20325 - Is Keeping Pictures Prohibited in Islam?

the question

We know from Hadith that the Angels do not enter into a house where pictures/photographs of living things (humans or animals) are displaced.

What is the ruling for keeping the photographs of family relatives and pictures appearing in magazines/newspapers etc. and toys like dolls and sculptures of animals.

Your kind reply based on teaching of Quran and Hadith is most kindly requested. May Allah bless you for this act of kindness.

Summary of answer

Keeping three-dimensional pictures is prohibited. If non three-dimensional are hung up to be venerated and respected, as in the case of pictures of kings, presidents, ministers, scholars etc., they are prohibited because it involves exaggeration about a created being. If pictures are hung up for the sake of memory, such as hanging up pictures of one's friends, this is also prohibited. An exception is made in the case of children’s toys which are not regarded as prohibited or disliked.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Types of image-making

Image-making is of two types: one by hand and the other by means of machines.

· Image-making by hand is prohibited , and is in fact a major sin, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed the one who does it. He did not differentiate between images that have a shadow (i.e., three-dimensional) or those that are simply drawn (two-

dimensional), according to the more correct scholarly opinion, because of the general meaning of the Hadith.

· With regard to image-making by means of machines, i.e. cameras, there is a difference of opinion among the later scholars on this matter. Some of them forbid it and some of them allow it.

In order to be on the safe side, it is better to avoid that, because it is one of the doubtful areas. And whoever is careful with regard to doubtful matters will protect his religious commitment and his honour. But if he needs to do that for a specific purpose such as proving his identity, there is nothing wrong with that because if there is a need, the matter is no longer doubtful.

Is keeping pictures prohibited in Islam?

With regard to keeping pictures , this is also of two types:

· The first type is keeping images that are three-dimensional. Keeping them is prohibited. Ibn Al-`Arabi (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that there is consensus on this point. (See Fath Al-Bari, p. 388, vol. 10) He said: This consensus has to do with things other than girls' dolls.

It was narrated that `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "I used to play with dolls in the presence of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and I had friends who would play with me. When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) entered they would hide themselves and he would call them to come and play with me." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, no. 5779; Muslim, no. 2440)

· The second type is images that are not three-dimensional. These are of different types:

1. Those that are hung up to be venerated and respected , as in the case of pictures of kings, presidents, ministers, scholars etc. This is prohibited because it involves exaggeration about a created being.

2. Those that are hung up for the sake of memory , such as hanging up pictures of one's friends. This is also prohibited, because of the Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari from Abu Talhah (may

Allah be pleased with him), who said: “I heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: `The angels do not enter any house in which there is a dog or an image.’” (Narrated by Muslim, 2104).

3. Those that are hung up for the purpose of adornment. These are also prohibited because of the Hadith of `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came back from a journey and I had hung a patterned curtain on which there were images over (the door of) a room of mine. When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw it, he tore it and said, `The most severely punished of the people on the Day of Resurrection will be those who tried to imitate the creation of Allah.’” She said: “So I made it into one or two cushions.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 5610; Muslim, 2107)

4. Those that are treated with disrespect, such as images in carpets and pillows. Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated from the majority of scholars among the Companions and Tabi’in that these are permissible.

5. Those that have unfortunately become widespread and are difficult to avoid, such as images engraved on coins etc which have become a problem for the Muslim ummah. It seems to me that there is no sin on the one who acquires these without wanting to acquire images.

Is keeping children’s toys prohibited?

An exception is made in the case of children’s toys, which are not regarded as prohibited or disliked. But what are the toys which are exempted? We know that the toys of the past did not have eyes and lips and noses as they do nowadays. I think it is better to avoid these toys and limit oneself to those the kind of toys that were known previously. (See Fatawa Al-`Aqidah by Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin, p. 66, 663, 679)

And Allah knows best.