

## Modesty: A Fashion Paradox

**Hafsa Lodi**

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Hafsa Lodi's thoughtful *Modesty: A Fashion Paradox* focuses on fashion's growing trend toward modesty and how pop culture interprets that trend.

Lodi, who wears modest clothing herself, is an American fashion journalist who lives in Dubai. She begins sections of her text with personal stories and discusses alignments across religious boundaries, focusing on the variety of girls who grow up with modesty restrictions. Considerations of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish texts on the meanings and purpose of modesty are at the book's core, though it also discusses government restrictions and cultural modesty norms in countries including Egypt and Indonesia.

The book widens into a discussion of the global modest fashion trend, which is attributed to everything from companies capitalizing on wealthy Middle Eastern consumers' tastes to a backlash against men's harassment, brought to light by the #MeToo movement. As Lodi shows: there's both consistency and variation within discussions of modest clothing.

The book's focus on the fashions themselves tantalizes. Lodi is specific when it comes to colors, fabrics, and styles, relishing details. Modest Fashion Weeks; the scaling up of modest fashion influencer culture on social media; and the increasing number of e-commerce and traditional fashion houses who focus more efforts on modest clothing all factor in.

Refusing to pigeonhole Middle Eastern and Muslim women, the book acknowledges that, while there are women who are restricted by modesty laws, many more find protection, comfort, and spiritual meaning in the clothing practices that they voluntarily choose. There are no simple interpretations here; in their place, Lodi centers enduring questions about why women choose, or do not choose, modest fashion.

Smart and journalistic, *Modesty* embraces the heterogeneity of fashion and of modesty to tell a new story about self-expression and freedom.

LAURA LEAVITT (May / June 2020)

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