

A Set of Questions of Importance to the Muslim Family

Written by His Eminence Shaykh, the erudite scholar

Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn

May Allah forgive him, his parents, and all Muslims

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

introduction

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our selves and from our bad deeds. Whoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whoever He leads astray, none can guide. We bear witness that there is no true god but Allah, alone, with no partner, and we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them rightly until the Day of Judgment.

The Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn Charity Foundation is pleased to present these valuable Fatwas by His Eminence Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn (may Allah have mercy upon him).

We ask Allah Almighty to render this work purely done for His sake, pleasing to Him, and beneficial for His servants; and we ask Him to grant our Shaykh a great reward for what he did for Islam and Muslims and to multiply his reward, raise his rank, and admit him into Paradise; indeed, He is All-Hearing, Ever-Responsive.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his Companions, and those who follow them rightly until the Day of Judgment.

The Department of Islamic Sciences

at the Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn Charity Foundation

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Wearing a wig

§§ One of the things used by women for adornment is the wig, fake hair worn on the head. Is it permissible for a woman to use it?

?The wig is prohibited, and it is considered an artificial extension of the hair. Although it is not exactly an extension, it makes a woman's face seem longer than it is, thus resembling an extension. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed the woman who adds an extension to another's hair and the one who has her hair extended.

However, if a woman is bald with no hair on her head, she may use a wig to conceal this defect. Removing defects is permissible;

and that is why the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) gave permission to a man whose nose was cut in battle to replace it with a gold nose. The same applies if a person has some crookedness in his nose and he needs to correct it or he has a black spot and wants to remove it. There is nothing wrong with such things.

But if they are done for a purpose other than removal of a defect, like tattooing or removing the eyebrows, they become forbidden. The use of wig is forbidden even if the husband permits it, because his permission and approval are of no value with regards to the things that Allah prohibited.

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Hair plucking

§§ Some women remove their eyebrows or make them thinner for beautification and adornment. What is the ruling on this?

?There are two possible aspects to this matter:

First: Removal of hair is done by plucking. This is forbidden and one of the major sins. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed those who do this.

Second: Hair is removed by clipping or trimming. The scholars differed over this as to whether it falls under the prohibited plucking or not. It is better to avoid it.

However, if the hair grows in unusual places, like when a woman has a mustache or has hair on her cheeks, there is nothing wrong in removing it, because it is abnormal and makes her face look bad.

As for eyebrows, they can be thin and delicate or thick and wide. This is normal and usual. What is normal and usual may not be changed, as people do not regard this or that shape as a defect; rather, they consider a certain shape, or the lack of it, as beauty. So, this is not a defect that requires its removal.

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Prominence of hair

§§ One of the means a woman may use for beautification and adornment is putting a wad inside her hair to collect the hair on top of the head. What is the ruling on this?

?If the hair is collected in a large bun on top of the head, this falls under the warning issued by the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) when he said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not yet seen... and women who are dressed yet naked, turning away [from righteousness] and turning others away. Their heads are like the humps of Bactrian camels, leaning to one side..." So, if the hair is collected up on top of the head, this is subject to the reported prohibition. But if the hair is at the neck, for example, there is nothing wrong with that, except if the woman goes out to the marketplace in this state, in which case she will be displaying her beauty as her hair will be bulging underneath the gown. Such is display of beauty and a means to temptation, so it is not permissible.

There is a widespread phenomenon of girls cutting their hair to shoulder length for beautification, wearing high heels, and using the known cosmetics. What is the ruling on these practices?

There are two ways in which a woman cuts her hair; either in a style that makes her hair resemble men's hair, which is prohibited and a major sin because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed women who imitate men, or she cuts it to an extent that does not resemble men's hair. The scholars differed on this second style into three views: Some scholars said it is permissible and there is nothing wrong with it; others held that it is prohibited; while some others said it is disliked. According to the famous opinion of the Hanbali school of Fiqh, it is disliked. Actually, we should not accept all the habits coming to us from others. Not long ago, women used to brag about their thick long hair. What is the matter with them today that they wish to cut their hair in imitation of women from other parts of the world! I do not disapprove of everything new; I only disapprove of everything that causes our society to turn to habits imported from non-Muslims. As for high heels, if they are unusual, display a woman's beauty, and attract attention to her, then it is not permissible to wear them. Allah Almighty says: {And do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance.} [Al-Ahzāb: 33] Anything that displays a woman's beauty, attracts attention to her, and makes her distinct from other women in a beautifying way is prohibited and impermissible.

As for the use of cosmetics, there is nothing wrong with that, provided that no harm or temptation is involved.

§§ What is the ruling on a woman applying kohl?

?Applying kohl is of two types:

First: Applying kohl to strengthen the eyesight, remove blurriness from the eyes, and cleaning and purifying the eyes without beautification. There is nothing wrong with that; rather, it should be done because the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to apply kohl, particularly if it is made from lthmid [antimony].

Second: Kohl applied for beautification and adornment. This is recommended for women, as they are required to beautify themselves for their husbands.

As for men applying kohl, this is debatable and I do not have a definite opinion on it. We can differentiate in this regard between a young man who is feared to cause temptation if he applied kohl, in which case he should be forbidden from it, and an old man whose use of kohl is not feared to cause temptation, so he should not be forbidden.

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The woman beautifies herself within limits

§§ Is it permissible for a woman to use makeup to beautify herself for her husband? And is it permissible for her to wear makeup in the presence of her family and Muslim women?

?A woman should beautify herself for her husband within the lawful limits. The more she beautifies herself for him, the more affection he would be expected to have for her and the greater the harmony between them. Indeed, this is one of the objectives of the Shariah. So, if makeup beautifies her and does not cause her any harm, there is nothing wrong with that. But I heard that makeup harms the complexion and leads to premature aging of the skin. So, she should ask doctors about this matter. If this proves true, then the use of makeup is prohibited or at least disliked. Anything that eventually makes a person look ugly and deformed is either prohibited or disliked. On this occasion, I would like to mention nail polish. It is a substance that women put on their fingernails or toenails and it forms a layer. It is not permissible for a woman to use it if she prays, for it prevents the water of ablution from reaching the nails. Hence, it may not be used before ablution or ritual bath. Allah Almighty says: {Wash your faces and your hands (up to the elbows)} [Al-Mā'idah: 6] So, if there is nail polish on a woman's fingernails, this blocks water and thus she is not regarded to have washed her hands, which is one of the obligatory elements of ablution and ritual bath. But if a woman does not pray, there is nothing wrong with using nail polish except if this practice is characteristic of disbelieving women, in which case it will not be permissible because it involves imitating them. I heard that some people gave a Fatwa that nail polish belongs to the same category as wearing leather socks, and that it is permissible for a woman to use it for a day and night in case she is a non-traveler and for three days if she is traveling. This Fatwa is wrong. Not everything that covers the body can be treated like the leather socks. The Shariah prescribes wiping over the leather socks because people often need to do this. Feet need to be warm and covered, for they touch the ground and the pebbles and are subject to cold and the like. So, the Shariah dedicated a particular ruling for wiping on the leather socks. Some may claim that analogy could be drawn between it and the turban, which is not correct. A turban is worn on the head, and as far as ablution is concerned, the obligatory element concerning the head is a light one, i.e. wiping, not washing like the case with the face. That is why the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) did not permit women to wipe over the gloves, though they cover the hands. Al-Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) performed ablution while wearing a cloak with narrow sleeves. He could not let his hands out of it so he brought them out from underneath it and washed them. [Al-Bukhāri and Muslim] This indicates that it is not permissible to draw analogy between any barrier that prevents water from reaching the body and turbans and leather socks.

It is the duty of a Muslim to exert his utmost effort in learning the truth and not issue a Fatwa unless he is heedful that Allah will hold him accountable for it because he represents the Shariah legislated by Allah Almighty.

§§ What is the ruling on women wearing tight-fitting clothes and pants?

?It is not appropriate for a woman to wear tight-fitting clothes and pants. If she is seen wearing them by non-Mahrams (a Mahram is a non-marriageable male relative), this is undoubtedly prohibited, for it involves tremendous temptation. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not yet seen... women who are dressed yet naked, turning away [from righteousness] and turning others away..." Some scholars interpreted "who are dressed yet naked" to refer to women who wear clothes that do not cover them

properly, either because they are tight-fitting, transparent, or short. So, a woman should beware of these types of clothing.

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Wearing denim is not imitation of disbelievers

§§ There is a type of fabric called denim. It is tailored in different ways to make clothes for boys and girls. It is characterized by durability. The problem, however, is that the disbelievers commonly wear this fabric in the form of tight-fitting jeans pants. So, the question is: Does wearing denim in its different forms, other than the tight-fitting pants and for the sake of its durability and good quality, fall under imitation of the disbelievers?

?Imitation means that a person does something that is particular to the people he is imitating. So, if Muslims wear this fabric or anything else in the same way the disbelievers wear it, this is regarded as imitation of them. But the mere fact that the clothes of disbelievers are made from this fabric does not mean that using it to tailor other types of clothes is imitation of them. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as it differs from the way of the disbelievers, even if they are known to use this fabric.

§§ We know that a woman's paternal uncle is one of her Mahrams before whom she may take off her Hijāb. But, if her paternal uncle jokes with her in an indecent manner, is it permissible for her to refrain from meeting him because of that?

?If a man jokes with his nieces in a suspicious way, they are not permitted to go to him or uncover their faces in his presence. The scholars who held that a woman may take off her Hijāb before her Mahrams specified the non-existence of temptation as a condition for doing so. In the case of this man who jokes with his nieces in an inappropriate manner, they are subject to possible temptation from him. It is obligatory to stay away from the means that lead to temptation. Do not be surprised that a person may desire his Mahrams - may Allah safeguard us. Consider the wording of the following verse: {And do not marry those [women] whom your fathers married, except what has already occurred. Indeed, it was an immorality and hateful [to Allah] and was evil as a way.} [Al-Nisā': 22] Regarding adultery, another verse reads: {And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way.} [Al-Isrā': 32] This indicates that marrying a Mahram woman is worse than adultery.

In brief, they should stay away from their paternal uncle and keep their faces covered in his presence since he jokes with them in this indecent suspicion-arousing manner.

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Hairdressing

§§ Is it permissible for a woman to dress her hair in a modern way, not for the purpose of imitating disbelieving women, but for the sake of her husband?

?What I was told about hairdressing is that it is quite costly that it may be described as a waste of money. I advise our women to avoid such extravagance. They can beautify themselves for their husbands in a way that does not involve such a waste of money, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade wasting money.

§§ Some women choose styles from fashion magazines, but they do not intend by that to follow fashion trends or imitate the West. What is the ruling on this? Is it regarded as imitation of disbelieving women, though women wear clothes and other things made by the West?

?I looked at many of these magazines and found them to be indecent, terrible, and wicked. This is not appropriate for us in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the country that is keener than any other country on preserving the Shariah and virtuous manners. We want it to be inappropriate – in this country – that such magazines should be available in our markets and tailor workshops. Indeed, their very appearance speaks volumes about their ugliness. It is not permissible for any man or woman to buy such magazines or look at them because they are means of temptation. Someone may buy them

thinking that he is safe from them. But Satan and his self keep working on him until he falls in the snare of these magazines and chooses from them styles that do not suit the Islamic environment. I warn all women and their guardians of keeping such magazines at home, given the great temptation they involve and the danger they pose to our morals and religious commitment.

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Layers of the face veil

§§ It is known that a woman's face veil consists of a number of layers. How many layers should a woman cover her face with?

?A woman should conceal her face from non-Mahram men by covering it with something that does not reveal the color of her complexion, be it one, two, or more layers. If the cover is thick and the complexion does not show from underneath it, then one layer is enough; otherwise, she should add one, two, three, or four layers, as needed. What matters is that she covers her face with something that does not reveal its color. As for wearing a face cover that reveals the skin color, it is not enough. The purpose is not that the woman puts something over her face; rather, the purpose is to conceal her face from non-Mahram men. Women should fear Allah Almighty with regard to themselves and other women. When a woman goes out wearing something revealing or semi-revealing, another woman follows her example, then a third, and so on until it spreads among many more women. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever introduces an evil practice to Islam, he will bear its sin and the sin of those who act upon it till the Day of Judgment." Praise be to Allah; our country pays great attention to its religion, morals, and dealings, and it befits it to do so, for it is the land from which the light of Islam came out and to which it returns. So, it is our duty to preserve our religion, manners, and morals which are taken from the Shariah to truly be the best nation ever produced for mankind.

We should not adopt everything new that comes to us from outside. We should, rather, scrutinize anything that reaches us and see if it is in our interest and compliant with the Shariah, in which case we can take it; otherwise, we should reject it and keep it away from our society so that we continue to maintain our religion, morals, and dealings.

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Women using a zipper

§§ Some women make an opening at the back of their garment, called Sakhāb (zipper). They open it when they want to put on their garment. What is the ruling on this?

?I am not aware of anything wrong with having the opening in the back [not in the front], unless this is done as imitation of disbelievers. However, it has become prevalent among Muslims, even children.

