

Rules Related to Looking at Others

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ
وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ....

“(O’ Prophet!) Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts - that is purer for them; surely Allah is aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks...”

Al-Qur’an · Surah al-Nur · Ayat 30-31

Mahram and Non-Mahram

1. A Mahram is that person who one is allowed to look at - to a certain extent - more than others, and with whom marriage is Haram.
2. The following people are Mahram for boys and men:

- Mother and Grandmother
- Daughter and Granddaughter
- Sister
- Niece - Daughter of one's sister
- Niece - Daughter of one's brother
- Aunt (Father’s sister) - One's own aunt, his father’s aunt and his mother’s aunt
- Aunt (Mother’s sister) - One's own aunt, his father’s aunt and his mother’s aunt

The above group of people, by blood relations are Mahram; and there is another group which are also Mahram by means of marriage for the boy or man and these include:

- Wife
- Wife's Mother (Mother-in-Law) and the wife’s Grandmothers
- Wife of her father (Stepmother)
- Wife of her son (Daughter-in-Law)
- The wife of one’s brother and the sister of one’s wife are Non-Mahrams.

3. These people are Mahram to a girl and woman:

- Father and Grandfather
- Son and the son of her child (Grandson)
- Brother
- Nephew - Son of one's sister
- Nephew - Son of one's brother
- Uncle (Father’s brother) - One's own uncle, her mother’s uncle and father’s uncle
- Uncle (Mother’s brother) - One's own uncle, her mother’s uncle and father’s uncle

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The above group of people, by their own blood relations are Mahram, and another group is also Mahram by marriage on the girl or woman. These include:

- Husband
- Husband's Father (Father-in-Law) and the husband's Grandfathers
- Husband of one's daughter (Son-in-Law)
- The husband of her sister and the brother of her husband are Non-Mahrams.

With the exception of those who have been listed, it is possible that others - by the way of marriage and with certain conditions - may also become Mahram of each other, and these instances are mentioned in the detailed books of Fiqh.

4. If a woman breast feeds a child according to the specific conditions that are mentioned in the books of Fiqh, then that child will become a Mahram for that woman and certain others. For a better understanding of this rule, please refer to the "Islamic Laws" rule number 2483.

Looking at Others

5. With the exception of the husband and wife, it is Haram to look at any other person with the intention of deriving pleasure or lustfully, even if that person is of the same sex. For example, a man looking at another man; or someone of the opposite sex, for example, a man looking at a woman, whether or not he/she is a Mahram or a Non-Mahram, and this rule applies for looking at any part of the body.
6. Boys and men may look at the complete body with the exception of the private parts, of a woman who is their Mahram as long as it is without lust or the intention of deriving pleasure.
7. Boys and men are not allowed to look at the body or hair of a Non-Mahram woman, but to look at the hands up to the wrist, and the face, in that amount that must be washed in Wudhu - without the intention of pleasure or lust, is no problem.
8. Girls and women are allowed to look at the head, face, hands and feet of Non-Mahram men, in that amount which is normally uncovered, as long as it is not done with the intention of deriving pleasure.

Marriage

9. If someone fears that he/she will fall into sin because of not being married; for example he/she will look at a Non-Mahram, then it is Wajib for them to get married.
10. In marriage, a specific formula must be recited, and it is not sufficient that the boy and girl are content with each other or even love each other. Due to this, until the formula (for marriage) has been recited, both of them are not Mahram to each other, and as for the other women (in her family), there are no relations for them to be considered as Mahram.
11. If even one letter is pronounced incorrectly in the marriage formula such that it changes the meaning, then the marriage formula (and marriage) are void.

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