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26 Shawwaal 1444 – 17 May 2023

PROHIBITION OF PICTURES THE ISSUE IS NOT THE METHOD OF MAKING PICTURES NOR THE OBSCURE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Question

Many Ulama of Deoband are nowadays saying that digital pictures are not the prohibited pictures mentioned in the Hadith. Although this does not seem to be correct, why do they differentiate between pictures on the basis of methods of production?

Muftī ‘Abū al-Qāsim Nu’mānī is the Shaykh al-Hadīth of Deoband. He also served as Muhtamim from 2011 to 2020, where after he was appointed to his current post. He’s been part of Dār al-‘Ulūm’s Majlis-e-Shūra since 1992.

One of my former colleagues in New York, an Imām and Mudarris, is Bayt to him. He had studied under Muftī ‘Abū al-Qāsim in Deoband and professed strong love for him. Yet despite his Shaykh’s well-known antipathy for photography, this colleague had an incorrigible habit of indulging in the same. He photographed and videoed students at the request of his employer, posed for others when they requested to film or photograph him, and freely watched YouTube, etc. as a pastime. I believe his admiration for Muftī Taqī Usmānī – which he expressed to me several times – helped him justify such behavior.

The situation eventually deteriorated to the extent that advertisers featuring him and Maktab children were being printed out and left inside the Musalla itself. The egregiousness of defiling a place of worship with Harām Tasāwīr was entirely lost on him. At this juncture I stopped addressing him as “Mawlana”,

“Huzūr”, etc. in our personal interactions and when mentioning him to others. I resolved to write to Muftī ‘Abū al-Qāsim about this Murīd and request his intervention. A few recent discoveries have eliminated that resolve, however.

I was searching for an audio declamation against photography from Muftī ‘Abū al-Qāsim. I wanted to forward it to my colleague by way of admonition, but in the process I found that Muftī ‘Abū al-Qāsim has also started to appear on video and television. Strangely enough, he still maintains that digital photography is impermissible and vehemently criticizes those that indulge in it in his presence.

In a recent function he publicly and severely upbraided a person who had taken his photograph whilst he was giving or about to give a talk. For about seven minutes thereafter he solemnly spoke about the sin of photography and expounded on its punishment in the Ākhirah. And yet, at the very same time he was inveighing against photography, he was being filmed at close-range by multiple handheld and mounted cameras. Many onlookers and YouTube viewers were left either bemused or amused by the situation. One of the latter mockingly commented that, “Bayaan aapka kisme record hora rahe? Mufti sahab aasmaan se farishto se mangway kiya camera?”. Another said, “Photo grafi haraam hai- maolana video grafi sunnat hai, ya sawab hai? Mufti sahab zara wazaahat karden”.

Besides the aforementioned video, there’s quite a few more which are widely available on the internet. Some show him tying turbans at a Dastarbandī ceremony. In others he’s delivering a bayān, and several have him discussing local politics with TV reporters. In these circumstances, when the Pīr himself is publicly committing the same infractions, what use is it to try to get him to redress the shenanigans of his Murīdīn?

Also worth mentioning is that the current Muhtamim of Dār al-‘Ulūm, Syed Mawlānā Arshad Madanī, is himself better known as ‘media personality’ to many people in and outside of India who’re unacquainted with Deoband. As the Amīr of Jāmiāt-e-‘Ulamā-e-Hind, he’s seemingly incapable of fulfilling his duties without being on TV and other types of video broadcasts. In fact, the broader Madanī family, with the apparent blessings of Mawlānā Arshad, have inaugurated a media platform called “Madanī TV.”

(End of the Brother’s letter)

ANSWER

The deviate molvis have kicked up much dust and churned up much hot air by presenting the red herring of the method of production and difference of opinion regarding the prohibition. Bereft of any valid argument to bolster their baseless

claim of permissibility, they present two flaccid and flapdoodle stupid arguments to scuttle the Prohibition of pictures of animate objects.

- (1) They say that while a picture drawn with pen and paint is a prohibited picture, the picture produced by the camera and the digital method is not a picture.
- (2) There is difference of opinion regarding the prohibition.