The default ruling in matters other than acts of worship is that they are permissible, such as habits, transactions, and foods, except what is proved by evidence to be prohibited. On the contrary, with regards to acts of worship, the default ruling is prohibition unless otherwise is established by evidence.

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A woman should not uncover her face in the Sacred Mosque

§§ Many women ask about the ruling on uncovering the face in the Sacred Mosque, saying they heard that some scholars hold that it is permissible for a woman to uncover her face in the Sacred Mosque and during 'Umrah. What is the definitive say on this issue?

?The definitive say is that it is not permissible for a woman to uncover her face neither in the Sacred Mosque nor in the markets or other mosques. Rather, she is required to cover her face in the presence of non-Mahram men, for the face is deemed 'Awhrah that must not be seen by non-Mahrams. Texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah and sound reasoning all indicate that a woman is obligated to cover her face in the presence of non-Mahram men given the temptation and arousal of desire caused by uncovering it.

She should not be deceived by what other women do, who act immodestly and abandon Hijāb, and as a result she reveals her face, hair, neck, and arms and walks in the markets as if at home.

A woman should fear Allah Almighty with regard to herself and others. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I am not leaving behind a more harmful trial for men than women."

As for a woman in Ihrām (ritual consecration) for Hajj or 'Umrah, it is lawful for her to uncover her face while at home or in the tent. But she is required to cover it if there are non-Mahram men around her, whether she is in the mosque or elsewhere.

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Short clothes

§§ It is common in some Muslim countries that women wear knee-length dresses. Some even wear the dress a little above the knee, taking it lightly. What is the ruling on this? And what is your advice to the woman who does not care about Hijāb?

?It is prohibited for a woman to reveal her legs before non-Mahrams, and it is more prohibited to uncover her face before them. Indeed, people get more infatuated with faces than with legs.

The obligation of Hijāb is established in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and we have explained this in detail in a short treatise called "Treatise on Hijāb". With regard to the Hadīths whose apparent meaning indicates permissibility, we gave two responses, one of which is general and the other is detailed and addressing every proof said to indicate the permissibility to keep women's faces uncovered. My advice to the women who wear short dresses at knee-length or above is to fear Allah Almighty with regard to themselves and their societies, and not to be a reason for spreading this bad phenomenon. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever introduces an evil practice to Islam, he will bear its sin and the sin of those who act upon it till the Day of Judgment."

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The meaning of tilted hairdo

§§ The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not seen: people with whips like the tails of the cows with which they will be striking people, and women who will be dressed but naked, indecent and seducing others. Their heads will appear like the humps of the Bactrian camels, leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise, nor will they smell its fragrance, which is smelled from such-and-such a distance." What is the meaning of "turning others away"? Does this include the women who have a hairdo turned or tilted to one side or does it refer to the women who seduce men?

?In this Hadīth, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not seen," and he mentioned one type then said about the other: "And women who will be dressed but naked, indecent and seducing others. Their heads will appear like the humps of the Bactrian camels, leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise, nor will they smell its fragrance, which is smelled from such-and-such a distance." The word 'mā'lah', in its general sense, refers here to every woman who swerves from the straight path in her clothing, appearance, speech, or any other aspect, while 'mumīlāt', women that lead others astray, using what causes temptation so that whoever is tempted would be led to them. Regarding the tilted hairdo, some scholars said that it falls under this description in the Hadīth, for the woman wears her hair leaning to

one side which is contrary to the Sunnah. Women, therefore, should avoid this hairdo lest they fall under the Hadīth cited above. The matter is not so simple that women can take it lightly. It is better and more appropriate for a person to abandon what is doubtful and turn to what is not doubtful. There are many hairstyles, which women can choose instead of the forbidden ones.

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A woman's seclusion with the driver

§§ Some people send their daughters to school with non-Mahram drivers and do not consider the consequences of their actions. Kindly give advice to them.

?There are two possible cases in this regards:

First case: That there are several women riding along with the driver, not one single woman. There is nothing wrong with that if the ride is inside the town. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "No man should be in seclusion with a (non-Mahram) woman." This case is not seclusion, provided the driver is trustworthy; otherwise, he may not be with women without a sane adult Mahram. Second case: The driver is in the car with one woman alone. This is not permissible even for a single moment, for it is seclusion which the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) prohibited, saying: "No man should be in seclusion with a (non-Mahram) woman." He also said that Satan would be the third of them. Accordingly, it is not permissible for the women's guardians to let them ride alone with drivers in this manner. And it is not permissible for a woman to ride alone with a driver without a Mahram. Indeed, this constitutes disobedience to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and, by extension, disobedience to Allah Almighty. Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah. Allah Almighty says: {whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah} [Al-Nisā': 80] He also says: {And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error} [Al-Ahzāb: 36] We, Muslims, should obey the command of our Lord and His Messenger, considering the great benefit and good outcome of this. And we should feel jealous about our women and not leave them to their own devices, being misled by Satan and pulled towards sin and temptation. I warn my fellow Muslims against heedlessness and indifference in the midst of the prosperous lives Allah Almighty has bestowed upon us. Let us consider this verse wherein Allah Almighty says: {And the companions of the left - what are the companions of the left?} [Al-Wāqī'ah: 41] And let us be mindful of His words: {But as for he who is given his record behind his back} [Al-Inshiqāq: 10-13]

§§ Is it lawful for a woman to cut the tips of her hair?

?If a woman cuts from her hair during Hajj or 'Umrah, this is a ritual and worship that brings her closer to Allah Almighty and she is rewarded for it. A woman performing Hajj or 'Umrah is required to shorten her hair the length of a fingertip from each plait.

But if she cuts her hair outside Hajj and 'Umrah until it becomes similar in shape to men's hair, this is prohibited and even a major sin. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed the women who imitate men and cursed the men who imitate women. If she only cuts the tips of her hair and it remains in the shape of a woman's hair, it is disliked, according to the Hanbali scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them). Accordingly, a woman should not do this.

§§ What is the ruling on a woman shortening her hair from behind to shoulder length?

?The scholars disliked that a woman shortens her hair, except during Hajj and 'Umrah. This is the famous opinion of the Hanbali scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them).

Other scholars held that it is prohibited; whereas some others deemed it permissible on condition that it does not involve imitation of men or non-Muslim women. Women's imitation of men is prohibited; rather, it is a major sin. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed the women who imitate men and cursed the men who imitate women.

Men's imitation of women and vice versa is a major sin. So, if a woman cuts her hair in a way that makes it similar to men's hair, she is subject to the curse. A cursed person is someone excluded from the mercy of Allah.

With regard to imitation of non-Muslim women, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Anyone who imitates a people is one of them." It is better that she does not cut it, neither from the front nor the back. I do not like for our women to take every new imported habit or tradition that is of no benefit. Our open-armed reception of such things may lead to untoward consequences, like engaging in practices not sanctioned by the Shariah. It may prompt women to display their beauty through adornment, as women do in other places. It may also lead women to uncover their faces in front of non-Mahram men, which is prohibited.

§§ Is it permissible to dye gray hair black?

? Changing the color of gray hair with black is forbidden, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered avoiding it, saying: "Change this grayness, but avoid black."

A stern warning is reported regarding dyeing hair black, which entails a major sin. So, Muslim men and women should eschew it given the relevant prohibition and warning, and because it constitutes contradicting the creation of Allah Who made grayness a sign of old age, mostly. If someone changes it with a black dye, he thus opposes the wisdom of Allah in His creation. Yet, he can change it with a color other than black, like reddish or yellowish dyes. A person may also dye his hair with a shade between red and black. This is harmless and thereby one attains goodness by adhering to the Sunnah and avoiding what the Prophet prohibited.

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Diverse ways of beautification

§§ What is the ruling on tattoos? If a girl got tattooed when she was young, does she bear a sin for it?

Tattoos are prohibited; rather, they are among the major sins. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed women who tattoo others and those who have themselves tattooed. If a girl got tattooed when she was young and could not prevent it, there is no blame on her. The sin falls on the one who did this to her. Verily, Allah does not charge anyone beyond his capacity. This girl did not have a say. But she should remove it if she can, provided there is no harm to her.

§§ What is the ruling on lipstick and makeup for women?

? There is nothing wrong with wearing lipstick, for things are originally lawful unless otherwise established. Lipstick is not something fixed, so we cannot liken it to a tattoo. A tattoo is made by injecting color under the skin; it is prohibited and considered a major sin.

However, if the use of lipstick proves harmful to the lip, making it dry and removing its moisture, it should be prohibited then. I was informed that lipstick might cause chapping to the lips. If this is proven true, then people should avoid what harms them.

As for makeup, we forbid it; if it adorns the face for a while, it causes serious harm to it, as medically established. When a woman grows old, her face changes in such a way that no makeup or anything else can work on it. Based on this, we advise women against it, as it has been proved that it causes harm.

§§ What is the ruling on a woman dyeing her hands with henna? Is there anything reported about this from the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)? And what is the ruling if henna is applied on the palm only and not the fingernails?

? Dyeing the hands with henna is common among women, and it is a habit meant for adornment. This beautifies women, and women are required to beautify themselves for their husbands. This applies whether the fingernails are dyed as well or not.

As for wearing nail polish, it is prohibited – except if the woman is having her menstrual period (thus not praying) – for it prevents water of ablution from reaching the skin, unless she removes it before performing ablution.

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A woman talking to men

§§ Is the voice of a woman forbidden to the extent that she should not talk to shopkeepers in the market to buy things, without softening her tone, or going to the dressmaker to make her clothes, behaving in a modest way?

?The speech of a woman is not forbidden, nor is it 'Awrah. But if she speaks in a soft tempting way, this is forbidden. Allah Almighty says: {If you fear Allah, then do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech.} [Al-Ahzāb: 32] Allah Almighty does not say: Do not speak to men; rather He says: {then do not be soft in speech [to men]} Softness in speech is more specific than speech in general. Accordingly, there is nothing wrong if a woman speaks to a man in a way that causes no temptation. Women would go to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and speak to him and he would reply to them as people around them would hear her speech. This is not wrong, provided that the talk is not private and does not involve any temptation. Hence, it is not permissible for a man to enjoy a woman's speech, mentally or sexually, unless she is his wife.

§§ Is it forbidden for a woman to show her hands?

?According to the famous opinion in the Hanbali school of Fiqh, a woman's hands are like her face; she may not show them in front of non-Mahram men. This was the apparent practice of women during the time of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him); I mean covering the hands.

This is indicated by the Prophet's instruction to a woman in the state of *Ihrām*: "She does not wear a face veil or wear gloves." His instruction to the woman in *Ihrām* not to wear gloves implies that women would habitually wear gloves; otherwise, there would be no need to give this command. If it had not been the habit of women in his time to wear gloves, he would not have prohibited them from wearing gloves in *Ihrām*. So, a woman should fear Allah and not appear in a way that causes temptation to others and to herself. Addressing the Prophet's wives, the purest of women, Allah Almighty says: {And stay in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance} [Al-Ahzāb: 33] He also says: {And when you ask for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts} [Al-Ahzāb: 53]

If someone argued that this is specific to the Prophet's wives only, we say to him: Indeed, the purity of hearts is required for the wives of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and all other women. As *Hijāb* brings about purity of hearts for both men and women, this indicates that there is no difference in this regard between the Prophet's wives and other women.

It should be noted that some people define *Hijāb* as covering all of a woman's body except her face. However, the truth indicated by proofs and entailed by reasoning is that a woman must cover her face because the face is the center of temptation and the object of desire. No one doubts that the first thing men look for in a woman is the beauty of her face.

So, she should fear Allah, dress modestly, keep away from temptation, and cover her face so as not to cause evil and corruption.

§§ Some people let their daughters, young or old, wear short and tight-fitting clothes that show the contours of the body. Kindly give advice to such people.

?Every person should be keen to fulfill his responsibility. He should fear Allah Almighty and prevent all females under his guardianship from wearing such clothes. In an authentic Hadīth, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not yet seen... and [he mentioned] women who are dressed yet naked, indecent and seducing others. Their heads are like the humps of the Bactrian camel, leaning to one side. They will not enter

Paradise and they will not smell its fragrance."Those women who wear short clothes are dressed, for there is a garment on their body, yet they are naked because their 'Awrah is visible. As far as looking is concerned, all of a woman is 'Awrah - her face, hands, feet, and all parts of her body - in the presence of non-Mahrams. The same applies to tight-fitting clothing. It is apparently a garment, yet, in fact, it is nudity. Indeed, revealing the body's contours is nakedness. A woman should fear her Lord and not reveal her charms. When going out, to the markets or the like, she should wear modest clothes that do not catch attention and should not apply perfume as it would attract men to her. A Muslim woman should only leave her house unless for a necessary need, and when she does, she should not apply perfume, display her beauty, or walk in an indecent manner. We should know that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I am not leaving behind a more harmful trial for men than women." The temptation of women is great. Almost no one is safe from it. We, Muslims, should not follow the paths of the enemies of Allah; the Jews and Christians, for indeed the matter is grave. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Verily, Allah gives respite to the oppressor, but when He seizes him, He does not release him." Then, he recited the verse that says: {And thus is the seizure of your Lord when He seizes the cities while they are committing wrong. Indeed, His seizure is painful and severe.} [Hūd: 102] When Allah seizes a people, He does so in the manner of One Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability. Allah Almighty says: {And I will give them time. Indeed, my plan is firm.} [Al-A'rāf: 183] Those who call to immodesty and mingling between men and women are in manifest error and tremendous ignorance, for they contradict the commands of Allah Almighty and His Messenger, while being ignorant of, or ignoring, what has befallen the nations that have been afflicted with this same evil. And now they wish to get rid of this calamity, but how could they possibly do that? It has become a habit that cannot be changed except after tremendous effort.

