148544 - Can Muslims Celebrate Holi?

the question

Is it appropriate for Muslims to play with colours on the Hindu festival of Holi?

Summary of answer

Muslims are not permitted to celebrate Holi. Based on evidence from the Quran and Hadith, Islamic teachings prohibit participation in non-Muslim religious festivals. Scholars emphasize that Holi, being rooted in Hindu theology and involving rituals contrary to Tawhid (Islamic monotheism), is impermissible for Muslims to observe.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Understanding Holi: Its Origins and Practices

The festival mentioned in the question is a festival of the Hindus, and others such as the Sikhs, Buddhists and so on have followed them in that.

It is called the Festival of Holi or the Festival of Colours, because people colour themselves and others with different colours until their appearance becomes very repugnant, and the coloured clothes are thrown away after that, because it is very difficult to clean them and restore them to their original condition.

The festival is also called a spring festival, because it comes at the beginning of the spring and, more precisely, when the moon is full. Before the full moon, they light bonfires, because they believe that by doing so they are driving away evil spirits. Some of them burn parts of their houses with coals from that fire to drive evil away from them, and they keep the ashes of the fire to ward

off sickness from their bodies.

The Religious Significance of Holi in Hinduism

It is originally a religious festival, and those who celebrate it – the Hindus – believe that on those days the evil gods were destroyed by the good gods! This is part of their religion, which is based on myths and idol-worship. Along with the playing with colours, dancing and singing, sweets are distributed and they congratulate one another by saying “Happy Holi”.

In English, there is a similar-sounding word “holy”. Some researchers think that the meaning of the word, for the Hindus, is burning, because they believe that the fires put an end to evil and evil people. Whatever the case, this is the festival referred to in the question. (For more information on that, please see Al-Mawsu`ah Al-`Arabiyyah Al-`Alamiyyah

Is Celebrating Holi Prohibited in Islam?

The authentic texts indicate that it is prohibited to participate in these religious festivals of the disbelievers. The four Schools of Fiqh and others unanimously agreed on that.

This emphatic prohibition is because of their disbelief in Allah, and because these festivals are symbols of that disbelief. So how about if they are hostile and aggressive towards the Muslims, and transgress against their rights? This makes it even more appropriate to be averse towards them, their festivals and their religion altogether.

Quranic Evidence against Celebrating Non-Muslim Festivals

Among the texts which are indicative of this prohibition are the following:

Allah, may He be Exalted, states that one of the characteristics of the believers is that they do not witness vanity or falsehood. According to some of the commentators, this refers to festivals that

are based on falsehood.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And those who will not witness vanity [falsehood], but when they pass near senseless play, pass by with dignity.} [Al-Furqan 25:72]

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Abu Al-`Aliyah, Tawus, Muhammad ibn Sirin, Ad-Dahhak, Ar-Rabi` ibn Anas and others said: This refers to the festivals of the polytheists. (End quote from Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 6/130)

This sentence is not simply describing how people of dignity behave; rather it is intended to give an example that should be followed, which indicates that it is prohibited to witness such falsehood.

Hadith Evidence against Imitating Non-Muslims in Festivals

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stated that whoever imitates the disbelievers is one of them, implying that it is definitely prohibited to imitate them.

It was narrated that Ibn `Umar said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud (4031); classed as authentic by Al-Albani in Sahih Abu Dawud)

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The least that can be said concerning this Hadith is that it is prohibited to imitate them, even though the apparent meaning may imply that the one who imitates them becomes a disbeliever, as in the words (interpretation of the meaning), {And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them.} [Al-Ma’idah 5:51] (End quote from Iqtida’ As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim, p. 83)

This is sufficient evidence to indicate that it is prohibited for a Muslim to participate in the festivals of the Hindus and other disbelievers. The Muslim should not allow his family or children to play with colours on those days, because of what we have quoted above of the evidence that it is

forbidden to participate to even the slightest extent in the celebrations and religious festivals of the disbelievers, let alone what those festivals involve of free mixing, music and dancing. If that was a festival celebrated by some Muslims, it would not be permissible to participate in it, because it would be regarded as an innovation and because of what it involves of prohibited actions – so how about if it is one of the religious festivals of the disbelievers?!

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is not permissible for the Muslims to imitate them in any of their festivals that are unique to them, whether in terms of food, clothing, bathing, lighting fires, temporarily refraining from some customs or rituals, or anything else. It is not permissible to give a feast or to give gifts, or to sell anything that may be used for the purpose of that celebration, or to allow children and others to join in the games that are played on those festivals, or to wear adornments. (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 25/329)

For more information on the emphatic prohibition on participating in those festivals and the like, please see the answers to the following questions:
(947, 97014, 3325, 10213, 5219, 1027, 26804, 59905)

You will find a number of these questions and others concerning the festivals of the disbelievers and related issues .

And Allah knows best.