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Senior Project

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Outline

Fashion and Modesty

Fashion exists in each and every person’s daily lives. Whenever someone puts together an outfit and go out to the store, a party, or the mall, they are telling anyone who can see them, something about themselves. Which is why, as a self-proclaimed Muslim fashionista, modesty in fashion is important to me. However, some may say that the two cannot coexist in harmony. I, personally, disagree and do not find modesty and fashion to be mutually exclusive.

Everybody has a different definition of modesty. The dictionary defines modesty as: “behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency.” Impropriety and indecency can be interpreted differently; therefore my focus when it comes to modesty will be on the religious definition. Not just mine, however, but on the Jewish and Christian definition along with their guidelines. Ultimately, through using examples of high fashion as well as street fashion and relating them to the guidelines set for modesty, I aim to prove that one can look both humble and stylish.

The Bible is a Christian’s life manual. It is an outline for that tells one how to live their lives, from how to act to how to dress. Concerning dress, the bible states that “A Christian should wear what appropriate and stylish for any given occasion, with proper modesty; God will look on the heart of such a woman with approval.”-Peter 3:3-4. Although what is appropriate is not specified, style is mentioned. Not only that, but when saying “...stylish with proper modesty”, it is implied that style and modesty can walk hand in hand in the eyes of Christians.

For more specific guidelines, a direct quote from the Bible is “...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”-1 Tim. 2:9. One may interpret that the “braided hair or gold or pearls” section is not meant to be taken literally, but to stress that moderation is important as such things were thought of being extravagant in those times. In modern Christianity, there are not many specific rules to break when it comes to clothing. Subsequently, as long as a woman is clean and covered for the most part, she is modest and there is a plethora of fashion that can fit into the ideal modest Christian category.

Orthodox Jewish women have guidelines that prove to be much more specific when it comes to clothing. They must cover their hair following marriage, wear skirts, and cannot show their legs. There is no law that commands them to avoid tight clothing; however, very pious Jewish women try to do so. Many high fashion designers have designed clothes to be presented on runways that follow these laws. Vivienne Westwood’s Gold Label autumn/winter 2010-2011 collection is almost entirely occupied by long, loose clothing and not a pair of pants in sight. Marc Jacobs also took a page from the common Jewish women’s handbook. His 2014 Fall collection is entirely made up of loose, long sleeved shirts, and skirts that at least reach the knee. As for street fashion, maxi dresses fit the criteria perfectly and have been in style for years; they don’t seem to be going anywhere. Also, the world’s biggest fashion magazine, Vogue, called long, loose dresses the next big thing in Spring 2015.

The Quran has step by step instructions on how a Muslim is to live their whole lives, and that includes clothing. First and foremost, they are commanded to cover our hair. A headscarf can be added to any outfit, so that is not even an issue. In 24:31, Allah tells women to cover their bosoms, as most clothing does. Allah told Prophet Muhammad "O prophet, tell your wives, your daughters and the wives of the believers that they shall lengthen their garments. This is better so that they will be recognized and not molested (pestered or harassed). God is Forgiver, Merciful."-33:59. God is telling him to advise all female believers to wear long clothing that covers us so people may recognize our religion, and not bother us. Muslim women are also told directly to wear clothes that are loose, as to not show the shape of their bodies. High fashion fashion shows have displayed a number of outfits that accommodate to a Muslim woman’s needs. Designer Giambattista Valli has shown off his modest gowns on the runway and on a 2012 issue of Vogue starring one of the most iconic and influential models, Kate Moss. For everyday street fashion, Vogue has named Bohemian gowns as the newest trend. Being large, flowy, loose dresses that serve to soften a woman’s figure, these dresses are the perfect blend of modest and fashionable. Add a headscarf, and you’re good to go.