§§ We see some people adopt a strict approach with regard to their young daughters, to the extent that one of them would oblige his 4-year-old daughter to wear Khimār (long loose scarf), arguing that a person who grows up doing something will always do it. He also wants to impose that on his entire family. What do you think about this strict approach which restricts a little child who understands nothing?

?Undoubtedly, a person who grows up doing something will always do it. That is why the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered us to make the 7-year-olds pray, though they are not accountable yet; but this helps them get accustomed to prayer.

However, the 'Awrah of a young child is not subject to a ruling, and she is not required to cover her face, neck, hands, or legs. No one should oblige her to do so. But when a girl reaches a point where she becomes attractive to men, she should wear the Hijāb to ward off temptation and evil. This varies from one girl to another. Some grow up fast while others are the opposite.

§§ What is the ruling on a woman wearing gloves with the intention to conceal her hands while talking to men in the marketplace?

?Wearing gloves to conceal the hands from non-Mahram men is a good thing. A woman should wear gloves to cover her hands including the palms. This may be indicated by the Prophet's Hadīth that says: "A woman in Ihrām should not cover her face or wear gloves." Perhaps this Hadīth indicates that it was the habit of women to wear gloves and that doing so makes a woman more properly covered and farther from temptation. However, the gloves should not be pretty lest they attract men's attention.

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The face is the object of temptation

§§ The Muslim jurists differed over many Islamic rulings. One of these rulings is the issue of the woman's Hijāb. Their difference is rooted in the difference between the reported texts on this matter. So, what is the woman's Hijāb according to Shariah?

?The Hijāb according to Shariah is that a woman covers what is prohibited for her to reveal; most notably the face, for it is the object of temptation and desire. So, a woman is required to cover her

face in the presence of non-Mahram men. As for those who claim that Hijāb in Shariah is covering the head, neck, upper chest, feet, legs, and arms, and that a woman is permitted to reveal her face and hands, their opinion is indeed strange, for it is well-known that the face is the object of temptation and desire. How can one say that Shariah forbids a woman from revealing her feet and permits her to reveal her face?! This cannot exist in the great and wise Shariah that is free of any contradiction. Everyone knows that the temptation caused by revealing the face is far greater than that caused by revealing the feet, and everyone is aware that what men look for and desire in women is their faces. Hence, if a suitor is told that his would-be fiancée has an ugly face but beautiful feet, he will not go ahead with the proposal. If, on the other hand, he is told that she has a beautiful face, yet her hands or legs are below beauty standards, he will propose to her. This tells us that face is the most worthy of being covered. There are proofs from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the statements of the Companions and the prominent Imāms and scholars of Islam that indicate the obligation of the woman to cover all her body including her face before non-Mahram men. There is no room here to mention these proofs; but we have written a brief treatise on the subject that is of great benefit.

§§ What advice would you give to a man who prevents his wife from wearing the proper Hijāb?

?We advise him to fear Allah Almighty and be thankful to Him that He enabled him to marry this woman who wants to observe the command of her Lord with regard to lawful clothing that would make her safe from temptations. Allah Almighty commands His believing servants to protect themselves and their families from Hellfire, saying:

{O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded.} [Al-Tahrīm: 6]

And the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) laid on the man the responsibility for his family, saying: "A man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for those under his guardianship..." So, how could it befit this man to try to force his wife to abandon lawful clothing and wear prohibited clothing that causes temptation for others and herself. He should fear Allah Almighty with regard to himself and his wife and praise Him for giving him such a righteous woman.

As for his wife, it is never permissible for her to obey him in disobedience to Allah. Indeed, there should be no obedience to a created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator.

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Revealing the arm is not permissible

§§ Some women repeat a statement that say they have heard from some scholars; that if a woman reveals her arms while at home, her arms will burn on the Day of Judgment. Note that some women have their clothes tailored with the sleeves reaching the elbows only. What is the ruling on that?

?As for the mentioned punishment - that her arms will burn on the Day of Judgment - it is unfounded. But the ruling regarding a woman who reveals her arms before non-Mahrams is that it is impermissible and prohibited. A woman should wear modest and concealing clothes as much as she can and should cover her arms, except if there is no one in the house but her husband and Mahrams, in which case there is nothing wrong with keeping her arms uncovered. To a woman who has her clothes tailored with sleeves reaching the elbows only, I say: There is nothing wrong with these clothes if they are worn in the presence of your husband and Mahrams. And you should have other clothes tailored to wear them if there is a non-Mahram in the house, like your brother-in-law. It is not permissible for a woman to go out wearing such clothes unless she wears a garment with long sleeves over them, which, along with the 'Abaya [long gown], cover her properly while she is in the midst of people in the marketplace.

*

Women wearing perfume outside the house

§§ What is the ruling on women applying perfume and getting adorned and then going out of her house directly to her school. Is this permissible for them to do? And what is the adornment that is prohibited for a woman to reveal in the presence of other women?

?It is forbidden for a woman to go out to the market while wearing perfume. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If any woman applies perfume and passes by a gathering [of men], then she is such and such; meaning adulteress." This is due to the temptation associated with smelling perfume. However, if a woman is going to ride a car and her perfume will only be smelled by those who may lawfully smell it, and she gets off directly to her place of work, with no men around, in such a case there is nothing wrong with that, for being in her car is like being at home. Therefore, it is not lawful for a man to allow his wife or a woman under his guardianship to ride alone with a driver, for this is seclusion. But if she will pass near non-Mahram men, she is not allowed to apply perfume.

With regard to the adornment that she may reveal in the presence of other women; if it falls under what is usual among women of permissible adornment, then it is lawful.

But if it is otherwise, like a very transparent dress that reveals the skin or a very tight-fitting dress that reveals the charms of her body, this is not permissible as it is included in what the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) referred to in his statement: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not yet seen... [and he mentioned] women who are dressed yet naked, indecent and seducing others. Their heads are like the humps of the Bactrian camel, leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise and they will not smell its fragrance."

*

The rules governing extended families living together

§§ It is common in some communities that when an extended family lives in one house, women keep their faces uncovered before the male relatives of their husbands on the grounds that they live in one house. What does Your Eminence say about this?

?If an extended family lives in one house, women should wear Hijāb before non-Mahrams. A woman may not appear without Hijāb before her brother-in-law, for he is like a stranger in terms of looking at her and the non-Mahram relationship. It is also not permissible for a man to be alone in seclusion with his brother's wife if his brother leaves the house. This is a problem facing many people: two brothers living in one house, and one of them is married. It is not permissible for the married brother to keep his wife with his brother as he leaves for work or study. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "No man should be in seclusion with a [non-Mahram] woman." He also said: "Beware of entering upon women." They said: "O Messenger of Allah, what about the in-law?" meaning the husband's male relatives. He said: "The in-law is death." The question in such cases is always about the crime of adultery. The man goes out and his wife and brother remain together. Then, Satan tempts them and he commits adultery with his brother's wife - may Allah safeguard us. This is worse than committing adultery with the wife of one's neighbor. This is more terrible indeed. Here I would like to say something to absolve myself before Allah of the responsibility on this matter: It is not permissible for a man to let his wife stay with his brother in one house under any circumstances, even if his brother is one of the most trustworthy, truthful, and pious people. Satan to human beings is like blood running in their veins. Sexual desire has no limit, especially with young people.

§§ But what do we do if two brothers live in the same house and one of them is married? Do we say: If he wants to go out to work, he should take his wife with him?

?No, but they can divide the house into two sections, one of which is for the brother when he is alone. There should be a door between the two sections, and the door should be locked with a key that the husband keeps when he goes out. The woman should stay in a separate section and the brother in the other section.

§§ But the single brother might object and say to his married brother: Why are you doing this? Do you not trust me?

He can say to him in reply: I am doing this for your sake, because Satan runs in man's veins like blood. He may tempt you, your self may overcome you, and your desire may overtake your mind, leading you to commit sin. So, I am putting this limit to protect you. It is in the interest of both of us. If he gets angry because of that, he should let him be and not care about it.

I am saying this to absolve myself of any accountability resulting from concealing it - and your reckoning will be with Allah Almighty.

As for uncovering the woman's face in such a situation, this is forbidden. It is not permissible for a woman to reveal her face before her brother-in-law, for he is exactly like a stranger to her in terms of being a non-Mahram.

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Forbidding the Niqāb

§§ Recently, we have seen a phenomenon spreading among women in a noticeably way. It is the so-called Niqāb (face veil with opening for the eyes). What is strange is not the wearing of Niqāb, but the manner of doing so. In the beginning, women used to only show their eyes, then, the opening began to widen bit by bit, revealing part of the face along with the eyes, which causes temptation, especially that many women tend to apply kohl when they wear Niqāb. And if anyone discusses the matter with them, they argue that Your Eminence gave a Fatwa that the original ruling regarding Niqāb is that it is permissible [as opposed to being obligatory]. Kindly shed light on this issue in some detail.

?Undoubtedly, the Niqāb existed during the Prophet's time and women used to wear it, as denoted by the Prophet's statement that a woman in Ihrām should not wear Niqāb. This indicates that they were in the habit of wearing it. But in this day and age, we do not give a Fatwa sanctioning it; rather, we hold that it should be forbidden, for it is an excuse for having a flexible attitude towards what is not permissible [revealing part of the face]. We see this in reality. Hence, we did not issue Fatwa to any woman whatsoever that says it is permissible to wear the Niqāb at this time we live in. Rather, we maintain that it should be completely forbidden and that a woman should fear her Lord and not wear the Niqāb, for it opens a door to evil which cannot be closed again.

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There is no 'Awrah between husband and wife

§§ What is the ruling on wearing tight-fitting clothes in the presence of women and Mahram men?

?It is forbidden for a woman to wear tight-fitting clothing that shows the charms of her body. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not seen: Men with whips like the tails of cattle with which they are striking people, and women who are dressed yet naked, indecent and seducing others." His words "dressed yet naked" were interpreted to mean that they wear short clothes that do not cover the 'Awrah. Another interpretation of these words is that they wear transparent clothes that do not prevent seeing the skin underneath. A third interpretation is that they wear tight-fitting clothes which conceal the body but show its contours. Accordingly, a woman is not permitted to don tight-fitting clothes except in the presence of the one who may see her 'Awrah, namely her husband. There is no 'Awrah between a husband and his wife. Allah Almighty says about the believers: {And those who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess.} [Al-Mu'minūn: 5-6] 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and I used to take a ritual bath using the same water container, and our hands would alternate in it (in taking water)." Indeed, there is no 'Awrah between a man and his wife.

However, a woman should cover her 'Awrah before her Mahrams, and it is not permissible for her to wear very tight clothes in the presence of her Mahrams or other women.

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When she is forced to take off Hijāb

§§ In some countries, Muslim women may be forced to take off Hijāb, particularly the head-cover. Is it permissible for her to comply with this, noting that non-compliance is met with penalties like dismissal from work or school?

?This trial that happens in some countries is among the things by which a person is tested. Allah Almighty says: {Alif, Lām, Mīm. Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe" and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.} [Al-'Ankabūt: 1-3] I am of the opinion that Muslim women living in these countries should disobey the authorities in this issue, for it is unacceptable to obey the rulers if they give a command to do something prohibited. Allah Almighty says: {O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.} [Al-Nisā': 59] If you reflect upon this verse, you will find that Allah Almighty says: {Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.} He does not repeat the verb 'obey' at the mention of "those in authority", which indicates that obedience to them is subsequent to obedience to Allah and obedience to His Messenger. So, if their command contradicts obedience to Allah and His Messenger, it should not be obeyed, for "there should be no obedience to a created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator." Any trouble that befalls a woman as a result of her adherence to Hijāb is one of the things she should bear patiently, and she should ask Allah Almighty to give her patience. We implore Allah Almighty to guide those rulers to the true path. I think such coercion happens only when a woman leaves her house, and as long as she remains at home, she is not subject to such coercion. So, she can stay at home to be safe from this harm. Studies that entail disobedience to Allah Almighty are not permissible. In such a case, she should only study what she needs in terms of her religious and worldly matters, and that is enough. She can mostly do this at home.

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The Shariah-compliant clothing

§§ You undoubtedly know that the object of temptation in a woman lies in her body, and if it is revealed, it causes temptation and evil spreads as a result. So, what is permissible for a woman to reveal of her body? And what is the ruling on women looking at the 'Awrahs of one another?

