

ARTICLE

Jihad of the eyes

As temperatures soar and sweat pours down our faces, it is essential to remember this: **protect your eyes, and that does not mean wearing sunglasses, it means to lower our gaze - be careful of our glances.**

In our culture today, as the temperature increases, so does the amount of exposed skin on people's bodies. Although this is very distressing and disturbing, it has become a fact of life. In fact, those of us, especially our sisters wearing Hijab, who cover to guard their modesty are seen as strange.

SOME ADVICE FROM THE QURAN AND SUNNAH

It is in this instance, surrounded by half-naked people, that we must have the courage to follow the command of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and lower our gazes.

Allah says: "Do not go near fornication and adultery, it is an abomination and an evil way." (Quran 17:32).

This sin is so hateful in the sight of Our Lord, that He commanded us to not even go near it. Despite what anyone may say, looking upon that which one is not supposed to is going near adultery. For an illicit affair begins with a lustful glance. Allah wishes for us not to commit this ugly sin, and thus He commands us to lower our gazes:

"Tell the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make far greater purity for them; And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And tell the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty." (Quran 24:30-31).

Lowering the gaze does not mean keeping our eyes constantly on the ground and not looking up at all. It is turning our faces away when we see a less-than-decently-dressed woman or man walking on the street in the middle of the day or at anytime.

THE ADULTERY OF THE EYES

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) further explained to us Allah's command. Abu Hurayrah (r.a.) narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, **"(the adultery of the eyes is looking (at [that] which is not allowed)"** (Bukhari, Muslim).

Also, on the authority of Jurayr (r.a.) who said, **"I asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) about accidentally looking at something that is not allowed and he said, "Turn your eyes away." (Muslim).**

In another Hadith on the authority of Abu Sa'eed, (r.a.) the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, **"A man should not look at the Awrah of another man, and the woman should not look at the Awrah of another woman." (Muslim).**

Thus, our Prophet (s.a.w.) even instructed us to lower our gaze when looking at members of the same

gender in some cases.

LOWERING FOR THE OTHERS' NAKEDNESS

One common mistake is to think that lowering our gaze is only required upon encountering nakedness and indecency "in the flesh" or in person. Lowering our gaze must also be practiced when watching a film or television program replete with nakedness and intimate scenes of couples (actually, we should try to avoid watching such types of programs, period).

BEWARE OF THE BEACHES

Beware of the beaches, rivers, pools or anywhere else you'll find a plethora of bikini and swimming-trunk clad men and women.

Lowering your gaze there is virtually impossible. You may turn in one direction, thinking you're home-free, but soon enough you can't even look there.

The same holds true for parks and recreational facilities. While this doesn't mean never taking the kids out to enjoy the slides and seesaws or having barbecues there, it does mean perhaps having activities on days that are cooler, or at times when the sun is not as hot and intense (i.e. some time in the earlier morning or before Maghrib).

This way, the prime time for sunbathing has passed, and most people either leave or feel cool enough to put some more clothes on.

MAKE DUA

"Never underestimate the power of Dua." This holds true in all trying situations.

Sometimes, despite avoiding certain places where you are more likely to encounter an improperly dressed person, you may find someone walking on the street going to the beach or the park who decided to get ready for suntanning or swimming beforehand.

In these cases, lowering the gaze may be even harder. You weren't expecting it, so you didn't mentally prepare yourself.

If you feel overwhelmed, one suggested Dua to read is: **"Aouzo billahis Sami 'il Aleem minash Shaytan ir Rajeem"** (see Quran 41:36 for more information). A translation of this is: **"I seek the refuge of Allah who is the Hearer and Who is the Knower from the Shaytan the accursed."**

In general, seek refuge in Allah. It has also been suggested to say **"La hawla wa la Quwwata illa billah"** (there is no power except with Allah). If we sincerely make Dua, Insha Allah, we can succeed in turning our eyes away.

LOWERING THE GAZE DOESN'T MEAN BEING ANTISOCIAL

But lowering our gaze does not mean being rude or antisocial. The Prophet used to present the message of Islam to people that had come for the yearly "Ukaz" festival, which did include unIslamic activities like

drinking and gambling.

However, this requires faith, self-control and discipline. This must never be used as an opportunity to indulge in these sins.

THE GAZE IS A PART OF A MUSLIM'S CHARACTER

A Muslim is decent and pure. This means all of his or her body must be decent and pure. A natural consequence of this is lowering the gaze.

Allah tells us: "**O you who believe! Do not follow Satan's footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will command what is shameful and wrong...**" (Quran: 24:21).

Looking at another man or woman in an indecent manner is following in Satan's footsteps. It all begins with a lustful glance. Such a glance leads to lustful talk and flirting, then meeting and we are all aware of what comes next.

Let us stop Satan in his tracks and lower our gaze.

Let us start today. Yes, it is very difficult and it takes discipline and faith.

Yet, whenever we struggle to please Allah, He will reward us several times over in this life and the next. It is truly a Jihad. But, it is a Jihad worth undertaking, and we will be all the better