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Correspondence: All correspondence should be addressed to: Editor, Bangladesh Sociological Studies (BSS), Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR), 15/H/1 (3rd floor), Zigatala, Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh. Telephone: +88-02-8612916; Fax: 88-02-8615128; E-mail: bssr@angonline.com; khurshed@bids.net; Website: www.bisrd.org

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Do Female University Students Use Burkha Only to Maintain Purdah? A Case Study of Burkha User Students of Rajshahi University

Nilufar Sultana¹
Wardatul Akmam²
Md. Fakrul Islam³

This paper, based on a sample survey among 100 Burkha user students of Rajshahi University, reveals that 47 per cent of the respondents did not mention maintenance of Purdah/religious reasons for their using Burkha. As perceived by the respondents, it has other positive aspects as well-e.g., it provides social security, helps to gain control over mind, gives relief from eve teasing and evil eyes, saves time and money, keeps skin healthy, helps to maintain "feminine privacy", etc. However, according to 51 per cent of the respondents some of the negative aspects of using Burkha were that sometimes they were looked down upon, teased, not properly evaluated by teachers, not recognized even by relatives/acquaintances, etc. A surprising finding of this study is that 51 per cent of the respondents did not use Burkha always, and that only 26 per cent covered their bodies in the way preached in Islam. Among the respondents only 56 per cent performed Salat five times a day, 52 per cent kept all the fasts in Ramadan and 58 per cent sometimes told lies just for fun. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents tried to comply with the Islamic codes almost fully.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, where 89.7 per cent of the population is Muslim (GoB 2005) and 48.74 per cent of them are women (GoB 2006). Purdah is one of the basic principles, which all practicing Muslims are to abide by. Literally, Purdah means "curtain" or "screen" (Marshall 1998), referring to "[s]eclusion of women from public observation by means of concealing clothing. . . and walled enclosures as well as screens and curtains within the home" (Britannica 2006, Vol. 8: 92). It also refers to "a system of sex-role differentiation marked by strong physical and social segregation" (Marshall 1998: 542). Moreover, it is a very complex institution that entails restriction of women's

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.
E-mail: sultanamatihar@yahoo.com

² Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.
E-mail: akmamprottoyah@hotmail.com

³ Associate professor, Department of Social Work, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.
E-mail: hiraharati@yahoo.com

physical mobility and internalization of the values of timidity, shyness, honor and shame (Feldman and McCarthy 1981 as cited in Begum 1987). "... it [purdah] is consistent with the traditional belief that female beauty is a snare for man. It is believed that women are unstable in mind and if allowed free access to men, will adversely affect the moral tone of society" (Begum 1987: 11-12). Although at present it appears that Purdah is only associated with Muslim societies, its origin was in Persia before the emergence of Islam (the religion preached by Prophet Muhammad (S.)). The Muslims adopted the system in the 7th century (Britannica 2006, Vol. 8).

In the system of Purdah, women must maintain physical covering of their whole body (except their hands and faces, according to some scholars) and 'lower their 'gazes'. However, men must lower their gazes and cover their bodies from only naval to knees. The system of Purdah is often referred to as "Hijab". The Quranic verse (the holy book followed by the Muslims as the primary source of rules of conduct) that directly instructs about the dress of women is as follows:

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 over
 Their bosoms and not display
 Their beauty except
 To their husbands, their fathers,
 Their husband's fathers, their sons,
 Their husband's sons,
 Their brothers, or their brothers' sons,
 Or their sisters' sons,
 Or their women, or the slaves
 Whom their right hands
 Possess, or male servants
 Free of physical needs,
 Or the small children who
 Have no sense of the shame
 Of sex; and that they
 Should not strike their feet
 In order to draw attention
 To their hidden ornaments,
 And O ye Believers!
 Turn ye all-together

Towards God, that ye
 May attain Bliss"

(Al-Qur'an 24:31, translated by Ali, 1983: 904-905).