?A woman is required to wear the Shariah-compliant clothing that covers her body. The dress of the wives of the Prophet's Companions, as stated by Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) and others, was described as follows: "from the hand to the ankle, in their homes." And when they went out, they would wear long clothing that extended one hand span beyond their feet. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) gave them permission to extend the length of their garment to an arm's length so as to cover their feet. This is the trait of a modestly dressed woman; but if she raises the clothing, she becomes one of the women dressed yet naked. That said, it is not permissible for a woman to look at the 'Awrah of another woman, between the navel and the knee. When a woman answers the call of nature, for example, it is not permissible for another woman to look at her, for she would be looking at the 'Awrah. As for the part of the body above the navel and below the knee, if a woman reveals it for some need, like when she raises her clothing to pass over mud or to wash her leg, in the presence of another woman, there is nothing wrong with that. Likewise, there is nothing wrong if a woman lets her breast out to suckle her baby in front of other women. Some ignorant women take this to mean that a woman wears clothing that covers the area between the navel to the knee only. This is a great lie against the Qur'an, Sunnah, Shariah, and the righteous predecessors. Who said that a woman should only wear pants that cover the area between the navel and the knee, and that this is the clothing of Muslim women?! This cannot be.

A woman should wear clothes covering from shoulder to ankle. As for a woman who looks at another, she may look at the chest and legs, but not the area between the navel and the knee, if the clothing is lifted.

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Short clothes

§§ I read an answer in your handwriting saying that a woman may reveal her face, head, neck, hands, arms, feet, and legs before her Mahrams and should cover the rest of her body. Does this ruling apply generally, noting that your position is that it is not permissible for little girls and women in general to wear short clothes? May Allah bless you.

?If we say that it is permissible for a woman to reveal such and such, this does not mean she can wear revealing clothes. But let's assume that a woman is wearing a dress down to her ankles and then her leg is revealed somehow, in such a case she does not incur a sin, as long as she is in the company of Mahrams or women only.

As for wearing short clothes, we prohibit it and warn against it, because we know that although this is permissible, it will get worse and lead to more than that, which usually happens with other things. People initially do something in a lawful manner and then things deteriorate and they fall into what is clearly prohibited. Moreover, the Prophet's statement "a woman should not look at another woman's 'Awrah" does not mean it is permissible for a woman to wear clothes that only cover what is between her navel and knees. No one can say that. The intended meaning is that if a woman's chest or leg gets revealed, while the dress is a proper one, it is not prohibited for another woman to look at her. Let's give an example: A woman suckles her baby and her breast is revealed for this purpose. We do not say to another woman: It is prohibited for you to look at this breast. Indeed, this is not 'Awrah. But if a woman says: "I only wear pants that cover what is between my navel and knees," this is not permissible and no one adopts this opinion. Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) mentioned that the female Companions used to wear clothes covering from their hands to their ankles, at home. But when they went out to the market, they would let their clothes hang down, as related in the Hadīth reported by Um Salamah. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) gave her permission to let her garment extend to an arm's length [beyond the ankles] so that her feet would not be revealed while walking.

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Revealing a woman's face inside a vehicle

§§ Some female teachers or students reveal their faces inside the bus or car as they commute to school on the grounds that no one can see them. What is your opinion about this? And what about the driver who transports them while their faces are revealed?

?It is prohibited for a woman to reveal her face in the presence of non-Mahram men. This is not permissible whether the woman is a teacher or a student and whether she is in a car or walking on foot in the market. But if she is in a car and pedestrians cannot see her from behind the glass, and there is a barrier between the women and the driver, there is nothing wrong in such a case if they uncover their faces, for this is similar to being in a room separate from men.

However, if the glass is transparent, or it is not transparent but there is no barrier between the women and the driver, it is not permissible for them to uncover their faces lest the driver or any man outside the car sees them.

In such a case, the fare received by the driver is not unlawful, for the women did not hire the car for the purpose of uncovering their faces. However, the driver should ask them to cover their faces. If they refuse and insist on revealing their faces, he should then put curtains on the glass or use tinted glass and place a barrier between him and the women. By so doing, the violation to Shariah would be removed.

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Greeting a woman

§§ What is the Islamic guidance regarding men returning the greeting of women? And is it permissible for a woman to greet a man? Is there a difference in this respect between a young woman and an old one from whom no temptation is feared? And what is the ruling on shaking hands with old women and kissing their heads?

?A man should not greet a woman, and vice versa, for this is a means of temptation. As an exception, a man or a woman can greet the other over the phone if needed. Another exception is when a woman is one of his acquaintances and he enters the house, for example, and finds her. In such a case, there is nothing wrong if he greets her. But that a man greets a woman whom he meets in the market, this is a means of great temptation; so, he should not do this. As for kissing Mahram women on the head or forehead, there is no harm in it; and there is also nothing wrong with a father kissing his daughter on the cheek. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) visited his daughter 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) while she was sick, and he kissed her on the cheek. There is nothing wrong with that. As for Mahram women other than daughters, they may only be kissed on the head and forehead.

With regard to a woman shaking hands with a non-Mahram, this is forbidden, for it leads to greater temptation than what is caused by just seeing her. As for kissing the head of an old woman, there is no harm in it if she is a Mahram; otherwise, a man should not kiss her.

§§ Is it permissible for a man to kiss his stepmother's head?

?Yes, it is, for she is one of his Mahrams.

§§ And is it permissible for a man to shake hands with his stepdaughter?

?This needs to be tackled in some detail. In brief, if he has consummated the marriage with her mother, he may shake hands with her if no temptation is feared; otherwise, he should avoid this.

§§ How can she have a daughter while he has not consummated the marriage with her?

The daughter is from a previous marriage, and he contracted the marriage with her mother, yet he has not consummated it, in which case this daughter is still non-Mahram to him.

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Special Issues

§§ It is common among many women that they use the services of a woman who comes to the house to remove the hair on their body, including the thighs. Is it permissible for such a woman to look at another woman's thighs as she removes the hair from them? Moreover, is this practice regarded as a necessity?

?This is not a necessity, for the lawfulness of removing the hair from thighs and legs is debatable. Indeed, hair is part of the creation of Allah Almighty, and changing the creation of Allah, other than what is sanctioned by Him, is deemed an inspiration from Satan. Satan is quoted in the Qur'an as saying: {And I will command them so they will change the creation of Allah} [Al-Nisā': 119] Hair is part of the creation of Allah, so it should not be removed except as prescribed by the Shariah, like removing the hair of the pubic area, the armpit, and the mustache. As for the hair of legs and thighs, it should not be removed. However, if the hair on a woman's leg is so thick that it looks like a man's leg, there is no harm in removing it. If there is thick hair on a woman's thighs, it should not be removed by another woman, but by the woman herself, for there is no need for seeking the help of another woman to do this. Nowadays, there are products whereby hair can be easily removed once they are applied to it. They can be used, after consulting a physician.

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Women's obligation to cover their faces

§§ What is the punishment for a woman who neglects Hijāb? Will she be punished with fire in the Hereafter?

?Anyone who disobeys Allah Almighty by a sin not expiated by good deeds is in danger of punishment; and if the sin is polytheism or disbelief that brings one out of the fold of Islam, then the punishment is certain. Allah Almighty says: {Verily, whoever sets up partners with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise to him, and Fire will be his abode.} [Al-Mā'idah: 72] He also says: {Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills.} [Al-Nisā': 48] If the sin is less than that - i.e. less than the disbelief that brings one out of the fold of Islam - and it is of the kinds not expiated by good deeds, then the person will be subject to the will of Allah; He may punish him if He wills or forgive him if He wills. The Hijāb a woman is obligated to wear is to cover her entire body before people other than her husband and Mahrams. Allah Almighty says: {O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their Jilbābs [outer garments]. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused.} [Al-Ahzāb: 59] A Jilbāb is a sheet or loose garment that covers the whole body. So, Allah Almighty commands His Prophet to tell his wives and daughters and the women of the believers to bring down their Jilbābs over themselves to cover their faces and upper necks. Proofs from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and sound reasoning indicate that a woman is required to cover her face before all men other than her husband and her Mahrams. A sane person would not doubt that if a woman is required to cover her head and feet and to not stamp her feet to make her hidden adornment known, like anklets, then there is greater and stronger reason to cover her face. This is because the temptation caused by the face is far greater than the temptation caused by a visible hair or toenail.

If a wise believer ponders the Shariah and its rulings and secrets, he will conclude that it cannot oblige the woman to cover her head, neck, arms, legs, and feet, and then allow her to show her hands and her beautiful face. This contradicts wisdom.

And if we consider the reality of people nowadays and how women have become negligent in covering their faces, which in turn has led to more neglect and led them to reveal their heads, necks, and arms and to walk indifferently in the markets in some Muslim countries - if we consider this, we will know that wisdom entails that women should cover their faces. A Muslim woman should fear Allah Almighty and wear the due Hijāb which causes no temptation, covering her body in the presence of men other than her husband and Mahrams.

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Women going to male doctors

§§ When a woman needs to see a male doctor to be examined, this requires her to reveal part of her body for examination. What is the ruling on this?

?There is nothing wrong if a woman goes to a male doctor when a female doctor is not available, and it is permissible for her to reveal any part he needs to look at. That said, she must be accompanied by a Mahram and not be in seclusion with the doctor, for this is prohibited. This ruling of permissibility is only because of need. The scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them) stated that such behavior is sanctioned because it falls under the prohibition of means, and anything that belongs to this type of prohibition becomes permissible in case of need.

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The permissibility of seclusion between a man and a woman for necessity

§§ It happens that part of a woman's body may be revealed before non-Mahram men in case of necessity; like when the wife of a neighbor falls ill while her husband is away and no Mahram is around. What should be done in such a case?

There is no doubt that mixing and shaking hands between women and non-Mahram men is not permissible, and it is more so with regard to seclusion. But when there is a necessity, the rulings are different. Allah Almighty says: {He has explained in detail to you what He has forbidden you, except if

you are compelled} [Al-An'ām: 119]So, if the wife of a person's neighbor badly needs his help, which entails that he speak to her and enter her house to take her to the doctor or the like, there is nothing wrong with that; but the means to temptation should be blocked. If he is married, he should take his wife with him to prevent seclusion.

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A blind man entering upon women

§§ What is the ruling on a blind man entering a place for women to teach them in schools?

?There is nothing wrong with a blind man entering a place for women for the purpose of education, as a woman is permitted to look at a blind man if temptation is not feared. Evidence of this can be found in the Prophet's statement to Fātimah bint Qays: "Observe your waiting period in the house of Ibn Um Maktūm, for he is a blind man and you can take off your garments in his house." Also, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) permitted 'Ā'ishah to watch the Abyssinians giving a display [with their weapons] in the mosque. But if temptation is involved, like when the man enjoys the woman's voice, makes her sit close to him, or holds her hand, this is not permissible then, not because it is prohibited to look at him, but due to the temptation associated with the situation.

*

Co-education is not permissible

§§ In some Muslim countries, male and female students attend their classes side by side on desks arranged in the same hall. What is the ruling on that?

?In my opinion, it is not permissible for any person, man or woman, to study in mixed-sex schools, given the great danger to this person's chastity, integrity, and manners. If a man – no matter how upright, well-mannered, and innocent he is – sits on a desk next to a woman, especially if she is pretty and immodestly dressed, he will hardly be safe from temptation and evil. Anything that leads to temptation and evil is prohibited and impermissible.

We ask Allah Almighty to save our fellow Muslims from such matters which only bring evil, temptation, and corruption to their youth.

§§ If all the universities available in the country are mixed, what should the student do?

?Even if he cannot find but these mixed-sex universities, he should move to another country where this mixing does not exist to study there. I hold that this is not permissible. Maybe there are others who hold a differing view.

§§ Some people shake hands with a non-Mahram woman if she puts some barrier on her hands. What is the ruling on that? And does the ruling apply to young and old women alike?

It is not permissible for a man to shake hands with a non-Mahram woman, whether directly or with a barrier, for this involves temptation. Allah Almighty says: {And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is an immorality and is evil as a way.} [Al-Isrā': 32] This verse indicates that we should avoid anything that leads to adultery, be it sexual intercourse or any other form of adultery. Undoubtedly, when a man touches the hand of a woman, this may arouse desire. There are Hadīths that give a stern warning to the man who shakes hands with a non-Mahram woman. There is no difference in this regard between a young woman and an old one. As the Arabic saying goes: "A thing that is renounced by someone may be desired by another." Moreover, the description of old and young can be relative. One may regard a woman as old while another sees her young.

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Women working with men

§§ You have outlined to us the limits of the man-woman relationship and what is permissible and what is not in their interactions. But what about the ruling on the relationship between them at work? Is it permissible for the woman to work in a mixed workplace with men; especially that this is so prevalent in many countries.

