

**Shaykh Mashhūr Hasan Āl Salmān**

*(hafidhahullāh)*

## **THE RULING ON WOMEN WEARING HIGH HEELS<sup>1</sup>**

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This sister from Tunisia who calls herself “AmaturRahmān” and firstly I think that this is name that does not exist. I do not know of any woman (in Islām) that has been named “AmaturRahmān”<sup>2</sup>, one of the most beloved names to Allāh is ‘AbdurRahmān and who is this name for? For males! And for females the most beloved name is, according to Shaykh ul-Islām is AmaturRahmān. She has two questions, the first:

### **1. What is the ruling on wearing high-heels?**

Wearing high-heels has some problems, firstly it is fake! Because it increases the height of the woman when she is not that height and she is pretending to have what she has not been given. The Prophet (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) said: “*The one who pretends that he has been given what he has not been given is just like the false one who wear two garments of falsehood.*”<sup>3</sup> Wearing high-heels makes her appear to have a height which is not her actual height. Also when she walks in them there is a noise to be heard and the feet stamp (on the ground as she walks) and our Lord says,

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<sup>1</sup> From the Shaykh’s Q & A session on 31 May 2008 CE see: [www.mashhoor.net](http://www.mashhoor.net)

The intent of this is in regards to a woman wearing high heels outside in public, not if she is wearing them within the home as a form of beautification for her husband.

<sup>2</sup> **[Translator’s Note (‘AbdulHaq al-Ashanti)]**: Actually, it may have slipped our Shaykh’s mind that there has been a woman named AmaturRahmān, AmaturRahmān at-Tameemiyah. In fact our Shaykh mentioned her himself in his book on women hadeeth scholars! Refer to the published translation of *The Noble Women Scholars of Hadith: Women’s Concern with the Prophetic Hadith* (London: Jamiah Media, 2010).

AmaturRahmān at-Tameemiyah was one of the female hadeeth teachers of Imām Abū Sa’d as-Sam’ānī (562 AH/1172 CE), it is mentioned in *at-Tahbeer*, bio. No.1131 that he heard from AmaturRahmān at-Tameemiyah in Herat.

<sup>3</sup> Narrated by Asmā’ (*radi Allāhu ‘anhā*) in Saheeh Bukhārī, *Kitāb un-Nikāh*. [TN]

(وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ)

“And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their  
adornment.”

{*an-Nūr* (24): 31}

Thirdly, high-heels include her walking with a jiggle and a wiggle and this makes the buttocks apparent and makes the backside apparent (as she walks in them).<sup>4</sup> So when she walks down the street she causes fitna to men<sup>5</sup> and in the *Shari'* this wiggle is prohibited. Fourthly, the wearing of

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<sup>4</sup> [TN]: Incidentally, this is exactly the same criticism of these shoes that is held by a variety of women's activists and feminists in the West. Beatrice Faust in her book *Women, Sex and Pornography* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1980) makes this same observation. Indeed, in the West such shoes are even referred to “sex shoes” due to what the movements made when wearing them indicate! In some cases the fascination with such shoes can lead to perversions and fetishes which lead to *shirk* as occurs in the West wherein some people actually worship the image of the high-heeled shoe!

<sup>5</sup> [TN]: In an article by Hannah Betts in the *The Guardian* (London) dated Tuesday 28 October 2008 it was stated:

**British activist and academic Sheila Jeffreys, professor in political science at the University of Melbourne, and author of *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, speaks for many when she expresses her contempt: “Men have traditionally demanded that women walk and dance in pain and gained great sexual satisfaction from this. The fashion industry that creates the rules is dominated by men, many of whom are shoe fetishists. They project their interest on to women's broken feet.”** For Jeffreys and others, this fashionable fetishism is a form of self-harm on a level with wearing tightly laced corsets, or foot binding. “I feel distress when I see women in high heels,” Jeffreys says. “I shudder at the pain they must experience and the long-term damage being caused to their bodies. When I see young women struggle to walk and remain upright, I am enraged at the depths of degradation women have to bear in societies where lip service is paid to their equality.”

The rhetoric deployed by heel opponents brings to mind the campaign against corset wearing, specifically the practice of tight lacing, current from the mid-Victorian period onwards. From the late 1860s to the early 1890s the *Lancet* published at least one article a year on the dangers of tight lacing, a custom held responsible for curvature of the spine, rib deformity, displacement of internal organs, respiratory problems, circulatory diseases, birth defects and a range of fertility issues, as well as broken ribs and puncture wounds. The corset-opposing Rational Dress Society, founded in 1881, included heels

high-heels is harmful (to women) and if a man was to stand in high-heels just as women do I don't reckon that he'll be able to stand for two minutes! I was happy when I came across a small treatise entitled *li'n-Nāẓilat il-Maḥā'ikab* by a well-known Egyptian writer which discussed the harms of wearing high-heels, so they are harmful.<sup>6</sup> In any case, high-heeled shoes also include resembling

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as part of its offensive against “dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movements of the body, or in any way tends to injure the health”.

