

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Umar and Women

Purdah For Women

In Madina the Muslim women did not observe any purdah. They freely moved among men. The majority of men in Madina were men of great faith, and they were very careful in their conduct to women. There were some hypocrites among Muslims from whom any mischief could be expected. There were also some Jews from whom no good could be expected. Umar felt that if God forbidding any hypocrite played any mischief with regard to the women of Muslims that would be very damaging.

Umar expressed these views to the Holy Prophet, and suggested that women should be required to stay at home. Umar said that the wives of the Holy Prophet should particularly stay at home, for their prestige and honour were a matter of great concern for the Muslim community.

On hearing this advice of Umar, Zainab a wife of the Holy Prophet said:

"Umar you have started in interfering in the domestic affairs of the Prophet as well. The revelation comes to our house. and you come up with suggestions of your own."

The Holy Prophet, however, appreciated what Umar had said. He said that he was awaiting revelation, and action would be taken in accordance with the injunctions of God.

And then came a detailed revelation on the subject. The revelation was:

"Prophet say to your wives: if you desire the present life and its beautiful things, come and I will give you your dowries and send you away in a handsome manner. And if you desire Allah and His Prophet and the next world, remember that Allah has in store a great reward for those of you who are righteous." 33:28

Another verse provided:

"O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits flagrant indecency will have your punishment twice over. Indeed it is easy for Allah to double your punishment. As for those who are obedient to Allah and His Apostle and act righteously We shall give them their reward twice over. We have rare gifts in store for them." 33:30

And yet another verse said:

"O wives of the Prophet, you are like no other women. If you fear Allah do not be soft spoken, for it will tempt the man who has a disease in his heart. Speak in a dignified tone, stay in your homes, and do not display your beauty as in the days of ignorance. Observe prayer, give alms, and obey Allah and His Apostle. Members of the house of the Prophet! Allah only intends to rid you of your uncleanness and to purify you completely. Women keep in mind the revelations of Allah and the words of wisdom which are recited in your houses. Benign is Allah; All-Aware." 33:32

These verses corroborated what Umar had said. When the Holy Prophet informed Umar of these verses he felt satisfied that God had ordered in the way he had desired. Turning to Umar the Holy Prophet said, "Umar, rejoice for once again Allah has spoken through your tongue."

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Source : Alim.org-Umar bin al-Khattab History