

Does the ruling on driving a car vary from one country to another?

Throughout the Muslim world we find that there are differences between one country and another, in manner of dress, customs and traditions. For example we see that in some countries our sisters wear niqaab, because they follow the fatwa that says that niqaab is obligatory, but that is not widespread in another country, and the opinion that they follow there is that niqaab is not obligatory, rather it is mustahabb. Similarly with regard to women driving cars, in some countries the shaykhs have declared it to be haraam because of the harms that would result if it were allowed, whilst in other countries it is a very ordinary thing for a woman to drive a car, and they have been doing so for decades.

To what extent is there flexibility in rulings? Is what is happening correct, I mean is it right that something may be obligatory in one country and mustahabb in another?.

Praise be to Allaah.

The rulings of sharee'ah are of two types:

1 – Those where the evidence of sharee'ah points to the ruling, regardless of various customs or what good or bad consequences may result.

In this case the ruling is fixed and does not vary from one place to another or from one person to another, unless a person is forced to do something, is sick or is excused, in which case the ruling is waived as much as required by his situation according to what it says in sharee'ah.

An example of such a fixed rule is the obligation to offer the five daily prayers, to fast Ramadaan, to enjoin what is good and forbid

what is evil, to seek knowledge, etc.

Another example is the obligation for the Muslim woman to cover her entire body, including the face and hands. This ruling is obligatory and does not vary from one place to another.

We have already discussed this obligation in questions no.

[21134](#) and

[13647](#), where we

quote the evidence for that.

2 – Rulings which are based on specific reasons, or where the ruling as to whether a thing is forbidden, allowed or obligatory depends upon whatever good or bad consequences will result from that, and where there is no shar' i evidence to suggest a fixed ruling that does not vary. The issue of women driving cars may come under this heading.

The scholars have issued fatwas stating that it is haraam because of the negative consequences that may result from it.

This applies completely to the land of the two Holy Sanctuaries. With regard to other countries, the matter should be referred to trustworthy scholars for they know their countries' situation best.

Shaykh ' Abd al- ' Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

People have spoken a great deal in the al-Jazeera newspaper about the issue of women driving cars. It is well known that it leads to evil consequences which are well known to those who promote it, such as being alone with a non-mahram woman, unveiling, reckless mixing with men, and committing haraam actions because of which these things were forbidden. Islam forbids the things that lead to haraam and regards them as being haraam too.

Allaah commanded the wives of the Prophet and the believing

---

women to stay in their houses, to observe hijab and to avoid showing their adornments to non-mahrams because of the permissiveness that all these things lead to, which spells doom for society. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance, and perform As-Salaah (Iqamat-as-Salaah), and give Zakaah and obey Allaah and His Messenger. Allaah wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs (evil deeds and sins) from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification ”

[al-Ahzaab 33:33]

“ O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e. screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed ”

[al-Ahzaab 33:59]

“ And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, headcover, apron), and to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband ’ s fathers, or their sons, or their husband ’ s sons, or their brothers or their brother ’ s sons, or their sister ’ s sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islam), or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful ”

[al-Noor 24:31]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ No man is alone with a (non-mahram) woman but the Shaytaan is the third one present. ”

Islam forbids all the things that may lead to immorality or accusations of immoral conduct made against chaste women, who never even think of anything touching their chastity, and it has stipulated a punishment for that which is one of the most severe of punishments, in order to protect society from the spread of the causes of immorality.