**And they certainly had a point. NHS podiatric surgeon Emma Supple decries the current vogue for “Killer, statement, gladiatorial heels” as “warfare on your feet”. Thousands of British women are rendered immobile by high heels, she says. Corrective surgery is occurring to the tune of £29m a year, be it bunion or corn removal, toe straightening and joint replacement, or the removal of trapped nerves. Four out of 10 women admit to having had accidents, with statistics suggesting that as many as 20,000 women a year are hospitalised by their heels. “There has to be a change,” Supple says, “because this really is a form of self-torture. We have enormous rates of obesity, osteoporosis. Women have to be able to get out of their cars and pound pavements.”**

Cosmetic foot surgery is also on the increase, with treatments including plumping the ball of the foot with dermal filler to provide greater cushioning, and Botox injections to firm up damaged tissue. Dr Michael O'Neill, a podiatric surgeon at the Princess Margaret hospital in Windsor, has noted that prolonged wear may lead to incontinence, stress fractures, back and hip problems, in addition to more than the odd broken ankle. Jaw, neck and head pain may also be a consequence, with menstrual dysfunction and fertility problems completing the lamentable package.

**Dr Gad Sād is associate professor of marketing at Concordia University, Canada, and author of *The Evolutionary Bases of Consumption*. “High heels may well be the most potent aphrodisiac ever concocted,” he says. “The height sensuously alters the whole anatomy - foot, leg, thigh, hips, pelvis, buttocks, breasts.” Men are perfectly frank in admitting that high heels stimulate their sexual appetite, and women, consequently, assign to stilted shoes all the magic of a love potion. “In particular, heels alter the angle of the buttocks by 20 or 30 degrees to create a more youthful and thus fertile-looking body,” he continues.**

<sup>6</sup>[TN]: The wearing of high-heels decreases the range of leg motion and limits mobility. High-heeled shoes slant the foot forward and down while bending the toes up and the more the feet are forced into this position, the more it may cause the Achilles tendon to shorten. This may cause problems even when the wearer of high-heels chooses lower heels or flat-soled shoes. When the foot slants forward, a much greater weight is transferred to the ball of the foot, increasing the likelihood of damage to the underlying soft tissue which supports the foot. Some high-heeled shoes compress the toes or force them together,

the disbelieving women<sup>7</sup> and it makes her walk with a wiggle and this causes her backside to wiggle so there are two prohibited actions not just one! So it is not permissible for a woman to wear high-heels (outside of the home).

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possibly resulting in blisters, corns, hammer toes, bunions, and many other medical conditions, most of which are permanent and require surgery to treat. Because high-heels tip the foot forward they put pressure on the lower back through making the rump push outwards and crushing the lower back vertebrae and contracting the muscles of the lower back. In an news article reported by the BBC on Tuesday 1 August 2006:

**Women are paying the price for fashion in the form of broken bones and sprained ankles, a doctor has warned.**

The warm weather has led to a spate of injuries caused by women falling from their high-heeled sandals.

Rupert Evans, an accident and emergency doctor at University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff said injuries could lead to long-term problems. Women should stick to shoes with heels less than 4cm (1.5in) if they wanted to avoid a trip to hospital, he advised. Dr Evans said he has seen an increase in the number of women being admitted to hospital with injuries caused by the fashionable footwear. Injuries ranged from sprained ankles to broken bones and dislocations - and in some cases caused permanent damage. He estimated that up to half a dozen women were now being admitted to his department with shoe-related injuries on weekend evenings. Drinking alcohol added to the problem, he said. "I suspect it's something to do with the weather we've been having. "Women are dressing differently and a lot of them are coming in with high-heel shoe injuries."

**Sensible shoes**

He added that shoes which did not have a back or a strap could cause particular problems. "Try to have shoes with a strap and keep the heel height down to 4cm (1.5in)," he said. He said he was not advising that women should stop wearing high heels altogether, but advocating wearing them in moderation. "There can be serious consequences, but we are not trying to ban them," he said. Martin Shalley, president of the British Association for Emergency Medicine said he had not spotted a recent increase, but he reiterated that high heels could definitely lead to serious injuries. "That is something we see and I have seen a few breaks over the years. Falling off a high heel can cause much more serious injuries." He added that Dr Evans' advice was very reasonable. "Of course it could be a problem associated with alcohol. Alcohol and heels are a bad mix," he said.

The two are a deadly mix yet taken up by most women in the so-called "modern world"!

<sup>7</sup> [TN]: Ironically, when the Victorians took up high-heels they claimed that it was actually good for the health of the woman! They were believed to alleviate backaches and stooping and made walking less tiring, some Victorians even compared high-heels to the foot of the devil! The formal invention of high heels as fashion is typically attributed to the rather short-statured Catherine de Medici (1519-1589). At

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the age of 14, Catherine de Medici was engaged to the powerful Duke of Orleans, later the King of France. She was small (not quite five feet) relative to the Duke and was not considered attractive. She felt insecure in the arranged marriage knowing she would be the Queen of the French Court and in competition with the Duke's favourite (and significantly taller) mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Looking for a way to dazzle the French nation and compensate for her perceived lack of aesthetic appeal, she donned heels two inches high that gave her a more towering physique and an alluring sway when she walked. Her heels were a wild success and soon high heels were associated with privilege.

Mary Tudor, or "Bloody Mary," another monarch seeking to appear larger than life, wore heels as high possible (See McDowell 1989). By 1580, fashionable heels were popular for both sexes, and a person who had authority or wealth was often referred to as "well-heeled." In 1791, the "Louis" high heels disappeared with the revolution, and Napoleon banished high heels in an attempt to show equality. From the 1860s however the Victorians began to wear high-heels again. In the 1960s in the West the feminists were the most vocal ones to critic high-heels and for many feminists, high heels indicated subservience and sexual stereotyping by men. High heels were titillating man-made objects, literally involved in crippling women, or at least slowing them down when the need to run away from male violence and oppressors arose. Heels were seen as a comparable successor to foot binding and the tight-laced corset as perverse regulatory objects for molding the feminine. A number of studies have been authored on this topic by feminists and other writers.