In Bangladesh, it is generally believed that using Burkha outside the house (or in the presence of men other than the range of the relations mentioned in the verse quoted above) ensures observance of Purdah by women. The Burkha in Bangladesh usually consists of two parts. One is an apron-like garment that covers from neck to feet. The other part is a scarf that is worn to cover the head and neck and to put an extra covering over the bosoms. Less than half of those who use the Burkha cover their faces by a Niqab/veil. During the last three/four years various different types of material in different colours are being used for making the apron of the Burkha. Often it appears that these gorgeous materials attract people's attentions, which should not be a feature of Burkha if it is used on religious grounds. Using the Burkha is more common in rural Bangladesh than in the urban areas. As far as we know, there has not been any intensive study particularly on women's clothing in contemporary Bangladesh. Hence, it is difficult to precisely state the percentage of women who use Burkha. But those who do, is it only to abide by the religious obligations, or are there some other reasons behind their using Burkha? In a research monograph, prepared by Najmun Nahar in 2006, it was observed that some university girls used Burkha for economic reasons—they used Burkha as they could not afford to buy sufficient number of formal and decent clothes required to attend classes regularly. This monograph was the only literature we could find specifically on the topic of this paper.

It is a general idea that the custom of Purdah extensively bars women from pursuing higher education in universities that are mostly located in Dhaka or other divisional cities. Parents residing away from these city centres think it would seriously hamper and security of their daughters (Duza *et al.* 1992). Naturally, the participation of girls in universities remains much lower than that of boys. According to data provided by the University Grants Commission, in 2002 the percentage of female students in 17 universities was 25.20 (GoB 2005). In 2004, personally collected data revealed that the percentage of female students in Rajshahi University was only 20.66. Often conservative parents would allow their daughters to seek higher education in universities only if they use Burkha. As teachers of Rajshahi University, the authors observed that a significant proportion of the female students of the university use Burkha when they come to attend classes, which made them curious about the reasons behind their use of Burkha. The present study is an attempt at inquiring about the actual reasons for using Burkha among the Burkha

user students of Rajshahi University. More specifically, objectives of the study were the following:

1. To understand in brief the socio-economic situation of the Burkha users;
2. To find out the extent to which they know about religious codes regarding Purdah, of which their use of Burkha is a part;
3. To know if they always use Burkha when they go out (or meet men other than their husbands or Mahrums).
4. To unfold the reasons behind their using Burkha;
5. To discover the extent to which the respondents abide by the other basic codes of life in Islam;
6. To know about the ways in which using Burkha affect the respondents' lives.

Methodology

This study is primarily based on a sample survey. There were around 20,000 students studying in Rajshahi University in 2007 (Rajshahi University Diary 2007). Among them a little more than 4,000 were female students. It was difficult to ascertain the exact number of Burkha user students in the 47 departments of the University. Many of those requested to be a respondent refused to answer questions regarding Burkha and Purdah. Therefore, we had to be content with only 100 respondents, using "convenience sampling". Although it would be difficult to generalize from such a sample, our question set out in the title could be answered. A questionnaire was used to record responses of the respondents. Besides, observation method was also applied to observe the respondents. The period of data collection and observation was in between September 2006 and March 2007.

Socio-economic Situation of the Respondents' Families

Among the respondents, 83 per cent lived in nuclear families (families consisting of husband and/or wife with their unmarried children, who used the same hearth), and 17 per cent lived in extended families (families other than nuclear family). This finding is no exception from the ongoing general trend of extended families breaking up into nuclear families. Table 1 shows the number of members in the respondents' households. It reveals that seven percent of the respondents had only two - three members in their households, 40 per cent had four to five

members, 38 per cent had six to seven members and 15 per cent had eight or more members in their households.

Table 1. Number of Members in Household

Number of Members	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
2-3	7	7.00
4-5	40	40.00
6-7	38	38.00
8 or more	15	15.00
Total	100	100

Table 2 portrays occupation of the respondents' fathers. Fifty-three percent of the respondents' fathers were service holders, 24 per cent were businessmen, 14 per cent were engaged in agriculture and 9 per cent pursued other occupations.

Table 2. Occupations of the Respondents' Fathers

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Service holder	53	53.00
Businessmen	24	24.00
Agriculture	14	14.00
Others	9	9.00
Total	100	100

Only 1 per cent of the respondents' fathers earned less than Taka 2,000 per month, 3 per cent earned Taka 2,000-4,000, 10 per cent earned Taka 4000-6000, 11 per cent earned Taka 6,000-8,000 and 45 per cent earned more than Taka 8,000 per month. Thirty percent of the respondents were not willing to disclose this information.