Women driving is one of the means that lead to that, and this is something obvious, but ignorance of the rulings of sharee ' ah and the negative consequences of carelessness with regard to the things that lead to evil – as well as diseases of the heart that prevail at present – and love of permissiveness and enjoying looking at non-mahram women all lead to indulging in this and similar things, with no knowledge and paying no attention to the dangers that it leads to. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ Say (O Muhammad): (But) the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are Al-Fawaahish (great evil sins and every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse) whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship) with Allaah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allaah of which you have no knowledge ”

[al-A ' raaf 7:33]

“ and follow not the footsteps of Shaytaan (Satan). Verily, he is to you an open enemy ”

[al-Baqarah 2:168]

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “ I am not leaving behind me any fitnah more harmful to men than women. ”

It was narrated that Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: “ The people used to ask the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about good things, but I used to ask him about bad things, fearing that I would live to see such things. I said, ‘ O Messenger of Allaah, we were in a state of ignorance (jaahiliyyah) and evil, then Allaah sent us this good (i.e., Islam). Will there be any evil after this good? ’ He said, ‘ Yes. ’ I said, ‘ Will there be any good after that evil? ’ He said, ‘ Yes, but it will be tainted. ’ I said, ‘ How will it be tainted? ’ He said, ‘ (There will be) some people who will guide others in a way that is not according to my guidance. You will approve of some of their deeds and disapprove of others. ’ I said, ‘ Will there be any evil after that good? ’ He said, ‘ Yes, there will be people calling at the gates of Hell, and whoever responds to their call, they will throw them into it (the Fire). ’ I said, ‘ O Messenger of Allaah, describe them to us. ’ He said, ‘ They will be from among our people, speaking our language. ’ I said, ‘ What do you command me to do if I live to see such a thing? ’ He said, ‘ Adhere to the jamaa ’ ah (group, community) of the Muslims and their imaam (leader). ’ I asked, ‘ What if there is no jamaa ’ ah and no leader? ’ He said, ‘ Then keep away from all those groups, even if you have to bite (eat) the roots of a tree until death overtakes you whilst you are in that state. ’ ” Agreed upon.

I call upon every Muslim to fear Allaah in all that he says and does and to beware of fitnah and those who promote it. He should keep away from all that angers Allaah or leads to His wrath, and he should be extremely cautious lest he be one of these callers to Hell of whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) tells us in this hadeeth.

---

May Allaah protect us from the evil of fitnah and its people, and protect this ummah from the evil of those who promote bad things. May He help the writers of our newspapers and all the Muslims to do that which pleases Him and may He set the Muslims straight and save them in this world and in the Hereafter, for He is Able to do that.

Majmoo' Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz, 3/351-353.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen

was asked: I hope you can explain the ruling on women driving cars. And what

is your opinion on the idea that women driving cars is less dangerous than their riding with non-mahram drivers?

The answer to this question is based on two principles which are well known among the Muslim scholars:

The first principle is: that whatever leads to haraam is itself haraam. The evidence for this is the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allaah, lest they insult Allaah wrongfully without knowledge ”

[al-An ' aam 6:108]

So Allaah forbids insulting the gods of the mushrikeen – even though that serves an interest – because it leads to insults against Allaah.

The second principle is:

that warding off evil – if it is equal to or greater than the interests concerned – takes precedence over bringing benefits. The evidence for that is the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ They ask you (O Muhammad) concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: In them is a

great

sin, and (some) benefits for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit ”

[al-Baqarah 2:219]

Allaah has forbidden alcohol and gambling even though there is some benefit in them, so as to ward off the evils that result from them.

Based on these two principles, the ruling on women driving should be clear, because women driving includes a number of evils, including the following:

1 – Removal of hijab, because driving a car involves uncovering the face which is the site of fitnah and attracts the glance of men. A woman is only regarded as beautiful or ugly on the basis of her face,

i.e., if it is said that she is beautiful or ugly, people only think in terms of her face. If something else is meant it must be specified, so that one would say that she has beautiful hands or beautiful hair or beautiful feet. Hence it is known that the face is the focal point. If someone were to say that a woman can drive a car without taking off her hijab, by covering her face and wearing dark glasses over her eyes, the answer to that is that this is not what really happens when women drive cars. Ask those who have

seen them in other countries. Even if we assume that this could be applied initially, it would not last for long, rather the situation would soon become as it is in other countries where women drive. This is how things usually develop; they start out in an acceptable fashion then they get worse.

