365 - Is Taking Pictures Haram?

the question

My question is : IS the taking of PHOTOGRAPHS ALLOWED,(I know drawing pictures of living things is not allowed -but what about taking photograph's of people etc.), can you supply me with some evidence please. I need this information quickly.- Inshallah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Photography (tasweer) means the taking of pictures of living, animate moving beings, like people, animals, birds, etc. The ruling is that it is forbidden on the basis of a number of reports, such as the following:

'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Those who will be most severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be the image-makers." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 10/382).

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah, may He be exalted, says: 'Who does more wrong than the one who tries to create something like My creation? Let him create a grain of wheat or a kernel of corn.'" (Reported by al-Bukhari, see Fath al-Baari, 10/385).

'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Shall I not send you on the same mission as the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent me? Do not leave any built-up tomb without levelling it, and do not leave any picture in any house without erasing it." (Reported by Muslim and An-Nasa'i; this is the version narrated by An-Nasa'i).

Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Every image-maker will be in the Fire, and for every image

that he made a soul will be created for him, which will be punished in the Fire." Ibn 'Abbaas said: "If you must do that, make pictures of trees and other inanimate objects." (Reported by Muslim, 3/1871)

These ahaadeeth indicate that pictures of animate beings are haraam, whether they are humans or other creatures, whether they are three-dimensional or two-dimensional, whether they are printed, drawn, etched, engraved, carved, cast in moulds, etc. These ahaadeeth include all of these types of pictures.

The Muslim should submit to the teachings of Islam and not argue with them by saying, "But I am not worshipping them or prostrating to them!" If we think about just one aspect of the evil caused by the prevalence of photographs and pictures in our times, we will understand something of the wisdom behind this prohibition: that aspect is the great corruption caused by the provoking of physical desires and subsequent spread of immorality caused by these pictures.

The Muslim should not keep any pictures of animate beings in his house, because they will prevent the angels from entering. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or pictures." (Reported by al-Bukhari, see al-Fath, 10/380).

But nowadays, unfortunately, one can even find in some Muslim homes statues of gods worshipped by the kuffaar (such as Buddha etc.) which they keep on the basis that they are antiques or decorative pieces. These things are more strictly prohibited than others, just as pictures which are hung up are worse than pictures which are not hung up, for how easily they can lead to glorification, and cause grief or be a source of boasting! We cannot say that these pictures are kept for memory's sake, because true memories of a Muslim relative or friend reside in the heart, and we remember them by praying for mercy and forgiveness for them.

Taking pictures with a camera involves human actions such as focusing, pressing the shutter, developing, printing, and so on. We cannot call it anything other than "picture-making" or tasweer, which is the expression used by all Arabic-speakers to describe this action.

In the book Al-I'laam bi naqd kitaab al-halaal wa'l-haraam, the author says: "Photography is even more of an imitation of the creation of Allah than pictures which are engraved or drawn, so it is

even more deserving of being prohibited There is nothing that could exclude photography from the general meaning of the reports." (p. 42, see also Fataawa Islamiyyah, 4/355).

Among the scholars who have discussed the issue of photography is Shaykh Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, who said: "Some of them differentiate between hand-drawn pictures and photographic images by claiming that the latter are not products of human effort, and that no more is involved than the mere capturing of the image. This is what they claim. The tremendous energy invested the one who invented this machine that can do in few seconds what otherwise could not be done in hours does not count as human effort, according to these people! Pointing the camera, focusing it, and taking the picture, preceded by installation of the film and followed by developing and whatever else that I may not know about none of this is the result of human effort, according to them!

Some of them explain how this photography is done, and summarize that no less than eleven different actions are involved in the making of a picture. In spite of all this, they say that this picture is not the result of human action! Can it be permissible to hang up a picture of a man, for example, if it is produced by photography, but not if it is drawn by hand?

Those who say that photography is permitted have "frozen" the meaning of the word "tasweer," restriciting it only to the meaning known at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and not adding the meaning of photography, which is "tasweer" or "picture-making" in every sense - linguistic, legal, and in its harmful effects, and as is clear from the definition mentioned above. Years ago, I said to one of them, By the same token, you could allow idols which have not been carved but have been made by pressing a button on some machine that turns out idols by the dozen. What do you say to that?"

(Aadaab al-Zafaaf by al-Albaani, p. 38)

It is also worth quoting the opinion of some contemporary scholars who allow the taking of photographs but say that the pictures should not be kept: "The angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or pictures." (See al-Sharh al-Mumti', 2/198).

There are many bad things involved in the making of pictures. Besides the element of imitating the creation of Allah - which is an accusation denied by many of those who make pictures - reality bears witness to the great extent of immorality and provocation of desires caused by the

prevalence of pictures and picture-making nowadays. We must remove or blot out every picture, except when it is too difficult to do so, like the pictures which are overwhelmingly prevalent in food packaging, or pictures used in encyclopaedias and reference books. We should remove what we can, and be careful about any provocative pictures that may be found.

"So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can" [al-Taghaabun 64:16 - interpretation of the meaning]

Photographs which are essential are permitted - such as those required for identity documents, or for identifying or pursuing criminals [e.g. "wanted" posters and the like - translator's note], or for educational purposes which cannot be achieved otherwise. The principle in sharee'ah is that we should not exaggerate about what is necessary.

We ask Allah to accept our repentance and have mercy on us, and to forgive our excesses, for He is the All-Hearing Who answers prayers. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad.