39806 - Ruling on Drawing Animate Beings

the question

What is the ruling on drawing animate objects in Islam?

Summary of answer

Drawing pictures of animate beings is haram. There is nothing wrong with drawing pictures of inanimate objects such as mountains, trees, planes, cars, etc.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Drawing of animate beings

Drawing is of two types:

One is drawing pictures of animate beings . It says in the Sunnah that this is forbidden. It is not permitted to draw anything that depicts animate beings, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, according to the sahih hadith: “Every image maker will be in the Fire.” And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The most severely punished of people on the Day of Resurrection will be the image-makers, those who tried to imitate the creation of Allah.” And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The makers of these images will be punished on the Day of Resurrection, and they will be told, ‘Give life to that which you have created.’”

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed those who consume riba (interest, usury) and those who pay it, and he cursed the image-makers. This indicates that making images is forbidden. The scholars interpreted that as referring to images of animate beings such as

animals, people and birds.

Drawing of inanimate objects

With regard to drawing inanimate objects – which is the second type of drawing – there is no sin in that, such as drawing mountains, trees, planes, cars and the like. There is nothing wrong with that, according to the scholars.

With regard to forbidden kinds of pictures, an exception is made in cases of necessity , such as drawing pictures of criminals so that they will be known and caught, or pictures for identity cards which are essential and which cannot be obtained otherwise, and other cases of necessity.

If the ruler decides that producing images of criminals is necessary, because of the seriousness of their crimes and to protect the Muslims from their evil when they are known, or for other reasons, there is nothing wrong with that. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"…He has explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you, except under compulsion of necessity …" [al-An'am 6:119]

And Allah knows best.