2 – Another evil consequence of women driving cars is that they lose their modesty, and modesty is part of faith as is narrated in a saheeh report from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Modesty is the noble characteristic that befits the nature of women

---

and protects them from being exposed to fitnah. Hence it is mentioned in a metaphorical sense (in Arabic), in the phrase “ more modest than a virgin in her seclusion. ” Once a woman ’ s modesty is lost, do not ask about her.

3 – It also leads to women going out of the house a great deal, but their homes are better for them – as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said – because those who love to drive enjoy it very much, hence you see them driving around in their cars here and there for no purpose, except to enjoy driving.

4 – You may find a divorced woman going where she wants, whenever she wants and however she wants, for whatever purpose she wants, because she is alone in her car, at any time she wants of the day or night. She may stay out until late at night. If people are complaining about this with regard to young men, then what about young women, going all over the place the length and breadth of the country, and maybe even beyond its borders.

5 – It is a means of women rebelling against their families and husbands; at the least provocation they may go out of the house and drive in the car to wherever they think they can get some peace, as happens in the case of some young men, who are able to put up with more than women.

6 – It is a cause of fitnah in many places: when stopping at the traffic lights, or at gas stations, or at inspection points, or when stopped by policemen at the scenes of traffic infractions or accidents, or if the car stalls and the woman needs help. What will her situation be in this case? Perhaps she may come across an immoral man who takes advantage of her in return for helping her, especially if her need is great to the point of urgency.

7 – When women drive it leads to overcrowding in the streets, or it deprives some young men of the opportunity to drive cars when they are more deserving of that.

8 – It causes fitnah to flourish because women – by their nature – like to make themselves look good with clothing etc. Do you not see how attached they are to fashion? Every time a new fashion appears they throw away what they have and rush to buy the new things, even if it is worse than what they have. Do you not see the adornments that they hang on their walls? In the same way – or perhaps more so – with the cars that they drive, whenever a new model appears they will give up the first for the new one.

With regard to the questioner asking, “ And what is your opinion on the idea that women driving cars is less dangerous than their riding with non-mahram drivers? ” – what I think is that both of them involve danger, and one is more serious than the other in some ways, but there is no necessity that would require one to do either of them.

Please note that I have answered this question at length because of the controversy that surrounds the issue of women driving cars, and the pressure faced by conservative Saudi society, which is striving to adhere to its religious commitment and morals, to allow women to drive cars.

This would be nothing strange if it were to come from an enemy who seeks to cause harm this land which is the last bastion of Islam that the enemies of Islam wish to penetrate. But what is even stranger is that this is coming from our own people who speak our language and live under our banner, people who are dazzled by what the kaafir nations have of material advancement and admire their ways which are devoid of any moral

restrictions.

End quote from Shaykh Ibn ‘ Uthaymeen.

With regard to countries in which woman are allowed to drive cars, Muslim women should avoid that as much as possible, for the reasons mentioned above.

In cases of necessity, such as helping accident victims or fleeing from a criminal, there is nothing wrong with a Muslim woman using a car in such situations, if she cannot find a man to help her.

There are other cases, such as women who have to go out to work and have no husband, father or guardian to look after them and no income from the government to meet their needs, and they cannot find work that they can do at home, such as some internet-based jobs, so they are forced to go out. In that case they can use the means of transportation that poses the least danger to them.

There may be some means of transportation that are available only to women, or a group of women may hire a driver to take them to work or university. Using taxis– for those who can afford it – may be better than using public transportation where a woman may be exposed to humiliation and aggression, so they should use taxis, so long as they are not alone with the driver.

If a woman is forced to drive a car in cases of extreme need, then she should drive wearing full jilbaab and hijab, and with fear of Allaah.

We have already mentioned above what constitutes need.

Women should also seek fatwas from the trustworthy scholars in their own countries – not those who are too lenient – who understand both

sharee'ah and the situation in that country.

And Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“ So keep your duty to Allaah and fear Him as much as you can ”

[al-Taghaabun 64:16]

We ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound. May Allaah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and upon his family and companions.