4649 - The pleasures of this world

the question

Is the principle of pleasure forbidden in Islam? What is the view of Islam concerning physical pleasure, because the religion is a bunch of hard and strict duties.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The pleasures of this world are of three types.

1. Pleasures which will be followed by a greater pain, or which make a person miss out on a greater pleasure. These are the pleasures enjoyed by sinners and negligent people to varying degrees, such as those who enjoy zina (illegal sexual conduct), drinking wine, stealing, and so on. It will be said to them on the Day of Resurrection (interpretation of the meaning):

“You received your good things in the life of the world, and you took your pleasure therein…” [al-Ahqaaf 46:20]

Pleasures which will not be punished in the Hereafter, but overindulgence causes a person to miss out on achieving higher levels and keeps him from earning reward. These are the permissible pleasures of those who are negligent, which they do not do in order to better themselves or to earn reward, and they have no intention of worship when they do these things. Examples include going to extremes in matters of food, drink, transportation, accommodation, travelling and going on vacation, and other things that are not inherently harmful or sinful.

Pleasures for which a person will be rewarded. These pleasures belong exclusively to the believers who let themselves enjoy them on the grounds of doing their duty towards themselves, seeking

help thereby to obey Allaah, and helping to keep themselves away from sin.

On the basis of these noble aims, these pleasures may be classified as acts of obedience towards Allaah, concerning which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Allaah will be pleased with a slave who eats some food then praises Allaah for it, and drinks some drink then praises Allaah for it.”

(Reported by Muslim, 2734, from the hadeeth of Anas). He also said. “In your intercourse with your wife, there is reward.” They said, “O Messenger of Allaah, can anyone of us have sexual enjoyment and be rewarded for that?” He said, “Do you not see that if you do that in a haraam manner, you will be punished for it? So if you do it in a halaal manner, you will be rewarded.” (As in the hadeeth of Abu Dharr, reported by Muslim, 1006).

It is clear from the hadeeth that enjoying these worldly pleasures on the basis of praising Allaah, recognizing His bounty and seeking to protect oneself from doing forbidden things will bring reward from Allaah. Praise be to Allaah for His blessings.

(See Majmoo’ al-Fawaa’id by Ibn Sa’di, p. 234). Thus we know that in Islam there are permissible pleasures, having to do with eating and drinking permissible foods and enjoying permissible kinds of clothing and means of transportation, and there are pleasures for which a person will be rewarded in the Hereafter, in addition to his enjoyment of them in this world, such as the one who eats with the intention of gaining the strength to obey Allaah, or who sleeps with the intention of helping himself to get up to pray Qiyaam al-Layl and Fajr, or the one who has intercourse with his wife with the intention of keeping himself and her chaste, keeping them both away from sin, and with the hope of having a child, or the one who works hard at his trade or job with the intention of spending on himself and his family and his parents, and so on. And Allaah knows best.