10836 - Ruling on plays and skits for the purpose of da’wah

the question

I would like to know the ruling for skits/dramas/plays for children/teenagers with Islamic content (like ayahs from Qur'an, quotations from Hadith, etc...) I have read your ruling about wearing wigs, false moustaches, etc...(which is haram) however, I would appreciate a comprehensive answer as many people who have some knowledge of the deen have said skits are allowable for youngsters. I would be much obliged for your early reply as we have a halaqa for young people and may Allah save us from going against the book and the Sunnah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This is one of the issues concerning which the scholars differed; some of them forbid it altogether and some of them permit it, but within the guidelines of sharee’ah. Before we discuss the different views on this matter, we should point out that there is no dispute at all concerning the kind of acting which involves promiscuity and the mixing of men and women, and other kinds of evil actions, which is well-known on the screen. There is no dispute among the scholars concerning the prohibition of such acting.

The kind of acting concerning which there is a difference of opinion is that which is done by two or more people in front of a group of others, using actions and dialogue, in order to teach that group something about Islamic worship or morals, or to help them understand reality and the corruption that exists, or to teach them about the glories of the past, or for purposes of entertainment – in which they may present themselves in a way that differs from the way they really are. This kind of acting must be subject to certain guidelines, as follows:

1-Avoiding acting the parts of Prophets, the Sahaabah, shayaateen (devils), kaafirs and animals.

Avoiding men playing the parts of women and vice versa. Avoiding acting the parts of unseen beings such as angels.

2- Playing the part of one who mocks Allah, His signs, His Messenger or any of the rituals of Islam, even if the aim is to teach the people. No one is permitted to act in such a manner, regardless of whether he means it or is joking.

3- Playing any role which involves any kind of speech that is haraam, such as lying or backbiting; or which involves making the clothes too long, etc.

4- Acting out any acts of worship such as wudoo' or prayer in an incorrect manner which is not that reported in the Sunnah.

One should avoid playing the role of evil or immoral characters, or playing the role of the imaams or prominent scholars of the ummah, lest that lead to an undermining of their status.

Some of the contemporary scholars said that acting is forbidden altogether; others said that it is permitted so long as it meets certain conditions. Among the latter was Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him). There follows his fatwa on the topic:

"Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds. There is no doubt that calling people to Allah (da'wah) is an act of worship, as Allah commands us (interpretation of the meaning):

'Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Revelation and the Qur'aan) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better"[al-Nahl 16:125]

The person who is calling others to Allah feels, when he is calling them to Allah, that he is fulfilling the command of Allah and drawing closer to Him. Undoubtedly the best way in which he can call people is with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). For the Book of Allah is the greatest preaching method that can be used when advising mankind:

‘O mankind! There has come to you a good advice from your Lord (i.e. the Qur’aan, enjoining all that is good and forbidding all that is evil), and a healing for that which is in your breasts, — a guidance and a mercy (explaining lawful and unlawful things) for the believers”[Yoonus 10:57 – interpretation of the meaning]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said likewise: “The best of speech is preaching.” Sometimes he used to preach to his Companions in a manner that they described as “making the heart tremble and the eyes fill with tears.” So if a person can use this means of preaching, undoubtedly this is the best means, i.e., by using the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). But if he thinks that sometimes he can add other permissible methods, using things that Allah has permitted, there is nothing wrong with that. But this is subject to the condition that these means should not involve anything that is forbidden such as lying or playing the roles of kaafirs, for example, or playing the roles of the Sahaabah (may Allah be pleased with them) or the imaams – the leaders of the Muslims after the Sahaabah – or similar things where there is the fear that this may lead to the people looking down on any of these great imaams… Another of the conditions is that this acting should not involve men imitating women or vice versa, because this is a matter concerning which it is reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed those who do it. He cursed the women who imitate men and the men who imitate women.

The point is that if some of these means are used occasionally in order to attract people, and they do not involve anything haraam, I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. But if it is done frequently and is made the only means of calling people to Allah, and one turns away from calling them with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), so that the people who are being called cannot be moved by any other means, then I think that this is not right, and in this case it becomes haraam, because directing the people towards anything other than the Qur’aan and Sunnah in matters that have to do with calling people to Allah is a reprehensible action. But I do not see anything wrong with doing that occasionally, so long as it does not involve anything haraam.”

And Allah knows best.

See al-Tamtheel fi’l-Da’wah ila-Allah by ‘Abd-Allah Aal Haadi, 11-66-67-102

And Hukm Mumaarasat al-Fann fi’l-Sharee’ah by Saalih al-Ghazaali