112018 - How to Combat the Dangers of Cartoons in Islam

the question

I have some questions to which I would like to find a satisfactory answer that will help me in my research. Recently it has become common in online discussion boards to use anime images (depicting animated beings). What are the means of combating this phenomenon, noting that people are very fond of them and love them, especially young women? What are the possible alternatives?

Summary of answer

How to combat the dangers of cartoons in Islam:
• Focus on teaching children to memorise the Quran and to make the best use of their youthful energy and willingness to learn for that purpose.
• Teach them to love Prophet Muhammad and his Companions by teaching them their biography and life stories, choosing age-appropriate books for the children.
• Teach them something about issues of creed (`Aqidah) in a simple and straightforward manner.
• Teach them to denounce and hate evil, and teach the child that he should not watch cartoons in which there is music or girls who are uncovered or crosses.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Impact of cartoons on children

No wise person would doubt the impact that animated cartoons have on children, and it is an impact that becomes more intense because of the attractive way they are presented and because of lack of restraint. The means by which these cartoons are shown are very powerful and exciting, to the extent that there are many adults who are infatuated by them, in addition to the lack of

restraint that would prevent children from watching them, such as mature thinking and strong belief.

Hence if you asked anyone who watched these cartoons when he was very young, he will be able to tell you a lot about the stories and events as if he can see them with his own eyes now.

Think about how much is imprinted on children's minds of images that promote a particular belief or teach a particular behaviour. Whoever reflects on the true nature of these cartoons [and what they promote] will realise the great danger that they pose to children and even adults .

The newspaper Al-Jazirah (issue no. 12321, Friday 27 Jumada Al-Ula 1427 AH) reported on an academic study undertaken by the researcher Huda Al-Ghufays which deals with the impact of cartoons on the child at different stages of his life. Among other things, it says in this paper:

"An academic study has warned of the dangers of imported cartoons on the faith of Muslim children, because of what they contain of deviant ideas aimed at undermining belief in the minds of young people and has affirmed how important it is to consolidate efforts to reform TV channels and satellite channels, in order to protect our youth from the conspiracy against them, for the matter is no longer hidden.

The study indicated that an ideological war has been launched against Islam and its people, aimed primarily at the faith of Muslim children, the foundations of the religion, and belief in Allah, His Books and His Messengers.

The study discovered that the time when children start to become attached to media is the age of three for males and the age of five for females. This is the most critical stage in the child's development and in the formation of his ideas and beliefs.

The study shows that a high percentage of mothers are unaware of whether or not cartoons can play a role in instilling sound belief or otherwise in children, as 75% of those who were included in the study were not certain about the impact of cartoons in building the child's creed ('Aqidah). This is indicative of an urgent need to rethink what children watch, and confirms the serious

impact that cartoons have on building the child's imagination and way of thinking, which leads to developing convictions that have a serious influence on the child's psyche. Unfortunately, this issue – the issue of the impact that cartoons have on the child's mind – despite the serious consequences that may result from that, has not been discussed in an appropriate manner which reflects the grievous danger that our children are facing."

Advice to Muslim Media

Those who are in charge of the Muslim media must fear Allah, may He be Exalted, with regard to the children of the Muslims. They must realise that they are taking part, through their media, in the destruction of society and in the spread of immorality, violence and corruption. They were not content only to corrupt young men and women, and adult men and women, with movies, plays and songs; now they have added to their dreadful track record things that will corrupt the beliefs and morals of children by means of what they import from the doomed East or the corrupt West of programs and cartoons for children which play a role in ruining and corrupting them.

How to combat the dangers of cartoons in Islam

Some of the means that we advise parents and those in authority to use in order to combat this assault on our children and ward it off are as follows:

- Focus on teaching children to memorise the Book of Allah, may He be Exalted, and to make the best use of their youthful energy and willingness to learn for that purpose.
- Teach them to love the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his Companions by teaching them their biography and life stories, choosing age-appropriate books for the children.
- Teach them something about issues of creed (`Aqidah) in a simple and straightforward manner, such as the oneness of Allah and how to venerate Him, love Him and fear Him, and that He has power over all things, and that He is the Creator and Provider, and other things that are appropriate to their age and intellectual level.
- Teach them to denounce and hate evil, and teach the child that he should not watch

cartoons in which there is music or girls who are uncovered or crosses. Even if there is any character in the cartoon who drinks or eats without saying Bismillah, he should denounce that, and if he sees anyone stealing or killing, he should denounce that.

Teaching him the previously mentioned matters before he watches anything will be beneficial, by Allah's leave, because the child may see something shown on TV outside the family home, so he will hasten to turn it off and not watch it. There are interesting stories of children who have been raised in this manner, which have been a means of warding off a great deal of evil.

Some alternatives to cartoons

Some of the alternatives to these cartoons that we may suggest are as follows:

- Similar cartoons should be produced that comply with Islamic guidelines and are free of evils, and which teach about virtues. There is no reason why they should not be the same cartoons, edited to remove the evils, and with the characters playing their roles using permissible words that do not go against Islamic teachings. The Majd channel did well when it used this method, as it has its own programs of cartoons, as well as beneficial dubbing of famous cartoons. Thus this will combine the aim of fulfilling the child's desire for entertainment with the aim of teaching him some proper behaviour and good manners.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih Al-`Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Now there are some Islamic recordings and cartoons, which say that they are Islamic – meaning that they have produced some movies such as the Conquest of Constantinople, or Peace Journey. Recently there has appeared the Boy of Najran, telling a story that is mentioned in Surat Al-Buruj and in the Hadith narrated in Muslim. This is a cartoon which has been produced as an alternative to corrupt cartoons. What is the ruling on that?