?I hold the view that it is not permissible for men and women to mix at a place of work, be it in the public or private sector or in public or private schools. Mixing between men and women leads to many evils, even if this only means the disappearance of the woman's sense of shyness and the man's awe. Indeed, when men and women mix, men are no longer held in awe. This - and I mean mixing between men and women - runs counter to the teachings of the Islamic Shariah and the practice of the righteous predecessors. Do you not know that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) assigned a special place for women during the Eid prayer, where they would not mix with men, as indicated in an authentic Hadith relating that when the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) finished his speech to men, he descended and went to the women to preach them and give them a religious reminder. This points out that they did not hear the Prophet's sermon, or that they heard it but could not comprehend what they heard. Do you also not know that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The best rows of women are the last ones and the worst of them are the first; and the best rows of men are the first ones and the worst of them are the last." This is only due to the fact that the first rows of women are close to men. Hence, they are deemed the worst among their rows. By contrast, the last rows of women are distant from men, and so they are regarded as the best. If this applies to an act of worship that men and women perform together, then what about things other than worship. It is known that a person engaged in worship is farthest from anything related to his sexual instinct. So, what would his state be if the mixing between men and women is outside worship. In fact, Satan runs inside human beings like the blood in their veins. It is not unlikely that such mixing would result in temptation and great evil. I advise my fellow Muslims to keep away from mixing and to know that it is most harmful to men. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I am not leaving behind a more harmful trial for men than women." Praise be to Allah that we, Muslims, have a special advantage that should distinguish us from others, and we should praise our Lord for bestowing it upon us. We should know that we follow the Shariah of the All-Wise Lord Who knows what sets aright the affairs of His creation. We should also know that those who have turned away from the path and Shariah of Allah Almighty are in error and will have an evil outcome. Therefore, we hear that the nations where men and women mix freely are trying their best to get rid of that. But this is not possible. We ask Allah Almighty to protect our country and all Muslim countries from all harms, evils, and trials.

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The permissible work

§§ What are the fields of work permissible for women, which they can do without going against the Shariah?

?Women can work in areas pertaining to women, like the education of girls, as part of administrative or technical staff, or they can work at home, sewing women's clothes and the like. But it is not permissible for a woman to work in fields related to men, as there has to be mixing between men and women, which is a means of great temptation that must be avoided. It should be known that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I am not leaving behind a more harmful trial for men than women." So, every person should always keep himself and his family away from the situations and means leading to temptation.

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It is prohibited to look at photos of female actresses

§§ There is a widespread phenomenon among young men which is keeping photos of foreign actresses and singers and others. They enjoy looking at them and justify their action with flimsy excuse that these are just photos, not real women.

?This is serious carelessness. When a man looks at a woman, whether in visual mass media or newspapers or the like, this subjects his heart to temptation and leads him to intentionally look at women directly. We see such examples in reality. We have heard that there are young men who keep photos of pretty women to look at them with desire and enjoyment. This proves the severity of the temptation involved in looking at such photos. It is not permissible for man to look at such photos, be they in magazines, newspapers, or anything else. Indeed, this inspires temptation that harms his religiousness and makes his heart attached to looking at women, and then he keeps looking at them directly.

§§ What are the limits of a woman's 'Awrah before a Muslim woman, a dissolute woman, and a disbelieving woman?

?A woman's 'Awrah before another woman does not differ according to religion. Her 'Awrah in front of a Muslim woman is the same as in the presence of a non-Muslim woman. Likewise, her 'Awrah in front of chaste and dissolute women is the same. An exception is when there is another reason that entails greater restraint. But it should be noted that 'Awrah is not what determines the type of clothing. In other words, although a woman's 'Awrah with regard to other women is the area between the navel and the knees, she should wear modest clothing. 'Awrah is one thing, and the clothing is another. Suppose that a woman is wearing modest clothing, but for some reason her chest or breast is revealed in front of another woman, there is nothing wrong with that. But if a woman wears a short garment that covers only what is between the navel and the knee on the pretext that this is the 'Awrah of women in front of one another, this is not permissible, and I do not think that any scholar adopts this view.

§§ Is it permissible for a woman to let her breast out to suckle her baby in the presence of other women?

The answer can be understood from the foregoing.

§§ What is the ruling on makeup for women or for the purpose of beautification for a woman's husband?

?There is nothing wrong with any adornment for women, as long as it causes no harm. In principle, things are lawful unless there is evidence to the contrary. I heard, however, that these powders (makeup) have an adverse effect on women's skin and cause a quick change to it, which is apparently true. Reactions are usually the same in the material and moral things, as they say. So, if it is conclusively proved that makeup causes no harm to women, then there is nothing wrong with using it, for it endears a woman to her husband and makes him attracted to her. This is specially so if the husband is of the type who cares about these things. In fact, husbands are different. While some may be passionate about such adornments, others may be indifferent. As for women wearing makeup amongst themselves while visiting one another, there is nothing wrong with that, if it is within the permissible limits of Shariah.

§§ Is it permissible for an unmarried woman to wear makeup before other women?

?According to some scholars, an unmarried woman should not wear makeup, for this is not required of her. In my opinion, she should avoid this. As for married women, we have explained the ruling on their case above.

§§ What is the ruling on women applying perfume at home?

?If women apply perfume at home, they will go out to the market after that and their scent will be smelled. It is authentically reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Any woman who has applied incense should not attend the 'Ishā' prayer with us." This proves that a woman may not go out perfumed. Yes, if those women will ride a car right at the door and will not come across any non-Mahram men, then there is no harm in wearing perfume in this case.

§§ What is the ruling on women's clothes designed by disbelievers when they are modest and there is no intention of imitating the disbelievers by wearing them?

?The phrase "intention of imitating" is irrelevant, because there is imitation, and the ruling applies whether the action is intentional or not. So, if these clothes are particular to the disbelievers and only worn by them, it is not permissible for a Muslim to wear them. However, if the clothes are common among Muslims and non-Muslims alike but are not available in our country, for instance, then there is nothing wrong with wearing them, provided that it is not intended for fame; if it is intended for fame, it is prohibited.

§§ What is the ruling on short tight-fitting clothes that reveal a woman's legs before Mahrams and women?

?As I said before, clothes should be long and concealing, not only covering the 'Awrah. Accordingly, women are required to wear long and concealing clothes, even if it is permissible that a woman uncovers her legs before other women and Mahram men. Indeed, we should be extremely cautious regarding these matters, particularly in this day and age, and prevent anything that might gradually lead to imitating the disbelievers in their clothes.

§§ What is the ruling on a young woman having a haircut for beautification?

?If her hair is cut to the extent that she looks like a man, this is prohibited. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed women who imitate men. Also, if the haircut makes her look like disbelieving women, it is prohibited, for the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Anyone who imitates a people is considered to be one of them." But if the hair is cut in other than these two aspects, then it is disliked according to the famous opinion in the Hanbali school of Fiqh. This opinion, albeit not based on a clear proof, is good to adopt, lest a woman gradually leaves what is permissible and turns to what is impermissible and from what is disliked to what is prohibited. So, the opinion saying that this is disliked errs on the side of caution against falling into what is prohibited, and it is a good one.

§§ It is said that you mentioned in the commentary on "Bulūgh al-Marām" that a man performing ablution should wipe over his hair from front to back and then from back to front until the water reaches the scalp. Is this true?

And does this apply to women also, noting that this is difficult for a woman given the thickness and length of her hair?

?Yes, this is true with regards to wiping over his head from front to back and from back to front. This is authentically reported in the Sunnah. As for the water reaching the scalp, this is untrue and incorrect, for water cannot reach the scalp by wiping. Wiping means that a person wets his hand then passes it over his head. This does not provide enough water to reach the scalp, except if it is done after shaving the head.

§§ As for the question "does this apply to women?"

?Yes, it does, for the rulings Shariah address both men and women, except if otherwise is established by a proof. I do not know of any proof excluding women from this ruling. Accordingly, a woman should also wipe over her hair from front to back. Even if her hair is long, it won't be affected by this, as she should only wipe gently. She should not press hard on the hair so that it gets wet or is raised to the top of the head.

§§ Should women wear Hijāb in the prostration of recitation just like they wear it in prayer?

?This depends on the difference of opinion among the scholars over the prostration of recitation, as to whether it should be treated like prayer, which would then require covering the 'Awrah, facing the Qiblah, and making ablution. If we regard it as a mere prostration that does not have the same requirements as prayer, then a woman is not required to put on the same Hijāb as she does for prayer, nor to be in a state of ablution. However, it is more prudent to follow the first opinion. Accordingly, a person should only make this prostration in a state of ablution and should cover what he or she covers during prayer.

§§ If a woman passes in front of another woman who is praying, does she interrupt her prayer?

?Yes, she does, for there is no difference in rulings between men and women except if otherwise is established by evidence. But if she passes beyond her Sutrah (barrier/screen), if she is using one, or beyond her prayer mat, or beyond the place of her prostration in case there is no Sutrah or mat, then such passing causes no harm and has no effect on her prayer.

§§ What if it is difficult to avoid this, especially in the two Sacred Mosques?

?The Hadīth does not specify any exception, and there is no difficulty in this. A person can prevent people from passing, and they will comply. If this is not easy, he can delay the supererogatory prayer until the place is not crowded or move forward to an empty place. Or he can offer the supererogatory prayer at home where it is better than in the mosque, be it the Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque, or any other mosque. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said while in Madīnah: "The best prayer is the prayer one performs at home, except for the obligatory prayer." The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) used to offer the supererogatory prayers at home.

§§ What is the ruling on women wearing white on their wedding night, noting that this is imitation of disbelievers?

?It is permissible for a woman to wear a white dress provided it does not resemble a man's clothing [in some Muslim countries, men traditionally wear white]. As for imitating the disbelievers, this imitation no longer applies as it is common now that Muslim women wear white on their wedding night. The ruling applies when the reason for it exists, and vice versa. If there is no imitation anymore and the white dress is worn by both Muslims and non-Muslims, the ruling does not apply. However, if something is prohibited per se, not on the grounds of imitation, then it is prohibited in all cases.

§§ A man asks his wife on some Ramadan nights to make food for his guests, and she feels exhausted after making the food that she cannot perform Qiyām (voluntary night prayer). Is she required to obey him in this regard if this continues for the most nights of Ramadan?

?A woman should live with her husband in kindness, and a man should live with his wife in kindness. Allah Almighty says: {And live with them in kindness} [Al-Nisā': 19] It is not kindness of man to exhaust his wife by making her serve him at such a time and in that way. If he insists, however, it is appropriate for her to obey him. If she feels too tired to perform Qiyām, Allah Almighty will record for her the reward for what she had intended and wanted to do. She failed to perform Qiyām for an excuse, fulfilling her duty of obeying her husband where obedience is due on her.

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Fatwas on Marriage

There is no doubt that every marriage means that a new brick and pillar have been added to the structure of society; and hence is the significance attached to it.

The building of generations and nations relies on marriage as its basis. And when the basis is sound and pure, the process of construction will be sound and free from obstacles that may hinder its completion.

With marriage, a Muslim begins a new life. This new life, however, should be supported by a proper understanding and deep realization of all the requirements of married life.

As we are now in the summer vacation where many wedding ceremonies are held, we find this an appropriate time to meet with one of the prominent scholars of the Ummah and ask him to demonstrate for us the right course and the well-established approach laid down by our great religion, so that we can follow its steps and derive guidance from its vision and thus be safe from falling into sins and errors.

We met with His Eminence Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-'Uthaymīn, may Allah bless him, and he gave us enlightening insight on marriage and its relevant issues as well as the commitments of the

married couple before, after, and during their marriage. He also tackled some violations that might be committed in marriage and offered valuable advice and instructions that benefit the Ummah in their religious and worldly affairs.

Here is the next conversation with him:

§§ Your Eminence, you know that marriage is a safe means for the fulfillment of sexual desire between man and woman by which chastity can be maintained. Lack of such fulfillment may lead to unfaithfulness, which in turn brings ruin to the Ummah. So, what is your advice to those who want to get married? And what should the bride and groom do on their wedding night?

I advise anyone wanting to get married to choose the woman whom the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) recommended. He said: "Marry the one who is affectionate and fertile..." He also said: "A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religious commitment. So win the one with religious commitment." On her part, the woman should choose the man who is well-mannered and religiously committed. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If there comes to you a person with whose religiousness and character you are pleased, give him (your daughter) in marriage." She should be quite careful and not rush to accept the proposal before she inquires about the suitor, lest she regrets her hastiness afterwards. On the wedding night, the husband should enter upon his bride with cheerfulness and joy, creating a cordial atmosphere for her, because at that time she would be feeling anxious and fearful. He should put his hand on her forehead and say the well-known supplication: "O Allah, I ask You for the goodness within her and the goodness that you have made her inclined towards, and I take refuge with You from the evil within her and the evil that you have made her inclined towards." He says that in an audible voice except if he fears that she might feel scared and averse, in which case he should only put his hand on her forehead and say this supplication inaudibly. When he is about to have sexual intercourse with her, he should say as the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) instructed: "If anyone of you, before having sexual intercourse with his wife, says, 'In the name of Allah; O Allah, protect us from Satan and protect what you bestow upon us from Satan,' then if Allah decrees that they should have a child, Satan will never be able to harm him." This is one of the means for having righteous children, and it is easy to do. Another thing that should, or must, be known is that when they have sexual intercourse, a ritual bath becomes due on both of them, even without ejaculation. Some people think that a ritual bath is only due if there is ejaculation, which is wrong. Once there is sexual intercourse, a ritual bath becomes due, with or without ejaculation. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "When he sits in between her four parts and has sexual intercourse with her, the ritual bath becomes due." Accordingly, the ritual bath becomes due if either of two things happens: ejaculation or sexual intercourse. If ejaculation occurs as a result of kissing, hugging, lustful gazing, talking, etc., the ritual bath becomes due, and so is the case if they engage in sexual intercourse, even without ejaculation. It is worthy of mention here that some husbands – may Allah give them guidance – do not care about the Fajr prayer in the morning after the wedding night. They either offer it late within its time and not in congregation or they fail to offer it until the sun rises. This attitude is wrong and it runs counter to the gratitude that should be shown for Allah's favor. Gratitude for His favor is by obeying Him.

