

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

FREE MIXING OR RIGHTEOUS INTERACTION?

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Short Introduction

One point the reader of the Quran will clearly recognise is that the Quran does not attempt to legislate in every matter, nor does it deem it necessary to do so. It gives clear and explicit instructions where it deems necessary and exercises subtlety where appropriate. It also claims to be a scripture fully detailed for human guidance (16:89).

016:089

“One day We shall raise from all Peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves: and We shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people): and **We have sent down to you the Book as a clarification of every thing (Arabic: tibiyan-likulli shayin), a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims**”

At times the instructions are very explicit. In other matters, the Quran clearly lays the foundation and limitations and gives guidance on how individuals and societies need to conduct themselves.

[Islamic secondary sources](#) have at times served no other purpose but to legislate, constrict and add details where there is no justification from scripture. Verse 16.89 is clear, the Quran explains everything required for all believers in terms of guidance. It is also inconceivable that the Prophet would conduct himself in any way nor teach anything other than the inspiration he received as part of revelation. The Quran remains the sole guidance he used to warn his people.

050:045

“**We know best what they say; and you are not one to overawe them by force. So admonish with the Qur'an such as fear My Warning!**”

The Quran aims to keep a very fine equilibrium and any analysis of the scripture clearly indicates this.

Main Topic

There are no doubt two contrasts, the decadence of the 'Westernised culture' and the extreme interpretations of religious institutions which render its adherents spiritually, and physically incarcerated. However, 'free mixing' and its term conjures up thoughts of 'Western decadence' and unfortunately this precursor is used to forbid all plausible, righteous social settings. There is clearly a difference between 'free mixing' alluded to by Western decadence and the righteous coexistence and interaction attributed to stable God conscious people.

Let us see what wisdom the Quran gives with regards this issue.

DID OPPOSITE GENDER'S COEXIST AS PART OF GENERAL LIFE AND NECESSITATED BY CIRCUMSTANCES?

- We learn the following from the Quran.

Prophet Muhammad ^(pbuh) returned greetings to those who came to see him (6.54)

It is clear that women moved about for good purposes (Sahitun - 66.5) [See article](#)

In 28.23 we find Prophet Moses ^(pbuh) conversing freely with 2 women (albeit there were other men present) with regards their flocks. In 28.25 one of the two women returned to Prophet Moses ^(pbuh) with a message from her father.

We find Prophet Zachariya ^(pbuh) (who was entrusted with care) used to enter Mary's chamber / sanctuary and found that she always had food (3.37)

We find the Queen of Saba seeking counsel and consultation from her chiefs with regards Prophet Solomon's ^(pbuh) letter (27.32-34)

We further note Queen of Saba entering Prophet Solomon's ^(pbuh) hall and when he spoke to her making her realise how she had wronged herself with regards her spiritual consciousness (27.44)

The Quran clearly stipulates that there is no sin for trusted friends (males and females) to eat together (24.61)

It is clear that genders would often mix as part of routine, daily life or where circumstances necessitated.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS AND THE GUIDANCE GIVEN BY THE QURAN?

No one should claim that they are free from desire and inclination. This would be a fantastic and unwarranted claim and no human has this authority. We must always be on guard and aware of our limitations and the commitments of Satan and his minions to influence us.

Even the Prophets of God were not exempt from these inclinations:

The following narrative captures a request from Prophet Joseph ^(pbuh) to his Lord with regards the women that attempted to seduce him.

012.033

He said: "O my Lord! the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me: Unless Thou turn away their snare from me, **I should feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant.**"

012.034

"So his Lord hearkened to him (in his prayer), and turned away from him their snare: Verily He hears and knows (all things)."

GUIDANCE 1

FOCUS ON MODESTY AND ATTIRE

024:030

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And God is well acquainted with all that they do"

Men should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. Men have just as much duty to cover what may appear lustful. Any revealing parts which may cause undue attention should be covered. Yet we see that the minimum coverage for a man has been stipulated in Islamic Shariah from his navel to his knee, which seems to fall shy of the spirit of this verse. This unfortunately gives man full access to display their masculinity through their upper torso without contravening Shariah restrictions. There seems to be some incredulity with regards this position. The lowering of the gaze and the guarding of modesty is a clear reference to both emotional and physical modesty.

GUIDANCE 2

FOCUS ON MODESTY, ATTIRE, DRAWING UNNECESSARY ATTENTION AND GAIT

024:031

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof;

that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain Bliss”

- Similar guidance is imparted to women with an additional focus on the covering of the chest.
- Also there is the Arabic term ‘yadribna bi-arjolihinna’ which has been used to signify walking or stomping of the feet in a way that reveals one’s concealed beauty or hidden charms. A similar idiomatic Arabic phrase ‘daraba bi-yadayhi mishyathi’ translates to ‘he swung his arms in walking’ and alludes to a similar gait which is deliberately provocative. Having read this verse one can extrapolate further for themselves what the verse means and where it should be applied.