Table 3. Income of the Respondents' Fathers

Income Category (Taka)	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
<2000	1	1.00
2000-4000	3	3.00
4000-6000	10	10.00
6000-8000	11	11.00
>8000	45	45.00
No Response	30	30.00
Total	100	100

Among the respondents' mothers, 74 per cent were housewives, 10 per cent were service holders and 6 per cent were engaged in other jobs. Eighty-nine percent of them did not earn at all, 1 per cent earned Taka 2,000-4,000, 5 per cent earned Taka 4,000-6,000, 1 per cent earned Taka 6,000-8,000 and 4 per cent earned more than Taka 8,000 per month.

It is often believed that influence of religion based political parties and their student organizations may be one of the reasons for use of Burkha by female university students. With this idea in mind, we inquired about the political parties, which the respondents and their parents supported. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents did not respond to the question regarding the political party they supported. Six percent said they supported the Bangladesh Awami League, 1 per cent supported Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), 23 per cent supported Jamate Islami, Bangladesh, the mostly known religion-based (Islam) political party and 1 per cent supported the Communist Party of Bangladesh (see Table 4). It is revealed from the table that among the 31 respondents who responded to this question, supporters of Jamate Islami were in the leading position, which is more or less expected. However, this finding also shows that some of those who supported political parties with secular ideologies (The Communist Party of Bangladesh, Awami League) also used Burkha.

Table 4. Political Parties Supported by Respondents

Political Parties	Number of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Awami League	6	6.00
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	1	1.00
Communist Party of Bangladesh	1	1.00
Jamate Islami, Bangladesh	23	23.00
No response	69	69.00
Total	100	100

Among the respondents' fathers, 18 per cent supported the Awami League, 11 per cent supported the BNP, 24 per cent supported the Jamate Islami, 6 per cent supported the Jatio Party, and one percent supported the Communist Party (see Table 5). Forty percent of the respondents did not reveal the political party, which their fathers supported. From this table we find that although supporters of Jamate Islami as a single political party were the highest in number, majority of the respondents' fathers were supporters of political parties that were not particularly based on Islamic ideals.

Table 5. Political Parties Supported by Respondents' Fathers

Political Parties	Number of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Awami League	18	18.00
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	11	11.00
Communist Party of Bangladesh	1	1.00
Jamate Islami, Bangladesh	24	24.00
Jatio Party	6	6.00
No response	40	40.00
Total	100	100

As far as the mothers of respondents are concerned, 19 per cent supported the Awami League, 7 per cent supported the BNP, 23 per cent supported the Jamate Islami, 5 per cent supported the Jatio Party. Forty six percent of the respondents did not disclose information regarding the political parties that their mothers supported.

Table 6. Political Parties Supported by Respondents' Mothers

Political Parties	Number of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Awami League	19	19.00
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	7	7.00
Jamate Islami, Bangladesh	23	23.00
Jatio Party	5	5.00
No response	46	46.00
Total	100	100

The respondents were asked if they used Burkha every time they came across a non-mahrum or not (see Table 7). Only 49 per cent of the respondents said that they always used the Burkha, and the rest used it on specific occasions, e.g., five percent used it while on a long journey and 15 per cent used it during classes. Thirty-one percent of the respondents have said that they used the Burkha during long journey and during classes, but not always (when they meet a non-mahrum male person).

Table 7. Occasions of Burkha Use

Occasions	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Always	49	49.00
Long journey	5	5.00
Classes	15	15.00
Long journey + classes	31	31.00
Total	100	100

The respondents were asked if they strictly covered their bodies as per rules of Purdah or not. Only 26 per cent said that they strictly cover their bodies, as has been indicated in Islam. The rest, although using Burkha, did not so much strictly covered their bodies, e.g., little bits of their heads, necks were sometimes visible.

As has been declared in the Quran, Islam is a complete code of life. We inquired the extent to which the respondents abided by the other instructions preached in Islam. For example, performing Salat (Namaj) five times a day at specific periods is a primary duty of a Muslim. Sixteen percent of the respondents performed Salat sometimes, especially on occasions such as Lailatul Barat, Lailatul Quadr, Ashura, etc., when the rewards (Sowab) of Salat are said to be multiplied several times. Among the others, 56 per cent performed Salat regularly five times a day, 12 per cent performed four times a day, 13 per cent performed three times a day and 3 per cent performed Salat only twice a day (see Table 8). Thus we observe that although wearing Burkha, 44 per cent the respondents did not strictly follow one of the basic and compulsory practices of Islam, the Salat.