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§§ Some people commonly say that if the husband goes out and attends the Fajr prayer in the mosque, this indicates his lack of desire for his wife; otherwise, he would stay with her for the entire day. What do you say about that?

?What I say is that this statement is an evil one. On the contrary, if he offers the Fajr prayer, this is a sign of his desire for her and that he shows gratitude for Allah's favor as He enabled him to get married. He is required to offer the Fajr prayer in congregation, not to abandon it without a valid excuse.

§§ What is your opinion about the statement of some scholars that “there is an excuse for a man to not attend the congregational prayer if he is waiting for his bride to be brought to him after the wedding ceremony”?

?My opinion is that some views of the scholars could be right and some could be wrong. So, we should refer to the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Second: The scholars who made this statement were talking about a situation that was common in their time; that the husband is receiving the wife, not the other way around. So, he is at home, waiting for his bride. There is an excuse for such a person not to attend the congregational prayer, for if he goes to pray, he will be distracted. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “No prayer when food is served.” Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) would hear the Imām’s recitation while he was having his supper and he would not go for prayer until he had finished his meal. If a man is excused for not attending the congregational prayer in this situation, there is greater reason than for a man who is waiting for his bride, and he is certainly more preoccupied and his excuse is obvious.

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But this habit has changed now and it is the groom who goes to his bride where she is. So, the matter is in his hand and he has no excuse for abandoning prayer in congregation.

§§ Your Eminence, it is a common practice among many people that when a man enters upon his bride, he offers two Rak’ahs and she also prays with him. Some even start to pray as soon as they enter, before talking to the bride. Is this part of the Sunnah?

?There are some reports from the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) regarding this issue, to the effect that when a man enters upon his bride for the first time, he should lead her in praying two Rak’ahs. But nothing is authentically reported from the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) regarding this practice. Whoever does this, I hope there is nothing wrong in doing it; and there is also nothing wrong if it is not done.

But nothing is authentically reported from the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) regarding this practice. Whoever does this, I hope there is nothing wrong in doing it; and there is also nothing wrong if it is not done.

§§ Your Eminence knows that women are deficient in reason and religion. If a woman chooses an impious man to be her husband, while her father has chosen a pious man for her, should her opinion be taken into consideration or should she be forced to marry the one whom her father chose?

As for forcing her to marry the one whom her father chose, this is not permissible, even if he is righteous. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “A virgin should not be given in marriage unless her permission is given, and a matron should not be given in marriage unless she is consulted.” In a version by Muslim: “And a virgin’s permission should be sought by her father regarding herself.” With regard to letting her marry a person whose character and religiousness are not pleasing, this is not permissible either. Her guardian should prevent her and say to her: I will not give you in marriage to that man you want to marry if he is not a good person.

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Someone may ask: What if the woman insists on not marrying except this man?

In reply, we say: We should not let her marry him and we incur no sin for that. But if we fear that temptation might arise between her and this suitor, and there is nothing in him that makes the marriage invalid under the Shariah, then we can marry her off to him in order to ward off the feared evil.

§§ Your Eminence, what do you say about some fathers who take all the dowry and only give very little of it to the daughters. Kindly note that some dowries are huge amounts that might reach 150 thousand riyals. Also, who knows what will happen to this dowry that he took by force without his daughter's consent after many years of marriage.

This question has two important points:

First: Is it permissible for a woman's guardian, her father or someone else, to allocate part of the dowry for himself or someone else?

The answer is no, this is impermissible, since the entire dowry belongs to the woman. Allah Almighty says: {And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously} [Al-Nisā': 4] Also, 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb reported from his father who reported from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whatever is given before marriage as a dowry or gift, or promised, belongs to the woman. Whatever is given after marriage belongs to whoever it is given to." There is no difference between her father or anyone else in this regard, according to the preponderant opinion. However, if she receives the dowry and it becomes in her possession, only her father can take from it as he wills, as long as he does not harm her by doing so. Other guardians are not entitled to such ownership. But if she gives anything to them willingly, it becomes lawfully theirs. The second point is that some dowries amount to unimaginable sums. This contradicts the Sunnah. Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that a man came to the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and said: "I married a woman from the Ansār." The Prophet said: "How much (dowry) did you give to marry her?" He said: "Four ounces." Thereupon, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Four ounces! It is as if you dig out silver from the side of this mountain." Four ounces are equivalent to 160 dirhams, which is less than the minimum amount that makes Zakah due. Demanding a large dowry removes blessing from a marriage. Indeed, the more blessed marriage is the one that costs less. A large dowry distresses the husband given the large sum he has spent, especially if he had to borrow that money. Whenever he feels happy with his wife then he remembers his debts, his happiness turn into grief and misery. Furthermore, if he is destined to not find harmony with his wife, it will not be easy for him to divorce her [because he must pay the deferred dowry], and so she continues to live with him in suffering and misery, neither truly married nor divorced. If she asks him for Faskh [annulment of marriage], he will mostly refuse unless he takes back the dowry. And if the dowry is large, the woman and her family will find it very hard to secure it. Hence, we advise our fellow Muslims to avoid demanding huge dowries and taking pride in them, rather, they should make it easy for young people to get married and lessen the reasons for trials and distress. Allah is the One sought for help.

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Hence, we advise our fellow Muslims to avoid demanding huge dowries and taking pride in them, rather, they should make it easy for young people to get married and lessen the reasons for trials and distress. Allah is the One sought for help.

§§ Your Eminence, one of the issues we would like you to touch upon is wedding invitation cards, which are sent to people to invite them to wedding banquets. The cost of one card may reach 7 riyals. Would you warn against it, especially that there are useful alternatives to these cards, like writing the invitation note on the back of a religious message or on the cover of an Islamic tape. People can also prepare a colored message written in a nice font on the computer then photocopy it, and its cost would be insignificant. Would you please call for putting an end to this wastefulness?

?I urge my fellow Muslims to give up this extravagance. This big amount of money is spent merely for an invitation, which the invitee might accept and might not, and it will ultimately be thrown away. I see this as clear extravagance which Allah Almighty prohibited, saying: {And do not spend wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils} [Al-Isrā': 26-27] Making the invitation on a card and writing useful quotes on the back is a good idea. I wish people would do that, but on ordinary paper. The second suggestion; to attach the card to useful tapes, is also good. And we have seen it in practice; cards, along with tapes, are given to people. This is good and we should support it as best we can. If people apply this idea, it will be both an invitation to a banquet and an invitation to the Shariah. Two good things are combined. The third suggestion, to make the invitation on photocopied papers, is also good and useful and does not cost much.

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The third suggestion, to make the invitation on photocopied papers, is also good and useful and does not cost much.

§§ Your Eminence, we hear about the due night stay with one's wife. Does it refer to the stay in bed, room, or house?

?This differs according to the difference of traditions. Allah Almighty says: {And live with them in kindness} [Al-Nisā': 19] But His statement {But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - advise them, and forsake them in bed...} [Al-Nisā': 34] indicates that married life is complete when the couple sleeps in one bed. This was the Prophet's guidance. But there is nothing wrong if he sometimes sleeps in a separate bed alone. The basic rule, however, is that a man should sleep with his wife in one bed.

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§§ Is a woman's waiting period established by seclusion or by copulation? And if he divorces her, can he retake the dowry?

Allah Almighty says: {O You who believe, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them...} [Al-Ahzāb: 49]. Touching here means copulation. However, the rightly-guided Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them) said: "If a man meets in seclusion with a woman and then he divorces her before copulation, the waiting period becomes due on her." The rightly-guided Caliphs have a Sunnah to be followed, in compliance with the Prophet's command. This is the case if he leaves her by divorce or the like. But if he leaves her by death, the waiting period and mourning become due on her, even if this happens before seclusion and consummation of their marriage. This accords with the general meaning of the verse that says: {And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - they [the wives] shall wait four months and ten [days]} [Al-Baqarah: 234] With regard to the dowry, if he divorces her before consummation of the marriage and seclusion, he may only retake half of it. But if he divorces her after consummation or seclusion, he may not retake any of it. If he dies, whether before or after consummation of marriage and seclusion, she is entitled to the whole dowry, and his heirs have no right to it.

However, the rightly-guided Caliphs (may Allah be pleased with them) said: "If a man meets in seclusion with a woman and then he divorces her before copulation, the waiting period becomes due on her." The rightly-guided Caliphs have a Sunnah to be followed, in compliance with the Prophet's command. This is the case if he leaves her by divorce or the like. But if he leaves her by death, the waiting period and mourning become due on her, even if this happens before seclusion and consummation of their marriage.

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If he dies, whether before or after consummation of marriage and seclusion, she is entitled to the whole dowry, and his heirs have no right to it.

§§ In some wedding ceremonies, some women distribute tapes and booklets containing religious lessons. Is this prescribed in the Shariah?

?This act itself is not prescribed in the Shariah, but it is commendable for the purpose it serves. In fact, the women may not be able to gather on other than this occasion, so, it is good to distribute such tapes and booklets among them in this gathering. This is one of the means of calling to Allah Almighty. However, these tapes and booklets should be for scholars who are trustworthy in terms of knowledge, piety, and approach.

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§§ Your Eminence, what is your opinion on preaching during a wedding ceremony?

?Preaching in such a situation is not reported from the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him). But if people ask a knowledgeable person, whom people would listen to and would not find burdensome in such a gathering, then preaching to them and speaking about the rulings they need is something good. He should not make it long though. And if he sees something wrong, he should stand to exhort people and warn them about it. Likewise, if a question is posed regarding a certain matter, there is nothing wrong if he gives the answer and digresses to other useful subjects.

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§§ Your Eminence, what is your opinion about women singing wedding chants. Is this considered 'Awrah?

?The mere voice of women is not 'Awrah. But if they raise their voices on this occasion, especially if their voices are pleasant and melodious, and the people are enjoying themselves at the wedding, this is feared to cause great temptation. It is more appropriate and safer to keep their voices amongst themselves. As for what some people do nowadays, placing loudspeakers on balconies, thus disturbing people and harming them with the loud noise, this is wrong and should be forbidden.

As for what some people do nowadays, placing loudspeakers on balconies, thus disturbing people and harming them with the loud noise, this is wrong and should be forbidden.

In brief, there is nothing wrong if women sing an appropriate chant on such occasion, provided this is not accompanied by prohibited music.

§§ Your Eminence, is it permissible for women to dance during wedding ceremonies, noting that this occurs among women only?

?Dancing is disliked. I used to take a lenient approach to it, but I was asked many times about incidents that happen when women dance which led me to forbid it. Some girls are agile and pretty with a nice figure, and their dancing tempt the women who watch them. I was even told that some women would get up and kiss the dancing woman and perhaps hug her. This is a clear temptation.

Some girls are agile and pretty with a nice figure, and their dancing tempt the women who watch them. I was even told that some women would get up and kiss the dancing woman and perhaps hug her. This is a clear temptation.

§§ Your Eminence, what do you say about the engagement ring?

?The engagement ring is originally a ring, and basically there is nothing wrong with a ring unless it is accompanied by some belief. For example, the suitor would have his name inscribed on the ring and give it to his fiancée and she would do the same, believing that this would form a bond between them. In such a case, this ring is prohibited, for it constitutes attachment to something that has no basis in the Shariah or in reality. It is also impermissible that the suitor himself puts the engagement ring on his fiancée's finger because she is not yet his wife. Until the marriage contract is concluded, she remains a non-Mahram to him [and he may not touch her].

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§§ Your Eminence, we know that it is not permissible for a woman to uncover her face before non-Mahrams. But what do you say about the Hadith relating that a bride served a drink to her suitor with her face uncovered, and this happened in the Prophet's presence, noting that the Hadith is authentic and reported by Muslim?

?This and similar Hadīths, which apparently indicate that the female Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) used to keep their faces uncovered, are to be held as taking place before the Hijāb was ordained, for the verses indicating the obligation of Hijāb were revealed later, in the year 6 A.H. Before that, women were not required to cover their faces or hands. So, all texts that apparently indicate the permissibility of uncovering women's faces before non-Mahram men are regarded to have occurred before the revelation of the verses on Hijāb.

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However, there may be Hadīths that include what indicates that this happened after Hijāb was ordained. It is such Hadīths that require an answer.