GUIDANCE 3

FOCUS ON MODESTY AND ATTIRE

033.059

“O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad / out etc). That will be better, so that they may be recognised (Ya Rafna) and not annoyed. God is ever Forgiving, Merciful”

- Again the drive for modest attire to cover one's body has been emphasized in the use of outer garments. There is no justification expressed or implied that this be restricted to an Arab attire, but anything which attempts to conceal ones charm, be it chest, body or legs as a suitable outer covering. However the reason given is clear that women may not be annoyed but RECOGNISED and KNOWN (Ya Rafna - he knew it, had cognition of it, to discern, became acquainted with it). This term also rebuts any arguments for facial coverage where the female cannot be recognised.

024.060

“ Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage,- there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest: and God is One Who sees and knows all things”

- Here we note an exception for older women. However the focus is still to remain modest and not to reveal any adornments unnecessarily. To refrain is much better. By virtue of this exception, the requirement for younger women to wear outer garments is re-emphasised.

GUIDANCE 4

COMPLACENCY OF SPEECH

033:032

“O Consorts of the Prophet! Ye are not like any of the (other) women: if ye do fear (God), be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire: but speak ye a speech (that is) just”

- This verse informs the Prophet’s wives not to be ‘soft in speech’ (Arabic: Takhda’na bil-qawli) unless someone whose heart is diseased should be moved by it. Instead they are told to utter customary, suitable speech. Again there is much wisdom here for both men and women as the consequence of the action has been given. This consequence (inadvertent charm offensive) as a result of softness in speech is potentially applicable to anyone regardless of gender and much wisdom can be inferred and guidance extracted. However, this directive has been specifically cited to the Prophet’s wives.

GUIDANCE 5

WISDOM REGARDING CONDUCT

033.053

“ O ye who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses,- until leave is given you,- for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that ye should annoy God's Messenger, or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in God's sight an enormity”

- Once again this citation is specifically geared to the Prophet’s household and his wives (who are not like other women 33.32). However again, there is much wisdom that can be extracted with regards how we should conduct ourselves.

(1) Do not enter houses unnecessarily and wait till you are invited

(2) Do not linger on in discussions if the host has commitments or may feel shy to ask you to leave. Make a judgment call with regards the circumstances of your host.

(3) The veiling in this context is a specific reference to the Prophet’s wives which is confirmed by their status as the ‘Mothers of Believers ‘ (33.6); and as is the case in this verse, they cannot be taken in wedlock after the demise of the Prophet.

GUIDANCE 6

THE FOOTSTEPS OF SATAN

024.021

“O ye who believe! follow not Satan's footsteps: if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will (but) command what is shameful and wrong: and were it not for the grace and mercy of God on you, not one of you would ever have been pure: but God doth purify whom He pleases: and God is One Who hears and knows (all things)”

- This is a very broad verse and covers all manner of approaches that may lead to temptation. Much can be written on the wisdom from this verse yet the broadness clearly implies a moral judgment which every individual must undertake whilst conducting themselves in light of all the wisdom from the Quranic passages.

GUIDANCE 7

THE GARMENT OF PIETY IS BEST

007:026

“O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best. Such are among the Signs of God, that they may receive admonition!”

- True piety is not only reflected through one's attire but is something fundamentally that emanates from within. If one seeks to purify themselves in thought and action, one's conduct and attire will most likely be outwardly reflected. Purity has its foundation from within oneself and no amount of clothing can conceal an evil or corrupted heart.

GUIDANCE 8

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS AND SUSPICION

- Baseless assumptions which cause one to become suspicious of another should be curtailed as some assumptions amount to sin (49:12). We also know the detrimental effects of suspicion and how it can potentially lead to slander. See the case narrated in Surah Nur 24.11

FINAL THOUGHTS

From the guidance cited above, it is clear that the mixing of men and women is not 'forbidden' per se but must be managed in the spirit of the Quranic directives.

Mixing may become necessary as part of work, academia, participation in noble causes, family and social circumstances, dealing with the emergency services and the medical profession etc

At all times, there should be an awareness of how one dresses, their speech and general demeanour. This can all be conducted within the ambit of passing honourable greetings, with respect and humility. In closer dealings with friends and family one can exercise the same duty of care to avoid situations which may lead to acts of impiety or cause unnecessary suspicion.

The boundaries, guidance and directives have been outlined by the Quran and personal judgment is key given any particular situation.

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