Non-maḥrams' Pictures and Films

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Q18. What is the ruling in the matter of looking at pictures of non-maḥram women who are not wearing ḥijāb? What is the view on viewing women appearing on television? Is the ruling different whether these women are Muslims or non-Muslims and whether or not it is a live broadcast?

A: Looking at the picture of a non-maḥram woman does not have the ruling of looking at the woman herself. Accordingly, there is no objection to it unless looking is accompanied by lust, there is fear of falling victim to temptation, or the picture belongs to a Muslim woman known to the mukallaf.
As a matter of obligatory caution, one should not view pictures of non-maḥram women on television that are broadcast live. As for that which is not broadcast live, there is no problem in it provided it is done without ill intentions and the fear of falling in ḥarām.

Q19. What is the view on watching satellite programs? And is it permissible for the people living in the provinces neighboring the Gulf States to watch those states' television stations?

A: Programs broadcast via Western satellite television stations and those of most neighboring countries teach misleading thoughts and misrepresentations. They also contain lahw and corrupt items and watching them often leads to corruption, going astray and committing ḥarām acts. So, it is not permissible to access these channels to watch the programs they broadcast.

Q20. Is there any problem in watching or listening to comical programs broadcast from radio and television?

A: There is no problem in listening to satire programs and humorous shows or watching them unless they involve insult to a believer.

Q21. In my wedding party a number of photographs were taken of me without my wearing ḥijāb. These pictures are now with my friends and relatives. Should I retrieve these pictures?

A: Should the keeping of these pictures by others entail no vile effect or it is difficult for you to collect the photos, you have no obligation in this regard.

Q22. Is there any problem for us, as women, in kissing the pictures of the late Imam Khomeini (May his soul rest in peace) or the martyrs, as they are non-maḥrams to us?

A: As a whole, the pictures of people do not have the same ruling of the people themselves. Therefore, there is no problem in kissing these pictures as a mark of respect, love, and blessing provided that no evil intentions are harbored and no fear of falling into sinful act is there.

Q23. Is it permissible to look at pictures of semi naked or naked women, unknown to us, such as those appearing on films and

television?

A: Generally speaking, watching moving pictures and photographs does have not the same ruling as looking in reality at people non-maḥram to you. Accordingly, there is no objection to it, as per Islamic law, if it is not done with lust, evil intention, and does not lead to a bad result. However, since watching obscene pictures is inherently intertwined with looking with sexual urge, and it is a precursor to committing ḥarām acts, it is, therefore, ḥarām.

Q24. In wedding parties, is it permissible for a woman to arrange for taking pictures of herself without the permission of her husband? Assuming that it is permissible, is it obligatory on her to observe proper ḥijāb?

A: Taking photos, per se, does not depend on the permission of the husband. However, if there is a possibility that non-maḥram men may see her pictures and that not observing proper ḥijāb could lead to a bad deed, she should observe it.

Q25. Is it permissible for a woman to watch men wrestling?

A: It is not permissible if the watching is done by attending the ring, with lust and questionable thoughts, or the fear of falling victim to temptation. Watching it through live television broadcast is not permissible by obligatory caution. Otherwise, there is no harm in it.

Q26. In a wedding party, should the bride cover her head with a light, transparent veil, is it permissible for a non-maḥram man to take pictures of her?

A: Should taking pictures entail ḥarām looking at a non-maḥram woman, it is not permissible. Otherwise, there is no problem.

Q27. What is the ruling in the matter of taking pictures for women mingling with their maḥrams? And what is the view if there is a possibility that a man who is non-maḥram to them is going to see these pictures while they are developed and printed?

A: There is no problem if the photographer who looks at them to take pictures is one of their maḥrams. There should also be no problem in developing and printing these pictures by a person who does not know them.

Q28. Some youth look at obscene pictures. They put forward a number of justifications for doing so. What is the view in this matter? Should looking at these pictures contribute to dulling the desire and, in turn minimizing the tendency to committing that which is ḥarām, how should one go about it?

A: Should looking at the pictures be with ill intentions or when the looker knows that it will lead to sexual excitation, the fear of falling into ḥarām, or bad consequences; it is ḥarām. Trying not to commit an act of ḥarām by allowing oneself to fall prey to that which is ḥarām at the outset is not a valid justification to embark on the practice.

Q29. What is the view on attending wedding parties for filming, knowing that there would be music and dancing? What is the view of filming by a man in men-only parties and a woman in women-only parties? What is the view on developing films of wedding parties by men, regardless of the fact that the producer of the film knows the family? And will the ruling be different if the developer is a woman? And finally, is it permissible to use music in editing these films?

A: There is no harm in attending wedding parties, nor is there any harm in men filming in men-only parties and women filming in women-only parties provided that this does not

entail listening to a ḥarām kind of music and singing; this should also not lead to the commission of any other ḥarām act. However, filming parties by the opposite sex is not allowed if it leads to looking with ill intentions or falling into other kinds of bad consequences. The use of lahwī music, which deviates one from the way of Allah, in editing wedding parties' films is also ḥarām.

Q30. Given the nature of movies — be they foreign or local — and music which are broadcast from the television of the Islamic Republic, what is the view on watching and listening to them?

A: Should the listener or viewer conclude that the music that is broadcast from radio and television is of the lahwī type which deviates people from the way of Allah, or that watching the movie which is broadcast from television would necessarily lead to vile consequences, it is not permissible to either listen to or watch. Broadcasting from radio and television per se is not a sharʻī reason for it to be permissible.

