1692 - What Are the Forbidden Names in Islam?

the question

Are there any names which it is forbidden to use? If so, what are they?

Summary of answer

There are names which we are forbidden to use such as names which belong only to Allah, names which befit no one except the Prophet, and names which imply enslavement to anything besides Allah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Forbidden names

Yes, there are names which we are forbidden to use, examples of which are as follows:

- **Names which belong only to Allah**

It is forbidden to use any name which belongs only to Allah , such as al-Khaliq (the Creator) and al-Quddus (the Most Holy), or names which do not befit any except Allah, such as Malik al-Muluk (King of Kings). This is the consensus of the fuqaha.

Ibn al-Qayyim said that names which belong only to Allah include : al-Ahad (the One), al-Samad (the Eternal), al-Khaliq (the Creator), al-Razzaq (the Provider), al-Jabbar (the Compeller), al-Mutakabbir (the Majestic), al-Awwal (the First), al-Akhir (the Last), al-Batin (the Hidden) and Allam al-Ghuyub (the Knower of the Unseen). (Tuhfat al-Mawdud, p. 98)

The evidence that it is forbidden to call anyone by a name which belongs only to Allah, such as

Malik al-Muluk (king of kings), may be seen for example in the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him); in the version narrated by al-Bukhari, he said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The most despised name with Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be a man called Malik al-Muluk. According to Muslim, he said, The man who will be most deserving of Allah's anger and most evil on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who was called Malik al-Amlak. There is no King except Allah.

As regards using names that may be used for Allah or for others, it is permissible to use these names, such as 'Ali (High), Rashid (Guide) and Badi' (Innovator or Originator).

Ibn 'Abidin said: "It seems to be the case that they are permitted, even if the definite article "al" is used. Al-Hasqafi said: What (these names) mean concerning us (human beings) is different from their meanings concerning Allah, may He be exalted.

- **Names which befit no one except the Prophet**

It is forbidden to use names which befit no one except the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), such as Sayyid Walad Adam (master of the sons of Adam), Sayyid al-Nas (master of mankind), Sayyid al-Kull (master of all), because these names, as the Hanbalis said, befit no one except him, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

- **Names which imply enslavement to anything besides Allah**

It is forbidden to use any name which implies enslavement to anything besides Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, such as 'Abd al-'Uzza (slave of al-'Uzza a pagan goddess), 'Abd al-Ka'bah (slave of the Ka'bah), 'Abd al-Dar (slave of the House), 'Abd 'Ali (slave of 'Ali), 'Abd al-Husayn (slave of Husayn), etc.

It was stated in Hashiyat Ibn 'Abidin that one should not be called 'Abd Fulan (slave of so-and-so).

It says in Kashshaf al-Qina': 'They (the scholars) agreed that every name which implies enslavement to anything other than Allah is forbidden, such as 'Abd al-'Uzza, 'Abd 'Amr, 'Abd 'Ali,

‘Abd al-Ka’bah, and any other similar names, such as ‘Abd al-Nabi (slave of the Prophet), ‘Abd al-Husayn, ‘Abd al-Masih (slave of the Messiah).” (Hashiyat Ibn ‘Abidin, 5/268;Mughni al-Muhtaj, 4/295; Tuhfat al-Muhtaj, 10/373; Kashshaf al-Qina’, 3/27; Tuhfat al-Mawdud, p. 90)

The evidence that it is forbidden to use any name which implies enslavement to anything other than Allah may be seen in the report of Ibn Abi Shaybah from Yazid ibn al-Miqdam ibn Shurayh, from his father, from his grandfather Hani ibn Yazid, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: A delegation came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and he heard them calling someone ‘Abd al-Hajar (slave of the stone). He asked him, What is your name? and he said, ‘Abd al-Hajar. He said, No, you are ‘Abd-Allah (the slave of Allah). (Al-Mawsu’ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 11/335)

- **Using names of idols**

Using the names of idols that are worshipped instead of Allah.

- **Names of devils**

It is forbidden to use the names of devils (shayatin), such as Khanzab and Iblis. It was reported that the Sunnah is to change names such as these.