We as well as other Ulama have thoroughly debunked these stupid arguments which are bereft of any logic and sense. There are many publications in refutation of their absurd claim of a digital picture not being a picture. Furthermore, there is complete Consensus of all our Akaabir Ulama on the Prohibition of pictures of animate objects. Then the strongest Dalaail for the Prohibition are the Ahaadith which unequivocally prohibit and condemn pictures.

This, our present discussion, will not repeat the valid arguments in refutation of the stupidities of the deviates. Let us look at this issue from another perspective, and that is the evil, the sin and the moral filth and destruction caused to the Ummah by pictures. Assuming that digital pictures are not pictures within the purview of the prohibition of pictures stated in the Hadith, then too, it is absolutely satanic and villainous to justify such pictures in view of the evil which these pictures generate.

Only sincerity is required to understand this perspective. A vast satanic avenue of immorality and obscenity has been opened by digital pictography which the likes of Mr. Taqi Usmani has halaalized. The vast majority of the Ummah has become addicted to cellphone and video pornography, haraam movies and filth of a variety of kinds. Innumerable illicit relationships have been struck up via cellphone communication. In every such evil relationship, males and females mutually exchange pictures of themselves in various postures of nudity and zina.

The addiction to pictures has ruined the Akhlaaq of the Ummah. This addiction has created a complete desensitization regarding sins of the zina dimension. On the basis of the justification and promotion of the hallucinated permissibility of digital pictography, the addiction stemming from it has completely diluted and even eliminated inhibition for sins of zina committed on these satanic devices. No longer are there any pangs of conscience for the deluge of zina sins committed by Muslims in the wake of the halaalization of digital pictography by deviates about whom Rasulullah (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said:

“I fear most for my Ummah such aimmah who are mudhillen.”

The ‘aimmah’ are the deviate, evil scholars for dollars who pursue worldly and nafsaani objectives under deeni cover. They are labelled ‘mudhillen’ for they mislead the ignorant Muslim masses. They lead them into the den of vice and

satanism. Those who argue against the Prohibition of pictures are perfect examples of aimmah mudhilleen.

Viewing this picture issue from the perspective of the irreparable moral and Imaani damage it has caused the vast majority of the Ummah who has become addicted to cellphone zina and pornography, and which has caused the breakdown of innumerable marriages, there is no need to delve into the issue of prohibition or permissibility of pictures.

Every molvi of mediocre qualification is aware or should be aware of the simple Fiqhi principle of Hurmat li ghairihi. While something may be lawful per se, evil and harmful external factors becoming attached to the lawful practice/institution will render it (the lawful issue) haraam. Grapes are halaal. However, selling grapes to a winery is Haraam Lighairihi. Anything which causes haraam is likewise haraam.

There is no honest and sincere Muslim who will deny the colossal harm and damage to Akhlaaq and Imaan caused by pictures – digital pictures – even if we have to momentarily and stupidly insult our intelligence with the shaitaani idea that digital pictures are not pictures. The stupid and absurd argument of digital pictures not being pictures and the alleged difference of opinion are of no significance in the context of the Prohibition of cellphone and video pictures based on digital pictography. Setting aside this redherring argument, the evil and immorality stemming from these supposedly permissible pictures should be the primary grounds for Prohibition just as the winery is the primary factor of prohibition of selling grapes.

These vile molvis and moron muftis who have ruined the Ummah shall still have to circumambulate their own intestines in Jahannam. They have legalized the abhorrent institution of pictography only to gratify their nafsani and lustful desires. They crave to display their snouts on the social media. It is the villainous nafs which goads them to recklessly perpetrate the capital sin of halaalizing a practice which Allah Ta'ala has made Haraam and for which many severe warnings of punishment have been sounded in the Hadith.

The following Naseehat of Hadhraq Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (Rahmatullah alayh) should be salubrious for the cliques of aimmah mudhilleen.