Q31. What is the ruling in the matter of printing and selling the pictures which ostensibly portray the Prophet (s.a.w.) and Imams Ali and Ḥusayn (a.s.) for putting them in government offices?

A: From the sharʻī point of view; there is no objection to it in itself. That said, this should not entail any insult or degrading act in common opinion, or detract from the status of those luminaries (a.s.).

Q32. What is the ruling in the matter of reading obscene books and poems arousing one's sexual passion?

A: It should be avoided.

Q33. Satellite television stations broadcast soap operas that deal with social problems in Western societies. Inevitably, they treat things like the mixing of the sexes, adultery, etc., as a matter of course. Watching these programs started to have its undesirable effects on some believers. What is the view on watching such programs by those who possibly may be affected by what they watch? Would the ruling be different if the person previews them in order to criticize these programs and to inform people of their negative points persuading people not to watch them?

A: It is not permissible to watch them with lust, nor is it permissible to do so if there is a possibility that one is going to be affected by what he sees or if a fear of depravation exists. As for watching these programs to prepare a critique and show people the dangers and negative aspects they contain, there is no harm in it provided that the critics are qualified to do the job and guarantee that they are not going to be affected by these programs or fall victim to corruption.

Q34. Is it permissible to look at the hair of a female newsreader that normally appears with make-up and without covering her head/chest?

A: There is no harm in watching per se provided that one is careful not to look with lust, there is no fear of committing a ḥarām act of falling into corruption and that the broadcast is not live.

Q35. Is it permissible to watch films that are bound to excite one's imagination and sexual urge if the person is married?

A: If watching these films is intended to stir one's desire or watching them leads to such a thing, it is not permissible.

Q36. What is the ruling in the matter of married men watching films which give instructions about how best they can make love to their pregnant wives provided that it does not lead to committing a ḥarām?

A: It is not permissible to watch such films that normally are accompanied by lustful watching.

Q37. What is the view on the work of the officials of the ministry of guidance which involves checking films and printed material to ascertain that they do not contain harmful scenes/material for eventual release, noting that the process involves watching and listening attentively?

A: There is no problem in censorship officials watching, and listening to, them attentively as far as necessity requires, so long as this is part of their legal job. However, they should be vigilant not to fall victim to looking lustfully or with ill intentions. Furthermore, these officials should be subject to authorities' control and guidance both ideologically and spiritually.

Q38. What is the view on watching video films which contain unsavory scenes for the purpose of censorship and eliminating the corrupt scenes before showing them to others?

A: There is no problem in that, should it be for reforming the film and removing its dissolute scenes provided that the person entrusted with the job should be immune against committing a ḥarām act.

Q39. Is it permissible for married couples to watch pornographic films in their own home? And is it permissible for a person with a severed spinal cord to do so in order to be able to make love to his wife?

A: It is not permissible to stimulate one's sexual urges by way of watching video films containing sexual scenes.

Q40. What is the ruling in the matter of secretly watching films and pictures banned by the Islamic state if it does not entail bad results? And what is the ruling for the young couple?

A: In the light of the ban, it is problematic.

Q41. What is the ruling in the matter of watching films that contain material showing irreverence towards that which the Islamic Republic holds sacred and dear or viewed as insulting to His Holiness, the Leader of Muslims?

A: It must be avoided.

Q42. What is the view on watching Iranian films that were produced after the triumph of the revolution, showing women wearing imperfect ḥijāb and which sometimes contain harmful scenes?

A: There is no problem in watching these films in itself if the viewer does not intend watching them with lust or ill intention and it does not cause him to fall victim to bad consequences. It is noteworthy that the producers of these films should avoid producing films which go against valuable Islamic teachings.

Q43. What is the ruling in the matter of distributing and showing films, which are passed by the ministry of guidance? And what is the view on distributing musical cassettes in the universities, especially, after the distribution has been sanctioned by the mentioned ministry?

A: If the mukallaf thinks that these films and cassettes contain lahwī — by the common view — songs and music which deviate people form the way of Allah, it is not permissible to

distribute, sell, watch, and listen to them. Approval by the competent authorities per se is not a valid reason to make it permissible for the mukallaf, so long as he views the matter differently from the authorities licensing the material.

Q44. What is the ruling in the matter of buying, selling, and keeping magazines of women's fashion, which normally contain pictures of non-maḥram women, especially when the aim is choosing and making dresses?

A: The mere presence of pictures of non-maḥram women in such magazines should not make it objectionable to sell, buy, or make choices for women's fashion unless the pictures are of the kind that entails bad consequences.

Q45. Is it permissible to buy or sell television cameras?

A: There is no harm in selling and buying television cameras provided that it is not intended for a ḥarām use.

Q46. What is the ruling in the matter of buying, selling, and renting video films showing explicit sexual scenes and the video machine itself?

A: Should these films contain sexually stimulating scenes which are bound to lead the viewer astray and to depravity, or contain lahwī songs and music that deviate people from the way of Allah, it is not permissible to produce, sell, buy, or rent them out. Nor is it permissible to rent the video recorder to be used for these purposes.

Q47. Is it permissible to listen to news bulletins or scientific and cultural programs broadcast by foreign radio stations?

A: There is no objection to it unless it leads to corruption and going astray.