

Veils debate: Page 2 >>>

From Dina Jung:

There are so many reasons why wearing the veil should not be allowed in this country that I am totally amazed why it is still allowed to happen and would like to share a few of my thoughts on the matter.

1. It is calling, by deduction, any woman NOT wearing a veil immodest (or, a bit of a slut) something I feel most women would be insulted about.
2. Our culture does not consider it immodest for women to show their faces so there is absolutely no need for anyone to do it. What is considered immodest in other countries is their business.
3. We do however, consider showing our breasts in normal everyday work and activity to be immodest, so anyone of a culture who does not believe it immodest e.g., some tribes in Borneo, are not allowed to do it in this country. So why is there favouritism in allowing the veil but not the breast.
4. It is totally undermining all the progress women have made with regard to equality, sex symbolism, etc. which being a teacher I feel especially affronted by.
5. It is a strong political statement not religious - we objected to black shirts and more recently the Union Jack in some circumstances, so why are we allowing the veil?
6. It is training boys and men to view women incorrectly.

Finally - it is one of the many ways in which Islam is spreading their doctrine which to me is the most worrying things of all. Please can we follow France's lead and do something about it.

From Frances Versluys

My first instinct is to not ban the face veil, if it is a woman's free choice. But we have to look at that 'free choice'. In an article by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown some time ago said that she was becoming very uncomfortable about the increase in burkas, and checked with the girls (in her lectures) that they had not been forced. They all said that they wanted to wear it. Some time later, one girl asked to see her in her office, took off several layers, and showed her skin, which was covered in scratches and bruises all over her body, some quite severe, inflicted by her family. How many others are like this?

I think the way to deal with it is to pity these women, as they are living in a society where the men are not expected to take any responsibility for their own actions. It is a huge, subtle insult to muslim men. Their women do not trust them. Muslim men feel if a woman incites their lust they can treat her in any way they want. If western society emphasises this as an insult the men may see their error (???) and the women may think harder about taking on this restriction.

From Nathan Griffiths:

If I started a religion in which a tenet was that I had to wear a balaclava, would it entitle me to wear a balaclava whenever in banks and airports? Hell no. Because my religion hasn't been foolishly

believed for centuries. We should not be able to stop people wearing what they want (if it is actually want to wear it) but religious clothing should be removed in places such as the above mentioned.

From Michael Bray:

The question of banning the burqa has become symbolic of the more general challenge by militant islam to western European cultural values. They are justifiably afraid that they will be absorbed by the 'host' culture and that their traditional way of life and the religious values that underpin it will be lost. The burqa is becoming a symbolic 'Berlin Wall' to try and keep out the sinful influence of the west. As with the actual Berlin Wall, use of an physical or a symbolic barrier to try and resist a tide of liberal values is ultimately doomed to failure. However, outright banning of the burqa would be giving far too much ammunition to the militants allowing them to cry religious repression or even racism. Better would be simply to enact a law that prohibits the use of face covering in defined circumstances such as when in public buildings (hospitals, banks, DSS offices, schools) or when requested to remove it by police officer or other public official. This should apply to ANY covering that obscures the face such as to prevent recognition. We would not accept someone going into a bank wearing balaclava, why should we allow a burqa?

From Simon Tresadern:

I believe that a complete ban on veils would only lead to one result, namely that these women would refuse or would not be permitted to go out in public at all. Whilst the veil may be considered to be a form of control and an example of male dominance, it at least gives these women the opportunity for some freedom.

The NSS's response should be that the veils are a matter of choice, and if the woman chooses of her own free will to wear it, then so be it. For the government to impose a complete ban the veil would be as undemocratic and unjust as forcing the wearing the veil itself. The NSS stands to "challenge religious privilege", not to judge on religious belief where freely chosen.

However, promoting education and the adopting of a more liberal stance in regards to dress is to be certainly to be encouraged.

From Stan Knafler:

In our society, where presentation appears to be important, a veiled face seems to offer a threat. We make an initial assessment of persons we meet on what their face projects-anger, fear, joy etc., which may be occasionally be wrong, but with no initial, visual assessment (of someone's face), we are denied that. We may assume that the veiled person is a Muslim lady, but that may not be the case.

There is our xenophobia, but also our sympathy for those women who are forced by their husbands to wear the veil and our dismay at those women who appear to treat European males as lustful males. As a grandfather and a retired schoolteacher, I remember that after the outcry against paedophiles, smiling at a child in the street made one almost embarrassed lest it was misinterpreted. Veiled women reinforce the feeling for many men that this, too, regards us as potential monsters.

From Bill Green:

A face veil is simply a mask. In British society the wearing of masks has always been associated with ill-intent or with criminal activity. If one sector of society is authorised to go about wearing masks, then we all can. Perhaps the Secular Society can organise a day when we all go about

wearing masks, entering banks, shops, police stations and the Houses of Parliament. When challenged, we can say our culture or our religious beliefs require it. The wearing of masks in public is alien to a law-abiding democracy.

From Andrew Curtis:

If people want to cover their faces then they should be allowed to do so as long as security is not compromised. If we were really brave we would be banning the ritual slaughter of animals and the circumcision of baby boys.

See also: [What the headscarf means when everyone wears one](#)

From Gareth Bruce:

What concerns me is; what happens when it is cold? When it snows, I cover my face, as I am sure do many people in the countries that propose a ban on face coverings. I fear that people who appear not to be Muslim will not be asked to remove their scarf and bobble hat, whereas Muslim woman will be victimised in the streets.

From Austin Fletcher:

My own view is that people should be free to wear virtually whatever they please, both privately and on the streets. But I don't feel there should be religious exemptions in situations where we're normally required to remove face coverings: banks, post offices, etc. To put it crudely, I don't think it's the business of the state to proscribe acts of consensual masochism in matters of dress. Of course, the issue of children is different, and requires a more nuanced approach. Unhappily I think the Libre Penseur position is basically correct.

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From John Dowdle:

I have a relaxed approach on this issue. When you get to my age, you can recall a whole tableau of peculiar fashion statements over the years. I vaguely recall zoot suits in the early 1950s, rockers – and then mods – in the 1960s, flower power dressers, followed by black power, followed by rock glam, heavy metal dressers, punks – with those weird Mohican haircuts – and body piercings?

And it is “fashion” – I believe – which forms the basis of body coverings among some young women in our society. I have met a number of them and held conversations with some of them, as well as listened carefully to some who have been interviewed on TV programmes. Whatever the situation may be overseas, it is clearly evident to me that degrees of body coverings are largely a matter of personal fashion statements.

Many of the young women observed are highly articulate, clearly very intelligent and not – I believe – downtrodden doormats for their UK male counterparts. Society has always expressed concern over forms of dress among the young. This may be yet another fashion phase that young people

go through and – when they grow up – grow out of. In the meantime, I do not believe changing the law specifically to target these young women is fair, sensible, reasonable or intelligent. Let them have their moment when they can cock a rebellious snook at our conventions regarding dress sense. Their older sisters – no doubt – once did the same at some stage by scandalising their own community by wearing mini-skirts in the more liberal 1960s and 1970s.

Let's all calm down and stop taking these unconventional fashion statements too seriously. To behave otherwise is to invite high blood pressure and possible stroke. Where is the sense in that?

Also see: [NSS member Des Langford considers the veil issue and draws his own personal conclusions](#)