“In the authentic Ahadith it is reported that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said:

‘There will be people in my Ummat, who will change the name of wine (giving it some other fancy name) and consume it. And, at these drinking sessions music, singing and dancing, will prevail. Allah Ta'ala will cause them to be swallowed

into the earth, and others among them will be transformed into apes and swines.”

This practice (of changing the names of forbidden things with a view to legalise them) which our Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) mentioned with regard to wine has today been employed by Muslims, not only for wine, but for many other forbidden practices. Practices which the Shariah has proscribed as Haraam (prohibited) have today been painted in the colours of modernity and their names have been changed so that people could indulge in these forbidden practices without any restraint. These people labour under the misconception that they have escaped the Divine Prosecution by employing this self-deceptive trick.

If they had any insight they would have realised that by the employment of this deception they are guilty of two crimes, i.e. (1) the commission of the sin, the name of which they have changed, and (2) being devoid of regret and shame for the crime thus perpetrated. These are such people who are forgetful of repentance.

... picture-making has been named photography and has thus been declared as lawful. ... interest has been named profit, and has thus been legalized.

والى الله المشتكى ولا حول
ولا قوة الا بالله العلي
العظيم

(My complaint is lodged with Allah Ta'ala. There is no strength and no power, but with Allah, the Great, the Majestic.)

The subject under discussion is the question of photography. This too is one of the links in that chain. Shariah has branded picture-making as an absolute prohibition, and the use of pictures as unlawful. Modern Muslims of today have camouflaged this practice with a new garb. They have turned away from the obsolete methods of picture-production and have invented a new method of picture-making, giving it a new name in order to escape the verdicts of Prohibition. In this regard there is not much complaint against the modernists who have been tutored and “nourished” in only modernity. Alas! Our complaint is against those who not only have knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah, but also venture to criticise sometimes the Aimmah-e Mujtahideen (the great Jurists of Islam) and our pious Pre-decessors because they labour under the illusion of being experienced and all-wise. They have dubbed picture-making with the term photography and have issued Fatwas (verdicts) of permissibility ...

These (votaries of photography) in support of their claim state:

“It seems that in the present age all the modern Ulama of enlightened opinion hold the view that photography is not picture-making, and that the term, Tasweer (picture-making) is not applicable to photography.”

“Indeed, it is astonishing to note that these very “modern” Alims of “enlightened opinion” who have shrugged off the Taqleed of the Aimmah-e-Mujtahideen and the Pious Predecessors in consonance with their lowly desires are the very ones who bow their heads in submission to their contemporaries (i.e. those who have issued verdicts declaring photography of animate objects lawful).

The anarchist regards the following (Taqleed) of the great Jurists of Islam as a dark blot, and he does not hesitate to portray the opinions of the overwhelming majority of Fuqahaa (Jurists) and Muhadditheen who include many Sahabas, as erroneous. It is this type of anarchist who today desires to declare a Haraam act as Halaal with the aid of the Fatwas of a handful of contemporaries. Indeed, it is most shocking to observe that he will not even consider the opinions of Hazrat Ali (radhiyallahu anhu) and Hazrat Ibn Abbaas (radhiyallahu anhu) when these do not conform to his (the anarchist’s) fancy. But, the verdicts of a handful of contemporaries are accepted by the anarchist when these conform to his desire notwithstanding the existence of the Fatwas of thousands of Ulama which contradict him.”

Shaikh Mustufaa Humaami (Rahmatullah alayh) of Egypt writes:

“The photographers of our time regard picture-making as a great skill and as a branch of the ‘fine-arts’ . . . this means that these people regard picture-making as lawful without any qualms. Now, what does the Law state regarding a person who regards a forbidden practice as lawful, and this too, when he has knowledge of its prohibition? We seek Allah’s protection. . . . Alas! Muslims today have been encircled by this great evil (of photography) to such an extent that there hardly remains a Muslim home without being full with photos. Ponder! Should Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) make an appearance today and observe this evil, what will be his attitude? The great misfortune of the situation is that this fitnah (the evil of photography) prevails in those cities where the inhabitants regard themselves to excel in knowledge.”