Disliked names in Islam

Names that are makruh (disliked) may be categorized as follows:

- **Names that have bad or distasteful meanings**

It is makruh to use names that have bad or distasteful meanings, or which sound odd, which would cause others to mock a person or would cause him embarrassment, in addition to being contrary to the guidance of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who taught us to choose good names.

- **Names whose meanings are too soft and provocative or sexy**

It is makruh to use names whose meanings are too soft and provocative or sexy, which is a widespread problem in the naming of girls.

- **Naming someone after promiscuous actors and singers**

It is makruh to deliberately name someone after promiscuous actors and singers who star in worthless entertainment shows.

One of the signs of empty-headedness and lack of pride in one's faith is the fact that after a show starring immoral women, people will compete with one another in naming their newborns after these women. Anyone who checks the names registered at the time of one of these shows will see that this is a fact. And our complaining is to Allah.

- **Names that convey any sense of sin**

It is makruh to use names that convey any sense of sin and disobedience to Allah.

Foreign names that belong only to the unbelievers

It is makruh to use foreign names that belong only to the unbelievers.

The proud Muslim who is content with his religion will avoid this and not come anywhere near it. The temptation to use these names is very strong in our time, and a Muslim might pick up any name from Europe and America. This is the worst type of sin and a sign of humiliation and defeat. If this imitation of the unbelievers and using their names is merely the matter of whims and stupidity, it is nevertheless a major sin; if it is done because one actually believes these names are better than Muslim names, then this is a devastating blow to the foundation of faith. In either case, the person who has done this must hasten to repent, and changing the name is a condition of repentance.

- **Names of Pharaohs or other tyrants**

It is makruh to use the names of Pharaohs or other tyrants.

- **Names that have any undesirable meaning**

It is makruh to use names that have any undesirable meaning.

- **Naming people after animals**

It is makruh to name people after animals that are known for their bad qualities. When the Arabs called their children by such names, it was because of good qualities that they noticed in them, and this was the desired meaning. So when they used the name Kalb (dog), it was because of the dogs alertness and ability to work hard; when they used the name Himar (donkey), it was because of the donkeys patience and forbearance, and so on This refutes the false arguments of the Shu'ubiyyah against the Arabs, as was explained by Ibn Durayd, Ibn Faris, and others.

- **Names which are composed of any word added to such words as al-Din or Islam**

It is makruh to use any name which is composed of any word added to such words as al-Din (the Religion) or Islam, such as Nur al-Din/Nuruddin (Light of the Religion), Diya al-Din/Ziauddin (Brightness of the Religion), Sayf al-Islam (Sword of Islam), Nur al-Islam (Light of Islam), etc.

This is because of the great status attached to these words, al-Din and Islam. Adding words to them to form names is an exaggeration which borders on lying, which is why some scholars said that this is haram, and the majority say that it is makruh, because it gives an incorrect impression which should not be given. The way this practice started was that these were titles which were added to people's names, then people started to use them as names.

Names of this sort may be forbidden for two reasons. In a name such as Shihab al-Din, for example, the word Shihab means a flame, which comes from fire, then this is added to the word al-Din (which is inappropriate). This can lead to the use of strange names, as in Indonesia, where people use names such as Dhahab al-Din (gold of the Religion) and Mas al-Din (diamond of the Religion)!

Imam al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him), used to dislike being called by his nickname Muhiy al-Din, and Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) used to dislike

being called by his nickname Taqiy al-Din, and he said, But my family gave me this nickname, so I am known by it.

- **Names which include the word al-Rasul**

Names which include the word al-Rasul (the Messenger) are also makruh.

- **Names of angels**

Some of the scholars regarded using the names of angels (peace be upon them) as makruh. Giving angels' names to women is clearly haram, because it implies imitation of the mushrikin, who thought that the angels were the daughters of Allah, Exalted be He above what they say!

- **Names of Surahs of the Quran**

Some of the scholars thought that it was makruh to give people the names of Surahs of the Quran, such as Ta-Ha, Ya-Sin, Ha-Mim. (The popular notion that Ya-Sin and Ta-Ha are names of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is not correct).

For more, please see these answers: 7180 , 5434 , 31245 , 10030 , 88734 , 191455 , 71296 , 21359 , 6239 , 122042 And Allah knows best.