

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Why do women need a male relative for travelling?

To protect the honour of women, the Islamic law has commanded women to be accompanied by Mehram men when they are travelling, so that they can be protected from mischiefs.

Abu Sa'id Khudri reported that the Prophet said, *"Any woman who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement should not travel alone for three days¹ or more except when accompanied by her father, brother, husband, son or any other Mehram man."*¹

The limit of three days, in Islamic law, signifies any travel where it becomes permissible to offer Qasr Salaah.

*Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying, "It is not permissible for a man to be alone with a woman, and no lady should travel except with a Mahram (i.e. her husband or a person whom she cannot marry in any case; e.g. her father, brother, etc.)." Then a man got up and said, "O Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace)! I have enlisted in the army for such-and-such battle and my wife is proceeding for Hajj." The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "Go, and perform the Hajj with your wife."*ⁱⁱ

The answer to this question is very simple, and that is, there is a risk for women to travel alone in a place where she is not familiar with. In the time of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) where there was no mode of transport except four legged animals, and one had to travel through the jungle and forests, with wild animals preying for food, it was not very safe to travel. Even in today's day and age, anywhere in the world you go, it is not safe for a woman to travel on her own. Travelling alone according to the Islamic law means to travel over 57.5 miles. Many governments of tourist attractions give advice to women who travel on their own even in the 21st century because we all know that if a woman is on her own in a place which she is not familiar with; there is a risk that she will get attacked or her goods stolen. Hence, if she travels and is with a close member of the family then at least she feels there is someone to protect her if something does happen.

I will list some advice the government of Australia offer to women travelling alone:

The following advice is given by the Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Travelling alone

- You face greater risks when you're travelling alone. If you decide to do so, you should take extra precautions.
- In some societies, men may take advantage of you if you have no obvious protector. This could take the form of hissing, pinching, passing comments, obscene gestures and so on.
- Retain your composure and do not react, but remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible, or go to the nearest police officer.

Dress sense

- In some countries or cultures, dress standards may be stricter for women than they are for men. The way you present yourself may affect the way the people you meet on your travels react to you. Take account of local dress standards. To help avoid unwelcome attention you should take care to be sensitive to these dress standards.
- In some Islamic countries you must wear a coat or gown over your clothes so that your arms and legs are covered, and a scarf over your hair.

¹ Three days travel is when on foot or a four legged animal, however, when in a car etc. the scholars have worked three days travel on foot to be 57.5 miles or 86 Kilometres. In Raddul Mohtar it states, "A clear route on dry ground for a distance of 57.5 miles is covered in a car or train..." (with reference from Bahar-e-Shariat and Qanoon-e-Shariat)

When you're on the road . . .

- Bag snatching and theft of jewellery directly from you is common in some countries.
- Don't display expensive jewellery.
- Keep your valuables well concealed.
- Remember that 'bum bags' can also be a target for thieves.
- Be wary of being alone in lifts as some thieves 'work' in high-rise buildings waiting for victims.
- Don't get into train carriage compartments where you would be the only passenger, or stay in one alone if everyone else gets off - attackers are known to target women alone in trains.
- But crowded trains and buses can also provide unwelcome opportunities for harassment. Raise the alarm; you could scare the attacker off.
- If possible, arrange your travel so that you arrive in an unfamiliar city during daylight rather than dark.
- Be aware of safety standards in your chosen accommodation.
- For example, is your door secure? Portable inside locking devices are now available from most travel equipment suppliers. Avoid rooms with easy access from the outside.

So we find that these are some of the advices given by governments when travelling to their country. We find that Islam recognised this 1400 years ago and are part of woman's rights. However, still people question the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). With all these precautions, why not protect yourselves by following the Qur'an and the Prophetic sayings?

ⁱ Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi & Ibn Majah

ⁱⁱ Bukhari