

Yemeni Arabic transcript:

ل: طيب وأيش بالنسبة لأزياء... هل اتغيرت أزياء البنات كمان؟
ي: أكيد! خاصة البنات اللي هم... أكثر المخلوقات اللي يحبوا الموضه.
ل: لا بس أني قصدي يعني البنات لما يمشوا في الشارع. كلهم يلبسوا عبايات صح؟
ي: ها، قصدك من ناحية العبايات؟
ل: أيوه، هل في تغيير؟
ي: أكيد من ناحية العبايات اكيد، كان لأنه قبل الوحدة ماكانش في كثير من البنات يلبسوا العبايات أو الحجاب. فأكيد في فرق قبل عشرين سنة والآن. الآن كل البنات يلبسوا عبايات. وللأسف أغلبهم مضطرات. يعني غصبا عنهم. يعني قبل عشرين سنة كان مافيش هدي الحاجات. كان أشوف البنات، كان فري، يلبسوا التيشترات و يلبسوا السراويل و يلبسوا...
ل: طيب... العبايات نفسها، من يوم مابدأوا يلبسوا العباية الى الآن هل حصل تغيير في العباية نفسها؟
ي: العباية نفسها.. أيوه أنا شفت حاجات غريبة.
ل: أيش هي؟
ي: والله مرة، أذكر ان أنا في منطقة اسمها الشيخ، الشيخ عثمان. شفت بنت لابسة عباية مسجل فيها بالتطريز حلو كده ورقيق بالترتر تقريبا مسجل فيها: خذلك نظرة وصلي عالنبى. ههههه الله! ولا مسجل بالانجليزي: I'm the star. يعني حاجات غريبة.
ل: بالعباية؟
ي: بالعباية نفسها. فتحصلي في عباية أبوشريطة وعباية فيها وردة وعباية... يعني شوف.. هو إبداع. مادام أن البنت مش قادرة تتحرر من العباية أقل شي تشكلها.
ل: لا بس أيش أيش أصلا أيش غرض العباية أصلا أيش غرض العباية؟
ي: مافيش غرض يعني، بس الغرض هو تقييد الحريات. أنا أشوف الإنسان اللي يشتي يلتزم يلتزم، عنده محبه للدين والإنسان اللي مش قادر يعيش بعباية... هو الدين أصلا مافيش حاجة كان فيه اسمها عباية. كان فيها الأزياء المستورة. أيش اقولك، أزياء كانت مستورة يعني، ثياب كانت تسترك يعني. فقط اللي كانت ملتزمة بالدين يمكن تبين الكفين والرجل ودي الأشياء. وطبعاً ده قانون سماوي مش نحنا البشر اللي بنحكم فيه، يعني هذي حاجة من الله. فماعتقدش ان رب العالمين... اوكيه بيغضب رب العالمين ولكن الآن أشوف في ناس يكثر وبه ويزيد وبه يعني. حتى العينين ورمش العين و ده غباء. يعني أني اذكر في وحدة مدرسة قالت أني مقدرش أجلس مع الطالبة وهي محبة لانني مقدرش أشوف تعابير وجهه أنه فهمت أو لا. نتكلم البنت لابسة برقع ماتقدرش تشوف تعابير وجهه. التواصل بين المدرس والطالب ماعاد فيش يقل. تكون تقل المفهومية.

English translation:

L: Well what about the outfits? Did the women outfits change too?

Y: Of course! Especially the women, they are the people who love fashion the most.

L: No, but I mean the girls walking in the streets, they all wear *abbayas*¹, right?

Y: You mean as for *abbayas*?

L: Yes. Is there a change?

Y: Indeed, as for *abbayas* indeed. Before the Union not a lot of girls used to wear *abbayas* or *hijab*². There is definitely a difference between now and twenty years ago. Now all girls wear *abbayas* and it's sad [to know] that most of them are compelled. I mean it's against their will. I mean twenty years ago these things didn't exist. Girls were, it was free, they wore t-shirts and pants and...

¹ Abbaya: a traditional costume that women in Yemen and the Gulf wear when they go out. It's usually one long piece of black cloth.

² Hijab: the Islamic headscarf that Muslim women wear.

L: Well... the *abbayas* themselves, ever since they started wearing them till now did they [*abbayas*] change?

Y: *Abbaya* itself, yes. I saw strange things.

L: What are they?

Y: *WaAllah*³ once, I remember I was in a place called al-Shiekh, al-Shiekh Othman. I saw a girl wearing an *abbaya* on which was written with very nice and fine sequins embroidery: take a look and *sali ala al-nabi*⁴. Hahaha, Allah! Or [sometimes] written in English: I'm the star. Very funny things.

L: On the *abbaya*?

Y: On the *abbaya* itself. You can find an *abbaya* with a ribbon and another with a flower and... I mean look, it's creativity. As long as the girl can't break free from the *abbaya* she can at least decorate it.

L: No, but what is the aim of the *abbaya* originally?

Y: There's no aim. The aim is to restrict freedoms. I see that the person who wants to be religious can be religious; he/she has passion for religion and the person who can't live with an *abbaya*... In the religion [Islam] basically there was not such a thing called *abbaya*. There were the modest clothes. What can I say, modest clothes meaning the clothes that would cover you. [Women] who were religious would only show their hands and feet and things like that. This is of course a divine law; it's not us humans being who can argue [with] it, I mean this is something from Allah. I don't think that the god of all creatures... okay He will get angry, but today I see people who exaggerate, I mean [they think] even the eyes and eye lashes [shouldn't be seen], this is stupidity. I mean I remember a teacher once told me that she can't sit with a student who is *mohajaba*⁵ because [the teacher] can't see [by] her facial expressions whether she understood or not. I'm talking about the girls who wear a *burqa*⁶, she can't see their facial expressions. The communication between the teacher and the student decreases. Thus the ability to understand decreases.

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³ *WaAllah*: an expression used to emphasize the importance and authenticity of something. Sometimes it's used as a transition to give the speaker more time to think (*well*, in English). It literally means: I swear by Allah.

⁴ *Sali ala al-nabi*: An expression used as: calm down or don't give the evil eye to the thing you are looking at. It literally means: pray for the prophet.

⁵ *Mohajaba*: the Arabic word for describing a woman who wears the Islamic headscarf, or the hijab. In this text, it means a woman who covers her face.

⁶ *Burqa*: the piece of cloth that covers the face that Muslim women sometimes wear.