Table 8. Number of Times (Waqts) Daily Salat was Performed by Respondents

Number of Times (Waqts) the Respondents Performed Daily Salat	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Twice	3	3.00
Three times	13	13.00
Four times	12	12.00
Five times	56	56.00
Performed Salat only on special days	16	16.00
Total	100	100

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is also compulsory for all healthy Muslims. The respondents were asked if they performed all the compulsory fasts or not. Fifty two percent of the respondents said that they fasted during whole of Ramadan, 38 per cent said that they kept fasts for almost the whole month, 9 per cent kept fasts only when they wished and 1 per cent did not fast at all. Thus it is observed that the respondents observed fasts more regularly than Salat. Telling lies is strictly forbidden in Islam. Seventeen percent of the respondents did not tell a lie, 29 per cent told lies only when they were in danger or in an embarrassing situation, 58 per cent told lies sometimes just for fun. Respondents were asked how far they observed the instructions given in Islam to follow in their daily lives. Only one respondent said she followed these instructions completely, another respondent said she did not follow the instructions, 68 per cent said that they tried to comply with

the rules almost completely and 12 per cent followed some of the instructions. Eighteen percent of the respondents did not respond to this question.

The respondents were asked six questions to find out the extent they knew about Purdah. The questions were:

1. Is purdah Farj (compulsory), Wajib (almost compulsory), Sunnat (directed/recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (S.) or Nafl (performed/maintained for some extra reward)? The answer is *Farj*.
2. During what period in life is Purdah obligatory for women? The answer is "*starting at puberty till old age.*"
3. What parts of the body are to be covered (Satr) by women to maintain Purdah? The answer is *the whole body except hands, feet and face.*
4. Is covering the Satr Farj (compulsory), Wajib (almost compulsory), Sunnat (directed/recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (S.) or Nafl (performed/maintained for some extra reward)? The answer is *Farj*.
5. According to the rules of Purdah, is covering the face Farj (compulsory), Wajib (almost compulsory), Sunnat (directed/recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (S.), Nafl (performed/maintained for some extra reward), or something about which there is no hard and fast rule? The answer is that there is no hard and fast rule on the issue.
6. According to the rules of Purdah, who are the Mahrums, in front of whom full observance of Purdah is not obligatory? The answer is -- *men being related in fourteen types of relationships (husband and men with whom marriage is not permitted) e.g., father (grandfather, great grand father and so on), father in law (grand fathers in law, great grand fathers in law and so on), maternal uncle, paternal uncle, own brother, step brother, brother's son, sister's son, son, husband's son, grand son, etc.*

Twenty-six percent of the respondents answered all the six questions correctly. Two percent answered only one question correctly, 5 per cent answered two questions correctly, 11 per cent answered three questions correctly, 27 per cent answered four questions correctly, and 29 per cent answered five questions correctly. Thus we find that most of them have more or less a good idea about Purdah.

Now we come to the actual reasons for the respondents' use of Burkha. More than one answer was accepted for this question. Only 53 per cent mentioned religious obligation as a reason for their using Burkha (see Table 9). Ten percent said they used Burkha as it was prescribed by their

family, 44 per cent used Burkha as a means of social security, 35 per cent used Burkha as it saved time (had they not used Burkha, they would have to spend a lot more time in changing clothes, fixing hair, etc. before they could go out as their reasons for using Burkha. Thus the lastly mentioned two appear to be the most important reasons (besides religious reason) for the respondents' using Burkha. However, none of the respondents of this study mentioned economic hardship as a reason for using Burkha, although Najmun Nahar (2006) in her study found that some of her respondents used Burkha as they could not afford to buy fashionable clothes usually worn by other female university students. So, they used Burkha, to conceal the type of clothes they were wearing inside. Thus we see that there are many reasons other than religious obligations for using Burkha by university students.

Table 9. Reasons for Using Burkha

Reasons	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Religious obligation	53	53.00
Prescribed by family	10	10.00
Means of social security	44	44.00
It saves time	35	35.00

Note: Multiple responses.

The students were asked to express their opinions regarding positive and negative effects of using Burkha. In Table 10 the positive effects perceived by the respondents have been clearly stated. It is to be mentioned that the respondents had the option of choosing more than one answer.

Table 10. Positive Effects of Using Burkha

Opinions	Number of Respondents	Percentage of respondents
Social security	47	47.00
Helps to control one's mind	17	17.00
Keeps safe from evil eyes	24	24.00
Brings honour	23	23.00
Keeps safe from eve teasing	31	31.00
People consider as a sober girl	19	19.00
Feel peace in mind for being able to abide by Allah's instructions	36	36.00
It is easier to abide by other obligations in Islam	16	16.00
Keeps safe from the negative effects of co-education	7	7.00

Table 10. (Continued)

No comments	9	9.00
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Note: Multiple responses.

