227097 - If a woman in ihram covers her face, does she have to keep the cloth away from her face?

the question

I heard that the piece of cloth with which a woman covers her face in ihram should not touch the nose; how correct is that?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Muslim woman is required to cover her face in front of men who are non-mahrams to her. If she is in ihram for Hajj or ‘Umrah, she should cover her face with something other than the niqab, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade the woman in ihram to wear niqab.

This has been explained, with evidence, in fatwa no. 172289

If the woman in ihram covers her face with her head cover, jilbaab and the like, then she does not have to create a distance between the cover and her face, because there is no report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to indicate that this is required. Rather the actions of women at the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) indicate that this is not required.

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The riders used to pass us when we were with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in ihram. When they drew close to us, one of us would let down her jilbaab from her head over her face, and when they had passed us we would uncover it again.

It is well-known that the jilbaab that is let down from the head over the face will inevitably touch the face.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (26/112-113):

If a woman covers her face with something that does not touch the face, that is permissible according to consensus.

If it does touch the face, then the correct view is that it is also permissible, and a woman is not required to go to the trouble of creating a distance between her cover and her face, whether that is with a stick or her hand or anything else. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) treated the woman’s face and hands equally (in terms of covering) and both of them are like the body of a man, not like his head. The wives of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to let down (their head covers or jilbaabs) over their faces without paying attention to creating a distance. End quote.

The difference between a man’s body and his head in the case of ihram is that a man is prohibited from covering his head with anything that clings to the head, whether that thing is something ordinary or otherwise. As for his body, he is not forbidden to cover it; rather he is only forbidden to wear clothing that is tailored to fit the body.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The Mother of the Believers ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: When the riders passed by us, one of us would let down her jilbaab from her head over her face. And she did not use a stick to create some distance between her face and the jilbaab, as some of the fuqaha’ suggest. This is not known from any of the women of the Sahaabah or from the Mothers of the Believers at all, either as an action that they did or something that was enjoined in a fatwa. It is impossible that this could have been one of the practices of ihram and was not well known among them and known to everyone, elite and common folk alike.

End quote from Badaa’i‘ al-Fawaa’id (2/664-665)

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is permissible for the woman in ihram to let her head cover down over her face if she needs to do so, without using anything to lift it off her face. If the head cover touches her face, there is no blame on her, because of the hadith of ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: The riders used to pass us … and he quoted the hadith mentioned above.

End quote from Majmoo‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (16/54-55)

He also said (16/56):

With regard to what many women do, of using a stick under the head cover to lift it off the face, there is no basis for that in sharee‘ah as far as we know. If that were prescribed, the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would have explained it to his ummah, and he could not have remained silent about it. End quote.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no blame on the woman if her hijab touches her face, contrary to the view of some scholars who say that the hijab must not touch her face, because there is no evidence for this condition in the Qur’an or Sunnah.

End quote from Majmoo‘ Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (22/184)

And Allah knows best.