78963 - Using icons and emojis on the Internet

the question

What is the ruling on using emojis and drawings in chat rooms [such as icons] or using some real images to explain something?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly

The basic principle regarding making images of animate beings is that it is prohibited, whether they are 3D images, or hand-drawn pictures on paper, fabric, walls or otherwise. This is the view of the majority of scholars. Please see questions no. 34839 , 10668 and 39806 .

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Riyadh al-Salihin*: Chapter on the prohibition of making images of animate beings on rocks, stones, cloth, coins, cushions, pillows and so on; and the prohibition on putting images on walls, ceilings, curtains, turbans, garments and so on; and the command to eliminate such images. End quote.

But modern scholars differed regarding photography; some prohibited it and some permitted it. The more correct view is that it is prohibited except in cases of necessity or need. See the answers to questions no. 22660 and 8954 .

Secondly:

It seems that the emojis that are used in chat rooms, such as happy faces and sad faces, do not come under the rulings on images, for two reasons:

The first reason is because their features are not distinct; rather they are more like a symbol. In

fact some of the scholars are of the view that “if the image is so small that it does not appear clearly to the viewer unless he stares at it, it is not disliked (makruh).”"(A*l-Fatawa al-Hindiyyah* 1/108).

The second reason is because there is something missing from the picture’s features without which life cannot be sustained, so there is no chest or stomach, and not even a head in reality. It is no more than a circle for the face, without any hair, nose or ears.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The image is the head, so if the head is cut off, there is no image.” Narrated by al-Isma‘ili in his *Mu‘jam* from Ibn ‘Abbas; classed as sahih by al-Albani *in al-Silsilah al-Sahihah* (1921).

The majority of jurists are of the view that if there is cut off from the image that without which life cannot be sustained, then it does not come under the ruling on images. Ibn Qudamah said: If the head of the image is cut off, it is no longer disliked (makruh). Ibn ‘Abbas said: The image is the head, so if the head is cut off, it is no longer an image. That was also narrated from ‘Ikrimah. It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Jibril came to me and said: ‘I came to you yesterday, and nothing prevented me from entering except the fact that there were images at the door, and in the house there was a curtain on which there were images, and there was a dog in the house. So issue instructions that the head of the image at the door be cut off, so that it will look like a tree; and issue instructions that the curtain be made into two cushions that will be stepped on; and issue instructions that the dog be taken out.’” So the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did those things.

If there is cut off from the image that without which the naimal could not live after it is gone, such as the chest or stomach, or it is given a head that is separate from its body, then it is not subject to the prohibition, because the image is no longer there after those things are gone, so that is like cutting off its head.

If what is missing is something without which it could still survive, such as an eye, hand or foot,

then it is an image that comes under the prohibition.

The same applies if there is an image of a body without a head, or a head without a body, or it is given a head but the rest of its body is the image of an inanimate object – in that case, it is not included in the prohibition, because that is not the image of an animate being."(A*l-Mughni* 7/216).

For more details on this matter, and the views of other scholars, please see *Ahkam al-Taswir fi'l-Fiqh al-Islami*, p. 234-240.

Thirdly:

You should avoid putting real images in chat rooms, even if it is only the image of a face. That is safer and more prudent, especially since the apparent meaning of the hadith which says that the image is the head, for the head is what matters when it comes to images, whether it is connected to the body or detached from it.

This was the view of some of the Shafa'i jurists [see: *Ahkam al-Taswir* (235)].

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim said: Regarding half an image [the upper half], I have no doubt that it is prohibited, even though a few people were of the view that it is not haram. Perhaps it is less serious than a complete image because of this view. As for me, I have no doubt about it, because the face is what is important in any image."(*Fatawa al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim* 1/165).

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The hadith mentioned is also quoted as evidence to prove that cutting off anything other than the head of the image, such as cutting off the lower half of it and the like, is not sufficient and does not make it permissible to use it. Doing that does not remove what prevents the angels from entering, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) issued orders that the images be torn down and erased, and he stated that they prevent the angels from entering, except when the images are things that may be handled in a disrespectful manner or the head is cut off. So anyone who tries to justify keeping an image in the house other than these two mentioned here must produce evidence from the Book of

Allah or the Sunnah of His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Moreover, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him} stated that if the head is cut off an image, what remains will be like a tree. This indicates that what justifies keeping it is when it no longer has the image of an animate being and now resembles an inanimate object. But if the lower part of the image is cut off and the head remains, it does not become like that because the face is still there. Furthermore, in the face there is brilliant creation and an image that is not present in the rest of the body. So it is not permissible to make an analogy with something else for one who understands what Allah and His Messenger meant. Thus it becomes clear for the seeker of truth that depicting the head of an animate being and what is next to it is included in the prohibition, because the sahih hadiths quoted above include that."(*Fatawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baz* 4/212).

This real image may be used in bad ways. It should also be noted that what is prohibited is drawing the image or taking a photograph of it. As for merely clicking on it or looking at it, that is not prohibited, unless it is images of women or images that promote immorality and evil.

May Allah enable us all to do what He loves and is pleased with.

And Allah knows best.