He replied:

"I think, in sha Allah, that there is nothing wrong with this, because in reality – as you said – it

protects children from watching prohibited things. At the very least, even if we are strict about it, it is less serious than other cartoons, meaning – as we have heard – the type in which they try to shed doubts on faith and belief, and which depict the Almighty – Allah forbid – when He sends down rain, and the like. Whatever the case, I do not think there is anything wrong with them…

I think that if there is nothing but good in it, then there is nothing wrong with it, in sha Allah. But if they are accompanied by music, then they are not permissible, because music is prohibited." (Liqa'at Al-Bab Al-Maftuh (127/question no. 10)

- Choosing educational programs which combine fun and learning. Such programs are becoming widespread, which incorporate sounds and images, and talk about the sea, animals, and so on. The Majd documentary channel is a very active contributor in this field, and its programs are free of music and women.

These cartoons and programs should be in accordance with Islamic guidelines. Sister Huda Ghufays has mentioned this in her research paper, and the Al-Jazirah newspaper said, reporting on her research:

This study suggests some important guidelines that makers of children's programs should adhere to and keep in mind, such as avoiding production of programs that create fear and terror in children, because they are at a stage where they are receptive to such things and they will have a great impact on them. That is because the child between the ages of two and five years is afraid of being alone, and he is afraid of fire and animals, and imaginary things such as ghosts and 'Ifrits (jinn). Depicting such things could lead to the child growing up with psychological problems.

Programs for children should focus on promoting good values and should not show a great deal of weeping and crying, because that only leads to a weak character that is unable to face challenges. Rather they should promote values within a framework of fun, with positive and happy stories and ideas.

The study confirms that children's media should be based on knowledge and professionalism, and it should not be produced by immature people. We should pay attention to this aspect of media

production, which is based on knowledge, skills and art. We should not go to extremes in using our imagination, because this will have a great impact on children's way of conceiving things; rather we should allow that within certain limits.

The study confirms that it is essential to analyse the impact of cartoons which claim to be in accordance with Islamic standards, to ensure that the purpose behind these productions is not mere entertainment and creating alternatives. We should be aware of the Islamic alternatives that are produced for children, because it seems that most of what is produced as alternatives focuses on avoiding that which goes against Islamic teachings, but they neglect another important aspect, which is how these movies could help to instil Islamic beliefs, in accordance with a well-prepared plan that is appropriate to the age of the audience. It is essential that specialists in Islamic knowledge should fiercely confront campaigns that are aimed at corrupting the minds and faith of our youth. End quote.

- We should occupy our children's time with some beneficial and healthy activities, in which they can play sports, swim and engage in other permissible games. This will combine fun with benefits, provided that we choose the right sports clubs and choose good friends for our children to play with.
- Children can also watch some Islamic websites which have some sections for children, showing them useful clips, games or cartoons about the stories of the Prophets and the righteous, and stories of battles and campaigns in Islamic history. Islamweb website has a special section for children which is very beneficial.

As you will notice, we do not deal with children as we deal with adults. So it must be noted that we urge parents to try to satisfy the child's desire to watch movies and play, but at the same time we should not let things get out of control, lest we find ourselves going against Islamic teachings and so that the child does not become corrupt and accustomed to evil, and cause trouble to us when he grows up. Hence we urge companies and organisations who are able to produce useful content for children with sound and images not to spare any effort in that, for the children are in the greatest need of that, and parents are also in great need of a beneficial and fun alternative to

show to their children. We think it is essential to produce something especially for girls, so that our daughters will be raised to be modest and lower their gaze from an early age.

Negative impact of the media and how to remedy it

Sister Huda Al-Ghufays also referred in her paper to some things that are useful in this regard.

In the article in the Al-Jazirah newspaper which reports on her research it says:

“With regard to the negative impact of the media and how to remedy it, the study indicates that we should adopt an educational method aimed at instilling faith, focusing on spiritual well-being and strengthening belief, so as to prevent or reduce these negative impacts. The study listed some of these negative impacts and how to find a solution to them:

- Showing a lot of media interviews with football stars, pop stars, movie stars and other celebrities, focusing on their lives and parties and presenting them as examples for children to follow. The study suggests that parents should make the child aware of the example of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and encourage the child to take him as an example to be followed, by presenting the Sirah (biography) of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in a story that the child can connect with.
- The child memorising the names of characters in cartoons, and asking to dress like them. The solution to that is to encourage the child to imitate the way the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and Companions (may Allah be pleased with them), and other historical heroes of the Muslims, lived.
- The child readily accepts ideas that are not in accordance with our beliefs. The solution recommended by the study is to strengthen the child’s spiritual immunity, by teaching him the Book of Allah and encouraging him to spend time studying it, and striving to connect the child to the Quran in all aspects of life.
- Undermining the child’s pride in being a Muslim; that is because the child is not raised to love Islam and is not made aware of how great it is to be a Muslim. The solution to this issue is to continually highlight the merits of Islam, making the most of special occasions to do

that, and comparing Islam to other religions. We should feel a sense of responsibility, and be sincere and truthful in fulfilling the trust as is required of us.”

And Allah knows best.