122505 - They go against sharee’ah and use as an excuse the fact that there are righteous people who do that

the question

Some imams in mosques and professors of Islamic education, and others who are regarded as examples for other people, trim their beards – and some shave them altogether – and they let their garments hang too low. When you try to prove it, some people of weak character argue that these actions are haraam and they say to you: So and so is the imam of a mosque and he lets his garment hang too low, or So and so is a teacher of Islamic studies and he shaves his beard.
We would like you to say something about such imams and those who are in similar roles, and the seriousness of what they are doing for themselves and for all other people.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The fact that some of those who go against sharee’ah are justifying what they do based on the actions of some imams of mosques or some teachers of Islamic education, will not benefit them before their Lord, because what is required of the Muslim is to follow the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and it is not permissible for him to put the teaching of anyone else before the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allaah (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allaah and the Last Day, and remembers Allaah much”

[al-Ahzaab 33:21]

“And (remember) the Day (Allaah) will call to them, and say: “’What answer gave you to the Messengers?’”

[al-Qasas 29:65]

If the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is clear, then it is not permissible for a Muslim to ignore it because of the actions or words of some person. Imam al-Shaafa’i (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: The people [scholars] are unanimously agreed that if the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has become clear to a person, it is not permissible for him to forsake it because of the opinion of any person.

Secondly:

The one who has become an example for people must be more careful about his adherence to the Sunnah and not going against it, because the people will follow his example and will regard his actions as being in accordance with sharee’ah.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Hence the scholars have obligations that others do not, with regard to acts of worship, morals and manners, and interactions with others, because the people will follow their example, they will follow their example completely. Some people will even sit by a scholar whilst he is praying – for example – and take note of every single movement. When Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) grew old, he did not sit muftarishan (sitting on the left foot and holding the right foot upright with the toes pointing towards the qiblah) in the prayer. One of his sons said to him: “What kind of sitting is this?” He said: “My feet do not let me?” Look at how the people watch the scholar and take note of everything he does, and even what he does not do. Hence it is essential for the seekers of knowledge to be good examples in all things, so that the people will respect them. End quote.

Al-Liqa’ al-Shahri (introduction to meeting no. 49).

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The scholar is known for his patience, his piety or awareness of Allaah, his fear of Him, his hastening to do what Allaah and His Messenger have enjoined, and his keeping away from what Allaah and His Messenger have forbidden.

This is how the scholar should be, whether he is a teacher, a qaadi, a daa'i who calls people to Allaah, or in any field of work. His duty is to be an example of goodness, and to be an example of righteous deeds, acting upon his knowledge, fearing Allaah wherever he is, guiding people to goodness. So he should be a good example to his students, to his family members, to his neighbours and others whom he knows, so that they can follow his example in his words and deeds that are in accordance with the laws of Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted.

The seeker of knowledge must be very careful and beware of being careless about that which Allaah has enjoined, or of falling into that which Allaah has forbidden, because he may be taken as an example in that. If he is heedless, others will be heedless too. The same applies to the Sunnah, and to makrooh actions. He should be keen to observe Sunnah actions, even if they are not obligatory, so that he will become accustomed to doing them, and people will follow his example in that. And he should keep away from makrooh things and dubious matters, so that people will not follow his example in that.

The seeker of knowledge has an important status. The scholars are the elite in this life, so they have duties that others do not share. The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock." End quote.

Majmoo' Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (2/312, 313)

2. and he (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And who is better in speech than he who [says: 'My Lord is Allaah (believes in His Oneness),' and then stands firm (acts upon His Order), and] invites (men) to Allaah's (Islamic Monotheism), and does righteous deeds, and says: 'I am one of the Muslims'" [Fussilat 41:33].

This verse shows us that the one who calls people to Allaah must be a person of righteous deeds, calling to Allaah with his words, calling to Allaah with all his actions. Hence He says after that “and does righteous deeds.” The one who calls people to Allaah must call with his words and with his actions. There is no one better in speech than this type of person, those who call to Allaah with their good words and guide the people with their words and deeds. So they become a good example in their words, deeds and behaviour.

This is how the Messengers (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon them) were: callers to Allaah with their words, actions and behaviour. Many of those who are called benefit more from the callers’ behaviour than from their words, especially the common folk and those with limited knowledge. They benefit from the caller’s behaviour, good attitude and righteous deeds in ways they cannot benefit from their words which they may not understand. One of the most important missions of the one who calls people to Allaah is to have a good track record, to be a person of righteous deeds, to have a good attitude so that his example may be followed in his actions, words and deeds.

This verse encourages and urges us to call people to Allaah, and explains the status of the callers (daa’iyahs): they are the best of people in word if they are sincere in what they say, and do righteous deeds; they are the best of people in word and no one is better than them in word at all. Foremost among them are the Messengers (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon them), then those who follow them with insight until the Day of Resurrection. End quote.

Majmoo’ Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (3/110, 111)

We ask Allaah to set the affairs of the Muslims straight, and to guide the daa’iyahs and seekers of knowledge to that which is in their interests and in the people’s interests.

And Allaah knows best.