In this week’s readings we examine the headdress of the woman of Muslim faith and its religious and political significance. There are several types of Muslim headscarves and the hijab and burkha are two of them presented in the text. Today Muslim women are under scrutiny to take these representations of their faith and religion off for a far many reasons. Due to the destruction and the killings of 9/11, there has been a steady influx of paranoia present across the globe. Many reasons have been given as to the reasoning of enacting laws to prevent the wearing of these garments in certain public places and to banish their use all together.

 The hijab is an act of worship for these women and should be treated as such. Having said that, what the true meaning as some would see it would be a rite of passage. This has been long argued among theologians and observers of the religion. There is no specific mention of the dress in the Qur’an or in the specific teachings of Muhammad. But there is significance as to what a man should do about his wife and how he should recognize and treat her.

The laws that were established in the age when the Qur’an was being written and acknowledge by Muhammad’s followers were primarily written by men. This left little influence for women to interject what their beliefs were in reference to the law regarding Muslims. This clearly left them at an disadvantage and subject to whatever interpretation there would be in regards to their own future in the law.

Leia Ahmed states in her article, Early Islam and the Position of Women, “ The moment in which Islamic and scriptural were elaborated and cast into the forms that were to be considered authoritative to our own day was a singularly unpropitious one for woman…It played a significant part in the extent to which the elaboration of the law would be weighted against women… and given legal articulation, rather than its broad ethical injunctions emphasizing justice and fairness…These findings today in Muslim societies, given in particular the trend to interpret and apply classical Muslim law yet more rigidly to women and in all ways, societally and governmentally, to endorse the orthodox Islamic vision of women. Now that women in unprecedented and ever-growing numbers are forming part of the intellectual community in Muslim countries, perhaps- as they are already reclaiming the right, not enjoyed for centuries, of attending the mosques- these veins of thought will be reopened and the process of the creation of Islamic law will be brought into question.”

This would be a clear indication that the Islamic law and the teachings of Muhammad need to be revisited and examined. This is not just in the interest of the Islamic women, but rather for the reconstitution of the fundamentals of Muslim ideology. Muhammad gave the law as the law was given to him. It is the conscience of every man and women to abide that law and distinquish what is political and what is spiritual.