7418 - Ruling on choosing specific times for encouraging good attitudes

the question

Nowadays in the schools there are events called “Multiplication Festival” or “Division Festival” or “Subtraction Festival”, and so on, or “Festival of the Human Body” – using the word “Mahrajaan” for “Festival” in Arabic. These events may last for a day, or three days, or a week, during which the topic in question is discussed and explored. Some Islamic schools want to use this idea for Islamic purposes, so they might say for example, “Festival of Sincerity” so that for three days all topics on the radio and in the classrooms will deal with sincerity. They could also do “Festivals” on the topics of prayer or wudoo’, without specifying that this should be at a particular time of year. Is this allowed in Islam?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We put this question to Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen, may Allaah preserve him, who answered as follows:

There is nothing wrong with that, it is permissible, as it serves to motivate people.

Question:

Even though the word Mahrajaan is a Persian word which means a festival?

Answer:

But the people are not taking it as a festival, it is just an occasion to motivate people and teach them about this thing.

Question:

Should we stipulate the condition that this event should not be held at the same time each year?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

So that it does not become an Eid or religious festival?

Answer:

(Yes), so that it does not become like an Eid or festival.

See Questions # 1130 and 3325.
If we Muslims hold events like this we should be careful to avoid using the word Mahrajaan so that people will not confuse them with the festivals of the Mushrikeen, even in name.

Mahrajaan is one of the festivals of the Majoos (Zoroastrians) and kuffaar who worship fire. The word Mahrajaan is composed of “mahar” meaning loyalty and “jaan” meaning power, so the whole word means, the power of loyalty. The origin of this festival is the celebration of the victory of the king Afridoon. It was also said that it was a celebration of the onset of the moderate weather of autumn. It could be that what we mentioned above (the king’s victory) coincided with the onset of the moderate weather of autumn and they continued to celebrate it. It is celebrated on October 26 in the ancient Syriac calendar. The festival lasts for six days, and the sixth day is al-Mahrajaan al-Kabeer (the Great Mahrajaan). On this date and on Nawrooz (Persian New Year) they used to exchange gifts of musk, amber, al-’ood al-hindi (a kind of perfume or incense), saffron and camphor. The Rightly-Guided Khaleefah ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azeez (may Allaah have mercy on him) abolished this festival when some of the Muslims celebrated it.

One of the problems affecting the Muslims nowadays is the use of the word Mahrajaan to describe many economic, cultural and social gatherings, celebrations and events, even those that are held for the purposes of da’wah. They call their events things like “Mahrajaan al-Thaqaafah (cultural festival”, “Mahrajaan al-Tasawwuq (shopping festival)”, Mahrajaan al-Kutub (book festival), Mahrajaan al-Da’wah (daw’ah festival). We see so many advertisements and hear many

expressions starting with this idolatrous expression Mahrajaan which is the festival of the fire-worshippers.

(Reference: from the article A’yaad al-Kuffaar wa mawqif al-Muslim minhaa (The festivals of the Kuffaar and the Muslim’s attitude towards them), al-Bayaan magazine, no. 143).