In Table 10 we find the highest number of respondents (47 per cent) considered social security as a positive effect of using Burkha. Other positive effects included the peace of mind (36 per cent), relief from eve teasing (31 per cent), relief from evil eyes (24 per cent), gaining honour (23 per cent), be considered as sober (19 per cent), support in controlling one's mind (17 per cent), makes it easy to fulfill the other obligations in Islam (16 per cent) and safety from the negative effects of coeducation (7 per cent). Nine percent of the respondents did not make any comments about the positive effects of Burkha.

Table 11. Negative Effects of Using Burkha

Opinion	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Considered as conservative	22	22.00
Identified as member of a particular group to which they actually did not belong	13	13.00
Some people tease	64	64.00
Not properly evaluated by teachers	42	42.00
Some Burkha user girls indulge in deeds not approved by greater society; so all Burkha users are evaluated negatively	11	11.00
Some people do not appreciate use of Burkha	27	27.00
No negative effect	26	26.00

Note: Multiple responses.

Regarding negative effects of Burkha use (see Table 11), 26 per cent of the respondents have opined that they saw no negative impact of using Burkha. Although 31 per cent of the respondents considered that use of Burkha saved them from eve teasing, 64 per cent opined that they were teased for using Burkha. Another negative effect mentioned by the respondents (42 per cent) was that the Burkha users were not properly evaluated by their teachers (42 per cent). Other negative effects included being considered as conservative (22 per cent), being identified as member of a particular group to which they did not actually belong (13 per cent), all Burkha users being negatively evaluated as some of the Burkha users indulge in activities that are not approved by society (11 per cent). Twenty two percent of the respondents said that there were

some people who did not approve of using Burkha at all. So, they had to face problems when they came across these people.

The respondents were asked about the advantages and disadvantages of using Burkha. Fifty-nine percent said that it saved time. Even though none of the respondents mentioned economic hardship as a reason for using Burkha, 34 per cent mentioned that use of Burkha saves expenditure on clothes (see Table 12). Other advantages of using Burkha mentioned by the respondents included – “it helps to move around freely with honour” (46 per cent), “it preserves skin from dust, smoke, sunlight etc.” (28 per cent) and “it helps to maintain ‘feminine privacy’” (28 per cent).

Table 12. Advantages of Using Burkha

Advantages	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Reduces expenditure on clothes	34	34
Helps to move around with honour	46	46
Preserves skin from dust, sunlight, smoke, etc.	28	28
Helps to maintain "feminine privacy"	28	28

Note: Multiple responses.

Regarding disadvantages of Burkha use (see Table 13), 49 per cent of the respondents said that there were no disadvantages of using Burkha. The disadvantages mentioned by the other respondents were that they became sick when they used Burkha during summer, or when they used it on wet hair (33 per cent); it is rather painful to use Burkha in the heat of summer (42 per cent); some of the respondents who used veils mentioned that it creates problems when they tried to talk (10 per cent); sometimes it brought a feeling of looking odd among the others (15 per cent); it was not possible to take part in sports (2 per cent); it created some problems while attending a social gathering (6 per cent); many relatives/acquaintances could not recognize them (18 per cent).

Table 13. Disadvantages of Using Burkha

Disadvantage	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
No disadvantage	49	49
Become sick in summer /when use it on wet hair	33	33
It is rather painful to use in the heat of Summer	42	42

Table 13. (Continued)

Problems when trying to talk	10	10
A feeling of looking odd among others	15	15
Not possible to take part in sports	02	02
Problems while attending social gatherings	06	06
Relatives/acquaintances cannot recognize	18	18

Note: Multiple responses.

Case Studies

Case 1

Ms Fahima Khatun (pseudonym), aged 22 years, was a student of 3rd Year. She was unmarried and belonged to a middle class nuclear family. Her father was a businessman and mother was a house wife. Fahima's mother also used Burkha. Both her parents supported the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Fahima started using Burkha since high school, and her reason behind using it was the instruction of her parents. She abided by most of the compulsory obligations stated in Islam. She answered four (out of six) questions on Purdah correctly, and performed Salat five times a day. In her interview she mentioned that she always used Burkha, but an informant who knows her closely said that she uses Burkha as she had wished - e.g., she used Burkha during winter and did not perform Salat five times a day.