An example is the Hadīth about the woman from Khath'am came to ask the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) about something and Al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbās was riding behind him during the Farewell Hajj. Al-Fadl kept looking at her and she kept looking at him, while the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) kept turning Al-Fadl's face to the other side. This Hadīth was cited as supportive evidence by those who hold that a woman may uncover her face. This is undoubtedly one of the equivocal Hadīths from which permissibility and non-permissibility can both be indicated. The indication of permissibility is obvious. As for the indication of non-permissibility, we say: This woman was in a state of *Ihrām* and was consequently required to keep her face uncovered. We do not know that anyone else was looking at her but the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and Al-Fadl ibn al-'Abbās. As for the Prophet, Al-Hāfiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy upon him) mentioned that the Prophet was allowed to look at women or be in seclusion with them, something not allowed for others. It was also permissible for him to marry without paying dowry, without a woman's guardian, and more than four wives. Allah Almighty gave him some privileges in these issues, for he was the most chaste among people and nothing inappropriate was ever likely to come from him, unlike other men. Based on this, the scholars adopt the rule that when the probability is there, the argument becomes invalid. So, this Hadīth is deemed equivocal, and we should refer equivocal texts to the definite and clear ones. Those texts clearly indicate that a woman may not uncover her face before men other than her husband and Mahrams and that uncovering women's faces is a means to temptation and evil. We can see this clearly in the countries where women were allowed to uncover their faces. Did these women stop at uncovering their faces only? The answer is no. They uncovered their face, neck, upper chest, arms, legs, and sometimes their chest. And these men failed to prevent their women from what they acknowledge to be sinful and prohibited. If a door to evil is open to people, be certain that many other doors will follow. And if a small opening is made, it will keep getting wider and no one will be able to patch it. The texts of Shariah and sound reasoning all indicate that it is obligatory on women to cover their faces. I wonder at some people who maintain that a woman is obliged to cover her feet and permitted to uncover her hands! Which is more worthy of being covered? Is it not the hands? Indeed, the delicacy of a woman's hands and the beauty of her fingers and fingertips are more attractive than her feet and toes. I also wonder at those who maintain that a woman is obliged to cover her feet and permitted to uncover her face! Which is more worthy of being covered? Is it reasonable to say that the perfect Islamic Shariah, which was revealed by Allah – The All-Wise, All-Aware – enjoins women to cover their feet and permits them to reveal their faces! The answer is no, this contradicts wisdom, for men are more attracted to women's faces than to their feet. I do not think that a man looking for a woman to propose to would inquire about her feet as to whether they are beautiful or not and leave the face. This is inconceivable. In fact, the first thing he looks for in his prospective wife is the face; her lips, her eyes; etc. But to look for the beauty of feet and neglect the face, this is impossible. Hence, the center of temptation is the face.

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etc. But to look for the beauty of feet and neglect the face, this is impossible. Hence, the center of temptation is the face.

The word 'Awrah does not mean that the face is like the private parts, which one would feel embarrassed to reveal; rather, the meaning is that it should be covered, for it tempts men and makes them attached to the woman.

I find it strange indeed that some people say it is not permissible for a woman to show three hairs or less and then they say it is permissible for her to reveal her beautiful delicate eyebrows and long dark eyelashes! And it did not stop at just uncovering such natural beauty; rather, in this day and age, a woman's face is made up with all kinds of cosmetics, like blusher and the like.

And it did not stop at just uncovering such natural beauty; rather, in this day and age, a woman's face is made up with all kinds of cosmetics, like blusher and the like.

I believe that anyone who is aware of the points of temptation and the desires of men would never say that it is permissible to reveal a woman's face and cover her feet, while attributing this ruling to the most perfect and wise Shariah!

Some latter scholars stated that Muslim scholars agreed over the obligation of covering a woman's face due to the great temptation it causes. This is mentioned by the author of *Nayl al-Awtār*, who reported Ibn Raslān as saying: This is because people now have weak faith and many women lack chastity. That is why it is incumbent to cover this face, even if we say it is otherwise permissible to uncover it. But the condition of Muslims today requires holding the view that it is incumbent to cover it. Indeed, if a permissible thing is a means to something prohibited, it becomes prohibited itself by way of the prohibition of its means.

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I am also amazed at some who call to immodesty with their pens and what they call people to nowadays, as if it were an obligation and people neglected it. But how can we allow ourselves to invite people to something while we see its evil consequences?!

A person should fear Allah Almighty before giving a say over something debatable. Many seekers of knowledge fall into this mistake. Possessing theoretical knowledge, they give a ruling according to it without considering people's conditions and the consequences of what they decide.

'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him) would sometimes prohibit something sanctioned by the Shariah to serve a public interest. For example, during the Prophet's lifetime, Abu Bakr's caliphate, and two years into 'Umar's caliphate, if a man divorced his wife three times in one phrase, they considered it as one divorce. Or if he divorced her in three successive phrases, according to Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) which is the predominant opinion, it would count as one divorce. But when this became commonplace among people, the Commander of the Faithful 'Umar said: "People have hastened something in which they were given respite. What if we execute what they wanted?" So, he executed what they wanted and prevented them from taking back their wives, for they had precipitated this matter, and that is prohibited. I say: If we hold that it is permissible for a woman to reveal her face, the academic honesty and the care rooted in this honesty require that we do not sanction it in this age where temptations are rife, and that we should prohibit it by prohibiting its means. Nonetheless, the proofs from the Qur'an and Sunnah indicate that it is prohibited for a woman to uncover her face, and that it is more appropriate to prohibit revealing a woman's face than to prohibit revealing her feet or legs or the like of that.

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§§ Your Eminence, what do you say about a man who married a woman and then his father forced him to divorce her. Should he insist on keeping her and thus disobey his father or divorce her while she did no wrong?

If a father asks his son to divorce his wife, then it is either of two cases:

First: The father gives him a valid reason that requires divorcing her, like when she displays suspicious conduct, flirting with men, associating with immoral people, and so on. In such a case, he should obey his father and divorce her, because he did not ask him to do so for a mere personal inclination, but to protect the honor of his son from anything that may tarnish it. Second: The father asks his son to divorce his wife because the son loves her so much that his father feels jealous, and the mother gets even more jealous. It often happens that when a mother sees that her son loves his wife, she feels very jealous to the extent that her daughter-in-law becomes like her co-wife – may Allah safeguard us. In a case like this, the son is not required to divorce his wife if his father or mother asks him to do so, but he should cajole them and try to persuade them in a kind manner to let him keep his wife. This is particularly so if the wife is religiously committed and well-mannered. Imām Ahmad (may Allah have mercy upon him) was asked about this issue in particular. Someone came to him and said: My father orders me to divorce my wife. Thereupon, Imām Ahmad said: Do not divorce her. He said: Is it not true that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered Ibn 'Umar to divorce his wife when his father, 'Umar, ordered him to do so? He replied: Is your father like 'Umar? Or he said something similar. If a father cites as argument the fact that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) ordered Ibn 'Umar to divorce his wife when his father, 'Umar, ordered him to do so, he should give a similar reply, but he should use gentle wording, saying: 'Umar saw something that made him believe that his son's interest required that he orders him to divorce his wife.

In such a case, he should obey his father and divorce her, because he did not ask him to do so for a mere personal inclination, but to protect the honor of his son from anything that may tarnish it.

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§§ Your Eminence, what is the ruling if a father wants to marry his son off to an impious woman? And what is the ruling if he refuses to let him marry a righteous woman?

?The answer is like the answer to the previous question. It is not permissible for a father to force his son to marry a woman he does not accept because of something wrong in her religious commitment or manners. Many are those who regretted forcing their sons to marry women they did not want. A father would say: "Marry her; she is my niece," or "she is from your tribe," or the like. The son in such a case is not obliged to comply and his father should not force him. Likewise, if he wants to marry a righteous woman, yet his father prevents him, he is not required to obey him. So, if the son is pleased with a righteous woman as a wife, and his father tells him not to marry her, he may marry her, even if

his father tries to prevent him. A son is not obliged to obey his father in something that causes no harm to the father and brings benefit to the son. If we said that a son is required to obey his father in everything, even in such things that bring benefit to the son and cause no harm to the father if he disobeys him, this would lead to much harm. But in a case like this, the son should speak politely with his father and try to convince him as much as he can in a kind manner.

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§§ Your Eminence, please allow me to present a number of violations that take place in some marriages, hoping that you would kindly discuss them. They are as follows:

First: Some women wear clothes that are unfamiliar in our society, on the grounds that they wear them only amongst other women. Some of these clothes are tight-fitting and showing the contours of a woman's body, and some have openings at the top that reveal part of the breasts or back. And some of these clothes are slit at the bottom up to the knee or close to it.

Second: In some wedding ceremonies, they beat the tambourine over loudspeakers, women sing, and the event is videotaped, and worse than that, the groom kisses the bride in front of the women. When a person jealous about the religion of Allah gives advice to them, he gets this reply: Shaykh so-and-so gave a Fatwa permitting beating the tambourine. I wonder if this is true. Kindly illustrate the truth of the matter to Muslims.

?Regarding the first violation, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There are two types of the dwellers of Hell-fire which I have not seen: people with whips like the tails of cattle with which they strike people, and women who will be dressed yet naked, indecent and seducing others. Their heads will appear like the humps of the Bactrian camels, leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise nor will they smell its fragrance, which is smelled from such-and-such a distance." The Prophet's statement "dressed yet naked" means that they actually wear clothes, but those clothes do not properly cover their bodies, either because the clothes are short, transparent, or tight-fitting. Usamah ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) gave me a Qubtiyyah (a type of clothes) to wear, and I gave it to my wife to wear. Thereupon, the Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Tell her to wear a tunic underneath it, for I fear it might define her bones." [Narrated by Imam Ahmad with a slightly weak Isnād] This also applies to the opening at the upper chest, which contradicts the divine command: {And to cover their chests with their head-covers.} [Al-Nūr: 31] Commenting on this verse, Al-Qurtubi said: The manner of doing this is for the woman to place her head-cover over the neckline of her clothes to cover her bosom. Then, he mentioned a report relating that 'Ā'ishah's niece, Hafsa bint 'Abdur-Rahmān ibn Abu Bakr, entered upon 'Ā'ishah one day while wearing something transparent over her neck and the surrounding part. Thereupon, she ripped it apart and said: You should use a thick fabric that conceals what is underneath it. The same can be said about the clothes that are slit at the bottom, unless there is something worn underneath it. If she wears something underneath it, there is nothing wrong with that except if it resembles the clothing of men, in which case it will be prohibited on the grounds of imitating men.

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A woman’s guardian should prevent her from wearing any prohibited type of clothes and from leaving the house while displaying her beauty or wearing perfume. As her guardian, he will be questioned about her on the Day of Judgment, a day {when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided.} [Al-Baqarah: 48]

As for beating the tambourine, this is permissible or an act of Sunnah if it serves to announce the marriage. But the following requirements should be observed:

First: The beating should be on the Duff (tambourine), which is also known among some people as the Tār. It is sealed on one side.

The instrument sealed on both sides is called a drum, and it is not permissible because it is a musical instrument.

All musical instruments are forbidden, except otherwise permitted by a proof, which is the case with the tambourine on wedding days.

Second: This should not be accompanied by anything prohibited, like immoral singing that arouses desires. In fact, this is forbidden whether accompanied by the tambourine or not and whether on wedding days or any other days.

Third: This should not lead to temptation, like the emergence of melodious voices. If it leads to temptation, it would be prohibited.

Fourth: This should cause no harm to anyone; otherwise, it would be prohibited. An example is when loudspeakers are used and they disturb the neighbors and others. This might cause temptation as well. The Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) forbade people from reciting in a loud voice in prayer lest they annoy and distract one another. What then should the attitude be towards the sound of tambourines and the voices of singing?! As for recording these scenes on camera, no sane person would ever doubt that this is something bad. Any rational man, let alone a believer, would not accept that his Mahram women, like his mother, daughters, sisters, wife, etc., get photographed and their photos be shown to anyone like a commodity and every immoral person can

look at them and enjoy himself. Worse than that is videotaping, for it captures the scene alive in audio and video form. Every sane and upright person would disapprove of this. It is inconceivable that anyone with a sense of honor and faith would ever deem this acceptable. As for dancing by women, it is reprehensible and I do not deem it permissible after I learned about certain incidents that took place among women because of it. Dancing by men is even more reprehensible and it falls under imitation of women. It is no secret how bad this is. If the dance involves men and women together, as some foolish people do, this is more serious and reprehensible, given the mixing and tremendous temptation involved, especially when this happens at a wedding ceremony where everyone is enjoying themselves. Concerning what you mentioned, that the groom goes to the bride within the gathering of women and kisses her in front of them, this is truly astonishing that a man upon whom Allah Almighty bestowed the favor of getting married should act like this and meet the blessing with something frowned upon in the Shariah and rejected by reason and honor. I wonder how the relatives of the bride let him do so! Are they not worried that this man might see among the gathering of women one who is more beautiful and charming than his bride and so he loses his admiration for her and starts thinking much about this which may ultimately lead to a bad outcome between the couple? Concluding my answer, I would like to advise my fellow Muslims against engaging in these evil acts and I call upon them to show gratitude for this and other favors and to follow the path of the righteous predecessors in abiding by the Sunnah; Allah Almighty says: {And do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the sound way} [Al-Mā'idah: 77]

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Questions on Children's Games

§§ There are lots of games and useful educational programs for children, but they mostly begin with music or something similar to music. We have an example here, which is a talking book. Kindly hear this tone and give us your opinion about it.

