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Rules for Muslims living in the West

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492. The *mujtahids* talk about prohibition of **looking indecently and lustfully at women**. By the expression “prohibition of looking lustfully,” they mean that it is prohibited to look at them with sexual desire. By the expression “looking indecently,” they mean a glance that could lead one to a situation whereby they may be tempted to commit a *harām* act.

493. It is permissible to look without lust at the women who would not listen, if they were forbidden from exposing themselves [by not observing the *hijāb*]. Therefore, it is permissible to look at the face, the hands, and the feet of the woman as well as those parts of their bodies that they normally expose in public but not those parts that some of them, against their own custom, would expose publicly. This is with the condition that the look is not combined with carnal appetite and the onlooker should not fear the temptation of getting into a situation whereby they may commit the *harām*. (See the question-answer section below and issue No. 500).

494. It is not permissible for a man to look at another man with lust; similarly, it is not permissible for a woman to look at another woman with lust.

495. Homosexuality (*Ash-shudhûdh al-jinsi*) is *harām*. Similarly, it is forbidden for a female to engage in a sexual act with another female, i.e. lesbianism. (See the question-answer section below.)

496. Masturbation by any whatever means is forbidden;

497. Based on obligatory precaution, one must refrain from viewing **pornographic pictures** and films, even if one looks at them without indecent intention and lust. (See the question-answer section below.)

498. The immoral establishments have produced an item that has the features of the private parts of a woman, and it is possible for a man to become intimate with it by placing it over his penis at bedtime. Based on obligatory precaution, one must refrain from using, it even if he does not intend to reach the stage of ejaculation. This law applies without any difference between a married and an the unmarried man. (See the question-answer section below.)

499. It is permissible for a man to use the **condom** to prevent pregnancy; however, it is precautionarily obligatory that he should seek the consent of his wife to using it.

500. It is not permissible for a Muslim man to go to unisex **swimming** pools and other places where people go about half-naked. That is if it entails a *harām* act. Based on obligatory precaution, one must refrain from going to such places, even if it does not entail a *harām* act.

501. A Muslim man is not allowed to **shake hands** with a woman without a barrier, such as gloves, unless refraining from shaking hands will put him in a considerable harm or unbearable difficulty. In the latter case, he is allowed to shake hands to the extent of necessity only. (See the question-answer section below.)

502. A young man is allowed to kiss his young sister or maternal aunt or paternal aunt or their small daughters out of affection and love. However, he is not allowed to kiss them, if it entails sexual arousal.

503. It is *harām* to play **chess**, regardless of whether or not the play is with betting. It is also *harām* to play chess through computerized instrument, if there are two players involved in it. Based on obligatory precaution, one must refrain from it, even if just the computer is the other player. (See the question-answer section below.)

504. It is similarly *harām* to play with instruments of gambling in which betting is involved. Based on obligatory precaution, one must refrain from it even when no betting is involved.

505. It is permissible to engage in **sports games** with balls like football (soccer), basketball, volleyball, table tennis, handball, etc. It is also permissible to watch such games at the sports stadiums or on various displays and monitors with payment or without payment as long as that does not entail a *harām* act, like looking with lust, or neglecting an obligation like *salāt*.

506. It is permissible to engage in **wrestling and boxing** without betting as long as it does not lead to serious bodily harm.

507 Based on obligatory precaution it is not permissible for a man to **shave** his beard. Similarly, it is not permissible for him to just leave the hair on his chin and shave the sides. This too is based on obligatory precaution. (See the question-answer section below.)

508. A Muslim is allowed to shave his beard, if he is compelled to do so or if he is forced to shave it for medical reasons, etc. It also allowed if he fears harm to his life by not shaving or if growing the beard would put him in difficulty (for example, if it becomes a cause of ridicule and humiliation that is not normally tolerable by a Muslim).

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