100005 - Warning against the evils of graduation ceremonies

the question

What is the Islamic ruling on graduation ceremonies that are widespread nowadays, and have captured the attention of young men and women, and a great deal of money is spent on them?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

No doubt when a student completes the university stage and gets his graduation certificate, this is an occasion of joy for all people, for the student, his family, his classmates and those who love him, because that represents the end of this stage of hard work, sleepless nights and anxiety, and prepares him to move to a new stage in which the student will take care of himself, eat from what he earns, and reap the fruits of his hard work. Hence celebrating this graduation is regarded as something normal that is in harmony with human nature in general terms. But if the individual is mature in his thinking and has a high level of faith, this joy make him realise how blessed he is, so he will give thanks to the One Who bestowed that blessing, may He be glorified, and he will realise that all grace and bounty is in His hand, and that He is the one who enabled him and helped him to achieve that, and were it not for Him, neither he nor his success nor his effort would exist.

Secondly:

There is nothing wrong with expressing joy on this occasion, inviting family and friends, and congratulating the student on his graduation. There is also nothing wrong with the university organising a celebration in which it honours the top students and encourages those who are still studying to work hard in order to achieve the same.

The basic principle regarding such celebrations is that they are permissible, whether they are held for male or female students, so long as they are free of evils and matters that are objectionable according to Islamic teaching, which include the following:

1. Extravagance and excess, both of which are blameworthy according to Islamic teaching, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess” [al-An‘aam 6:141]

“And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully,

Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful” [al-Isra’ 17:26-27].

That also includes charging a high fee for admission to these celebrations, which causes hardship to poor students and their families, who cannot afford the price of a ticket.

2. Holding celebrations in hotels and other places where there is no guarantee that men will not be able to look at the female students, either directly or through cameras and the like.

Hence it is essential that the celebrations for female students should be held in secure places where they will be safe from men looking at them.

3. Hiring bands to play at the celebrations, or having the graduation procession accompanied by music or nasheeds with vocal effects that resemble music. This is an obvious evil, because of the shar‘i proof of the prohibition on musical instruments and listening to them. Please see the answer to question no. 5000.

4. Hiring male and female singers to liven up the celebrations, according to their claims, and spending money on that. In fact they deaden people’s hearts with what they repeat of indecent and immoral words.

5. Resembling the disbelievers in their ecclesiastical graduation gowns and caps. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.”

Narrated by Abu Daawood (3512); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

6. Taking pictures of female students' graduation ceremonies, by video and otherwise, when there is no guarantee that men will not look at these pictures, even after a while.

7. Attendance of female students in revealing clothing in which it is not appropriate for a Muslim woman to appear before her Muslim sisters.

These are the types of evils that are widespread in the celebrations, and which we must beware of and denounce those who do them.

We ask Allah to protect the young Muslim men and women, and enable them to act in accordance with His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

And Allah knows best.