998
F.A	Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education	English Literature, Economics, Fine Arts	1994-1996
Matric	Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education	Biology, Chemistry, Physics Mathematics	1992-1994

PUBLICATIONS

Book Chapter
Abid, S. 2009. Understanding the Veil in: Lili Hernandez & Sabine Krajewski (ed.) Crossing Cultural Boundaries: Taboo, Bodies and Identities. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp 39-52

Journal Paper
Abid, S. 2009. Purdah the All Concealing Dress in: Andre Gingrich and Guntram Hazod (ed.) AAS Working Papers in Social Anthropology vol. 7. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Oral Paper Presentations

Abid, S. *The Semantics of Veil*, 6th International Conference "Language, Literature and Cultural Policies – Obsessive Discourse", University of Craiova, Romania, October 2007

Abid, S. *Communicative Dress: Conflicting Perception of Veil*, International Scientific Conference of Slovene Anthropological Society "Life in the Times of Conflict", Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 2007

Abid, S. *The Veil through History and Modern Times*, Crossing Cultural Boundaries, University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China, May 2007

Abid, Saadia. *The Veil*, "Anthropology in Action", 2nd MASN Conference, Opatija, Croatia, November 2006

Poster Presentation

Abid, S., *A Comparative Study of Internet Usage among Youth in Austria and Pakistan*, International Conference "Cyberworld unlimited?- Digital Inequality and New Spaces of Informal Education for Young People", University of Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany, February, 2006

Conferences Attended

"Lifeworlds 2 – Debating Authenticity"**,** SOCRATES ERASMUS Intensive Programme, 22nd August – 2nd September 2006, Vienna, Austria

"Lifeworlds 1 – Transitions between Plural Social Milieux", SOCRATES ERASMUS Intensive Programme, 23rd Aug- 2nd September 2005, Vienna, Austria

"Recent Excavations"**,** Indian Archaeological Society, April 2004, New Delhi, India

Seminar on "World Cultural Heritage**",** National Museum Institute on the occasion of World Cultural Heritage Day, 18 April 2004, New Delhi, India

Research Projects during MSc Course Work

- A six months field research conducted individually in "Fakir Khana" private museum in Lahore, July - December 2000
- Field assignment on the topic of Ethno-medicine, indigenous conception of curing methods, September 1999
- Field Assignment on shrine based health related beliefs, September 1999
- Analysis of an on-going educational project of an NGO, Adult Basic Education, January – June 1999

HONOURS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Selected for HEC Scholarship Programme, "Overseas Scholarship for PhD in selected fields in Austria
- Secured 1st position in M.Sc. Anthropology from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
- Received merit scholarship during M.Sc studies, from Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad
  Secured 1st position in English Literature in HSSC Humanities from F.G College for Women, Rawalpindi