10326 - TV and movie pictures and video pictures

the question

I have a question regarding pictures -Are pictures that are manafactured through means such as video, computers etc.
(i.e. they come on and off the screen)permissable? Can you please verify this with proof and evidence?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The ruling on a thing depends on the way in which it is perceived. It is essential to know how the picture-making you refer to is done. The author of Risaalat Ahkaam al-Tasweer (The ruling on picture-making) said:

1.Movie pictures or pictures on a cinema film:

This is a method which transmits moving pictures with sound for a limited time span, showing all the events that happened within this time frame. The picture which is shown by the film on the screen is the shadow or reflection of that thing, not its real essence, after it has been recorded on the film. It says in al-Sharee'ah al-Islamiyyah wa'l-Funoon (Islamic sharee'ah and the Arts) that the cinema is called [in Arabic] akhyaliyyah [from khayaal, meaning shadow or dim reflection], "because it shows the shadows of things, not their real essence."

2 – TV pictures

This is a method which transmits pictures and sounds at the same time via an electrical impulse. This is the result of the effect of light from the object whose picture is being taken being reflected

on a mica sheet which is covered with a vast number of tiny particles made of photosensitive material, manufactured from silver oxide and caesium, of which the particles are separated from one another and isolated electrically.

This kind of image-making using machines is very similar to the image on a movie film, but in TV pictures, the images are changed to electronic signals, then to electromagnetic waves, which are then either sent via antennas to be picked up by the receiving apparatus in TV sets, within the range that the signal can reach, or they are sent to be stored in the form of magnetic changes on plastic tapes that have been plated with the appropriate magnetic substance that can store these waves.

In order to show what has been recorded on these tapes after these waves have been stored, it has to pass through a machine which transforms it once more into electronic signals then sends it to a screen in the form of electrical signals, so that it appears as a picture, but only after a complex operation.

The TV set is the equipment which receives the electrical waves and gathers them, then transmits them in a regulated manner in the form of a picture with complete features.

There is another kind which is considered to be similar to this kind of image-making. This is something similar to the telephone which is used in some industrially-advanced countries, which transmits both the voice and the image of the speaker, so both parties can see one another on the screen of the device on which they are talking.

Similarly, there are cameras which are installed at the doors of houses. This system picks up the voice and image of the person who is coming to the house and transmits it to a screen inside the house, so that whoever is inside the house can see it clearly. And similarly there is equipment which is used to watch out for criminals stealing and so on in banks, stores, etc.

These kinds of equipment are considered to be of one kind, but are used for a variety of purposes, whereby the camera covers the area which is to be watched over, and it transmits the images to a screen like a TV, where the image appears clearly. New things are appearing all the time, and we

do not know what will appear in the future. If this indicates anything, it indicates the mind-boggling expansion of the use of machines to make images of both kinds, both still and moving, in many areas, including manufacturing, war, security, education, medicine, social, etc.

Ahkaam al-Tasweer by Ahmad ibn ‘Ali Waasil, p. 65-67

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said:

With regard to pictures made in the modern fashion, they fall into two categories:

The first category is those which have no tangible substance (and can only be seen by running them through a machine), as I was told is the case with pictures on video tapes. There is no ruling at all concerning these, and they do not come under the prohibition at all. Hence the scholars who forbid making pictures with cameras on paper (photographs) permitted this (video pictures), and said that there is nothing wrong with this. Then it was asked, is it permissible to film lectures which are given in the mosques? The (scholarly) view was that it is better not to do that, because it may disturb the worshippers and because they may film things that may not be appropriate, and so on.

The second category is fixed or still pictures on paper (photographs) …

But the matter needs further discussion if one wants to make these kind of permissible pictures. For they are subject to five rulings which depend on the intention. If the intention is something forbidden, then it is haraam. If he intends something waajib (obligatory), then it is waajib. Sometimes pictures may be essential, especially moving pictures. For example, if we see someone in the act of committing a crime against a person’s rights, such as an attempt to kill and so on, and we cannot prove it in any way but by taking pictures, then in this case taking pictures becomes waajib, especially in cases where pictures may decide the case. The means are subject to the rulings on the ends. If we make these pictures in order to prove the identity of a person for fear that someone else may be accused of the crime, this is also acceptable, indeed it is essential.

But if we take these pictures just to enjoy looking at them, this is undoubtedly haram… And Allah

knows best.” (See Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 2/197-199)