305881 - Does garnishing or decorating food come under the heading of excess which is haram?

the question

Is garnishing or decorating food one of the objectives of sharia? Or does it come under the heading of excess which is haram?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The objectives of sharia are things which Islam prescribes in order to preserve faith, life, reason, wealth and honour. The food that comes under the heading of the objectives of sharia is that which is necessary to sustain life and provide strength and nourishment to the body so that the individual may take care of what he needs for his spiritual and physical well-being.

Garnishing and decorating food is not one of the objectives of sharia in this sense.

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning), {and eat and drink, but be not excessive} [al-A'raf 7:31]: As for what is necessary, which is what will ward off hunger and quench thirst, that is recommended on the basis of reason and according to Islamic teachings, because it is necessary to preserve life and faculties. End quote from Tafsir al-Qurtubi (7/191).

There is nothing of that which could include garnishing and decorating food.

If garnishing and decorating food is not extravagant or excessive, then it is one of the things that are permissible in principle.

But if what the questioner means by saying "one of the objectives of sharia" is that it comes under

the heading of things that people regard as desirable and is permissible, then yes, it is prescribed and permissible in that sense. In the hadith it says that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Eat and drink, give charity and wear clothes, without showing off or being extravagant.”

Narrated by Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (6695); classed as hasan by al-Albani in *Sahih al-Targhib wa’l-Tarhib* (2145).

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Eat whatever you wish, wear whatever you wish, so long as you avoid two things: extravagance and showing off.

Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in *al-Musannaf* (26492).

What could serve as an indication that garnishing or decorating food is permissible, and that it is regarded as something good, is what was narrated by the Mother of the Believers ‘A’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to like sweets and honey. Narrated by al-Bukhari (5277).

Ibn Battal (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The meaning of this hadith includes everything that is similar to sweets and honey of all kinds of delicious food that are sweet in taste."(*Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari – Ibn Battal* 9/494).

Al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The word sweets (al-halwa’) only applies to sweets that are made by humans."(*A‘lam al-Hadith* 3/2053). This is a type of garnishing or decorating food.

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: al-Nawawi said, when discussing the permissibility of eating two types of fruits and other things together, and the permissibility of eating two types of food together: From this it may be understood that it is permissible to have various types of food when eating, and there is no difference of opinion among the scholars regarding the permissibility of that."(*Fath al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar 9/573).

Based on that, it is permissible to garnish and decorate food with food of different shapes and

types, so long as it does not reach the level of extravagance and showing off.

And Allah knows best.