?What I have heard is music, and music is prohibited as established by the Hadīth narrated by Al-Bukhāri in which Abu Mālik al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "From among my Ummah there will be some people who will permit illegal sexual intercourse, silk, alcohol, and musical instruments." Accordingly, it is not permissible to use these programs unless this music is removed. Moreover, the animals' voices I have heard in the stories included in this book are not like their real voices and they do not give a complete perception about the voices of these animals. That is why I am of the opinion that they should not be used, and that it is prohibited to use them if the music remains. If the music is removed, the programs are of little benefit anyway.

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§§ Many games contain hand-drawn images of living beings, and they are mostly for educational purposes, like the ones in the talking book. What do you say about this?

Answer: If they are intended to amuse children, then the scholars who sanctioned toys for children held that such images are permissible, while the scholars who forbade such images would not hold it permissible. That said, the images which I see before me are not an exact representation of the images that Allah gave to those creatures. So, the matter is easy.

§§ Then, Your Eminence, there is nothing wrong if they are for children. Likewise, can we say that the music in the games and useful educational programs for children is permissible and show some flexibility in this respect, since they are for children?

Answer: We should not show flexibility with regard to them, for there is nothing similar reported in the Sunnah, and the musical instruments whose prohibition is reported are general and there is no evidence for any specification regarding them. Moreover, if a child gets accustomed to diversion and music playing, this will become second nature to him.

§§ There were many types of dolls, which 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) called "the girls". Some of them are made from cotton in the form of a sewn sack with a head, two hands, and two legs. Some resemble human beings exactly, and these are sold in the markets. Some of them speak, weep, walk, or crawl. What is the ruling on making or buying these kinds of dolls for young girls for the purpose of education and amusement?

Answer: Dolls without a complete design, but with only some body parts and the head and do not represent a full creation, there is no doubt that such dolls are permissible. These are like "the girls" 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) used to play with.

But the dolls that have the shape of a complete creation, as if you are looking at a human being, especially if they move or make a sound, I do not feel comfortable sanctioning them. This is because such dolls completely emulate the creation of Allah Almighty, and the dolls that 'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) used to play with were not like this. So, it is better to avoid them. However, I am not definitively saying that they are prohibited, for things which are forbidden for adults may sometimes be permitted for children. Children naturally like playing and amusement, and they are not required to

perform acts of worship so that we can say that they should not waste their time in playing. Out of caution in such matters, one can remove the head or heat it on fire until it becomes malleable then he can press on it to eliminate its features.

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§§ Does it make a difference if the children make the dolls themselves or we make or buy the dolls for them, or the dolls are given to them as gifts?

Answer: I am of the opinion that it is forbidden to make them in a way that emulates the creation of Allah, for this is depiction of the creation, which is undoubtedly prohibited. But if they are brought to us from Christians or other non-Muslims, the ruling on acquiring them is as I have said in the beginning. As for buying, we should buy other things that do not contain images, like bicycles, cars, cranes, or the like.

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As for the dolls made from cotton that do not have a complete shape, if they have such parts as the head and neck but they have no eyes or nose, there is nothing wrong with this type of dolls because they do not emulate the creation of Allah.

§§ What is the ruling on making doll-like shapes using clay and then kneading them right away?

Answer: Anyone who makes something that emulates the creation of Allah falls under the Hadīth that says: "The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) cursed image-makers..." "The people who will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Judgment are the image-makers." But, as I said, if the image is not clear, i.e. it has no eye, nose, mouth, or fingers, then it is not a complete image and does not emulate the creation of Allah Almighty.

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§§ When children play together, sometimes a boy acts as a father and a girl acts as a mother. Should we let them play like this or prevent them? And why?

Answer: I am of the opinion that they should be prevented, for things may gradually develop until he sleeps with her. It is better to block the means to that.

§§ Some stories aim at educating or entertaining children, and they take different forms. Some of them recount situations for speaking animals. For example, a story aimed at teaching children that lying has evil consequences relates that a fox pretends to be a doctor in order to deceive a chicken, yet he falls into a hole on account of his lying. What do you think about this kind of stories?

Answer: I have no definite say on this, for these animals are presented in a way different from their actual creation, speaking, treating others, and punishing. Some may argue that this is only given as an example. So, I say nothing on this issue.

§§ There is another type of stories. A mother may relate to her child a story that can occur in reality, though it has not. For example, she says to him that there is a boy called Hasan who did some harm to his neighbors and climbed up their wall so he fell and broke his hand. What is the ruling on this type of stories through which a child can learn some virtues and good traits? Is this considered to be lying?

Answer: Apparently, if this is recounted as representation, like saying there is a child or a boy, without naming him or making it sound as if it really happened, then there is nothing wrong with that, for it is given as representation and not something real. Anyway, there is nothing wrong with such things, for they give benefit and cause no harm.

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§§ In schools, a child may be asked to draw an image of a living being or to complete an incomplete image of one, like a chicken for example. He may sometimes be asked to cut this image and paste it on paper or is given an image to color. What do you say about this?

Answer: In my view, this is forbidden and should be banned. Those in charge of education should fulfill their trust in this respect and prevent those things. If they want to test the intelligence of students, they can ask them to draw the image of a car, tree, or something similar with which they are familiar. Thus, the extent of their knowledge, intelligence, and applied skills can be known. This is one of the afflictions Satan inspired among people. In fact, there is no difference, as far as the skills of drawing are concerned, between drawing a tree, car, palace, or a human being.

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In my view, those in charge of education should ban these things. If they cannot help but make images, let them make images of animals without heads.

§§ Should we obliterate the images in books? Does separating the head from the body by drawing a line between them remove the prohibition?

Answer: In my view, it is not necessary to obliterate them, given the great difficulty involved in this and because these books are not intended for such images; rather, they are intended for the information contained therein. Drawing a line between the neck and the body would not change the image from what it is.

§§ A child may fail in school if he does not draw such images; that is, he may not get the score for drawing, and as a result he fails.

Answer: If this is the case, then the student may be obliged to do such a thing, and the sin will fall on those who ask him to do it. But I hope the officials will not go to that extent of obliging people to disobey their Lord.

§§ In some kindergartens, boys and girls are in mixed classes up to the age of five or six. What is the age up to which this is permissible? Also, in many of these kindergartens, female teachers teach both boys and girls. What do you say about this, and to what age is a woman permitted to teach a young boy?

Answer: I believe that this question should be referred to the Council of Senior Scholars to review and decide it, for this may open the door to mixing in the future. But as for mixing among children, there is basically nothing wrong with that. I fear, however, that this might involve plots intended to make this matter a means to bigger things as it seems to me; and Allah knows best. That is why the issue of such schools should be referred to the Council of Senior Scholars for consideration or to authorities which, after consideration, can prevent this.

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§§ Some schools segregate between boys and girls, but the teachers who teach both genders are women. To what age is it permissible for a woman to teach male students?

Answer: As I said, anything that involves mixing [between males and females] should be prevented, no matter what.

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Questions on Children's Clothes

§§ A lot of children's clothes have images of animate beings on them. Some of these clothes are heavily used such as shoes and underwear for children under the age of three, and some others are lightly used and their condition and cleanliness are maintained. What is the ruling on such clothes?

Answer: The scholars said: It is prohibited to make children wear such clothes that are prohibited for adults. Clothes that have such images on them are prohibited for adults, and so it is prohibited to make children wear them as well. Muslims should boycott such clothes and shoes, lest evil and wicked people penetrate to us through these areas. If we boycott them, they will not find a way to make such clothes and shoes spread in our countries, and so they will become less and less salable.

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§§ Is it permissible that young boys wear things that are particularly worn by girls, like gold and silk, and vice versa?

The answer is understood from the previous reply. I said that the scholars held that it is prohibited to make boys wear clothes prohibited for adults. Accordingly, it is prohibited to have boys wear the clothes of girls, and vice versa.

§§ Does this ruling apply to *Isbāl* (lowering one's garment below the ankle) for young boys?

Answer: Yes, it does.

§§ And does it apply to what involves imitation of disbelievers, like hats and pants?

Answer: This is another issue. Muslims' imitation of disbelievers in clothes and other things is prohibited, be they males or females, children or adults.

The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever imitates a people is considered to be one of them."

Muslims should possess strong character that prevents them from being followers of others. Indeed, they are superior, and so is their religion;

Allah Almighty says: {So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.} [Āl-'Imrān: 139]

He also says: {It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although those who associate others with Allah dislike it.} [Al-Tawbah: 33]

§§ Is it permissible for children, whether boys or girls, to wear short clothes that show their thighs?

Answer: As well known, the 'Awrah of children below the age of 7 is not subject to any ruling. But if children get accustomed to such revealing short clothes, they will undoubtedly find it easy to reveal their 'Awrah in the future.

A person might probably not feel shy to reveal his thigh, for he used to normally reveal it as a child.

At that point, people will begin to regard their 'Awrah just as they regard their faces, in terms of the lack of prohibition and shyness of revealing it.

So, I am of the opinion that children should be prevented from wearing such clothes and should instead be dressed modestly.

§§ What is the ruling on piercing a girl's ears to make her wear gold earrings? Does this constitute some form of mutilation and torture, as stated by some scholars?

Answer: According to the correct opinion, there is nothing wrong with that, for this is a means of permissible adornment. It is authentically reported that the female Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) used to wear earrings. The pain involved in piercing is slight, and the recovery is quick if this is done while the girl is young.

§§ Does this apply to piercing the nose?

Answer: Yes, according to those who hold that this is a place of adornment.

§§ What is the ruling on shaving the head of a baby girl upon birth or thereafter for the purpose of making her hair long and thick? Is it Sunnah to shave her head upon birth like baby boys?

Answer: It is not Sunnah to shave the head of a baby girl on the seventh day after birth like in the case of baby boys. As for shaving it for the purpose you have mentioned, the scholars said: It is disliked to shave the head of a baby girl. One may argue, however, that if this is proved to make the hair healthy and thick, then it is harmless to do it. According to the well-known rule, dislike is removed by need.

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§§ At what age of a child should a woman wear the Hijāb before him? Is it the age of discernment or puberty?

Answer: Within the context of clarifying what may be revealed of women's adornment, Allah Almighty says: {Or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women} [Al-Nūr: 31] When a child becomes aware of women's 'Awrah and begins to look at it and speak about it, women should then wear the Hijāb before him. This differs from one boy to another in terms of sexual instinct and the nature of gatherings he attends. A boy may often sit with people who speak a lot about women; and if it were not for that, he would be unaware and indifferent about women. The point is that Allah Almighty has determined it by His words: {Or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women} [Al-Nūr: 31] In other words, women can display their adornment to a young boy if he is not aware of their 'Awrah and does not care about women in that sense.

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§§ Does touching a child's sex organ to remove impurity invalidate ablution?

Answer: It does not invalidate ablution.

§§ Is it permissible for a father or mother to punish their child by beating him or putting something bitter or spicy in his mouth, like pepper, if he commits a certain mistake?

Answer: As for disciplining a child by beating, this is permissible, if he has reached an age at which this works, usually at 10. But it is not permissible to put something spicy in his mouth, for this may harm him, and he may develop sores in his mouth or suffer gastric ulcer as a result. So, this may lead to harmful effects, unlike beating, which is done on the outside of the body. There is nothing wrong with beating, if the child gets disciplined thereby provided that it is not severe.

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§§ What about children under the age of 10?

Answer: The case of children under ten should be looked into. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) sanctioned beating ten-year-old children if they do not pray. So, we should look into the case of those below this age. A boy less than ten might possess such understanding, intelligence, and a big body that make him bear beating, rebuke, and discipline; and he might not.

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§§ Is there any blame on the mother or father who make their little child memorize the Qur'an though they know that he might recite it in the bathroom while answering the call of nature or recite it in a way that does not befit its sanctity, noting that they repeatedly instruct him about that?

Answer: The mother and father should teach their children to read the noble Qur'an and warn them not to read it in such places where it is not appropriate to recite it. If the children engage in anything of this sort, they incur no sin for they are not accountable yet. If the father or mother hears them recite the Qur'an in an improper place, they should correct him and explain that it is not permissible. It is narrated in Sahīh Al-Bukhāri that 'Amr ibn Salamah al-Jarmi (may Allah be pleased with him) became an Imām for his people [leading them in prayer] while he was six or seven years old. This happened during the Prophet's lifetime.

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§§ If there is a yard attached to the house and the children play there, within the house's fence, does this fall under the Hadīth speaking about keeping children indoors at the time of sunset due to the spread of devils, or this applies only to being on the street outside the house?

Answer: The Hadīth applies to being on the street outside the house. As for being inside the house, there is nothing wrong with that.

§§ Should a woman prevent her little child from passing in front of her while she is praying, noting that this happens repeatedly during the prayer and preventing him distracts her while praying? She fears that if she prays in a separate place away from him, harm might befall him.

Answer: There is no blame on her in a situation like this that she lets him pass in front of her, if he passes frequently and she fears that preventing him would spoil her prayer. This was stated by the scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them). But, she should give him something to play with and

keep him near. When a child is given something to play with, he gets distracted from other things. But if he needs his mother due to hunger or thirst, it is more appropriate for her to delay the prayer until his need is fulfilled, after which she can pray.

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