Case 2

Samina Begum (pseudonym), aged 23, was a student of 4th Year (Hons.). She also belonged to a nuclear middle class family. Both her parents were supporters of the Awami League. Her father was a businessman and her mother was a housewife. Her mother also used Burkha. She started using Burkha when she was a student of a college (higher secondary level). She performed salat five times a day, tried to maintain most of the other instructions of Islam and answered four questions on Purdah correctly. In her interview she said that she always used Burkha to abide by the rules of Islam. However, our informant informed us that this respondent does not always use Burkha. At times, she even danced in cultural functions.

Case 3

Ms Rahima Molla (Pseudonym), aged 25, was an M.Sc. student. Her father was a businessman, who supported the Jamate Islami; her mother

was a housewife, who supported the Awami League. Rahima's mother and only sister also used Burkha. Rahima was married to a service holder, her father in law was a retired service holder. Rahima's husband was a member of the Tablig Jamat. Her father and mother in law supported the BNP. Neither her mother in law, nor her sisters in law (husband's sisters) used Burkha. Rahima started using Burkha before marriage when she was a 1st year (Hons.) student. She used Burkha all the time and had shown religious grounds behind it. She performed Salat five times a day, kept almost all the fasts and lied only to avoid danger. She answered five out of six questions on Purdah correctly. The positive aspects of using Burkha according to Rahima were that usually people payed honour and did not misbehave. It was very useful during long journey. Using Burkha allowed Rahima to get ready to go out very quickly, it kept the skin healthy, saved money and during winter it kept the whole body warm. However, the negative aspects of using Burkha included peoples' notion that the Burkha user women belonged either to Jamate Islami or the Tablig Jamat, some people made negative comments, some people considered Burkha users as "unsmart", and it was very painful to use Burkha during summer.

Case 4

Ms. Saleha Khatun (Pseudonym), aged 25, was an unmarried B.S.S. (Hons.) student. Her father was a businessman, and mother was a housewife. Both her parents supported the Jamate Islami. Her mother and only sister used Burkha. Saleha started using Burkha since high school and used it at all times she came across men other than her mahrams. She used Burkha for religious reasons only. She performed Salat five times a day and kept all the fasts during the month of Ramadan. She lied only if needed at times of danger. She answered five out of six questions on Purdah correctly. The positive aspects of Burkha according to Saleha were that it gave social security and helped to fulfill other religious obligations.

Case 5

Ms Saeeda (pseudonym), aged 22 years, was an unmarried student of 3rd year (Hons.). Her father was a teacher and mother was a housewife. Her mother also used Burkha. Saeeda used Burkha since she was a student of higher secondary level. She used Burkha always she came across non-Mahrum men, and her reason behind using Burkha was to abide by religious codes. She performed Salat five times a day, kept all the fasts during Ramadan and never told lies. She answered four out of six questions on Purdah correctly. According to Saeeda, the positive aspects

of using Burkha were that it enabled maintenance of modest clothes with minimum expenditure, saved time and elevated self-respect. The negative aspects were that often even elders express contempt, and that it becomes a barrier in getting a good job.

Conclusion

In conclusion we may state as an answer to the question set out at the title that Burkha users did not use Burkha only to maintain Purdah (or to abide by the rules set in Islam). In the present study, 47 per cent of the respondents did not mention religious obligation as a cause behind their using Burkha. As perceived by the respondents, it has other positive aspects as well—e.g., it provides social security, helps to gain control over mind, gives relief from eve teasing and evil eyes, saves time and money, keeps skin healthy, helps to maintain "feminine privacy", etc. However, according to 51 per cent of the respondents, some of the negative aspects of using Burkha were that sometimes they were looked down upon, teased, not properly evaluated by teachers, not recognized even by relatives/acquaintances, etc. It was a surprising finding that 51 per cent of the respondents did not use Burkha always, and that only 26 per cent covered their bodies in the way prescribed in Islam. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents did not respond to the question regarding the political party they themselves supported/ or were related to. Among those who did respond, those who supported the Jamate Islami were the highest in number (23). Among the respondents' fathers and mothers, almost the same number supported the Jamate Islami. Of the 100 respondents, only 56 per cent performed Salat five times a day, 52 per cent kept all the fasts in Ramadan and 58 per cent sometimes told lies just for fun. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents tried to comply with the Islamic codes almost fully.

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