97786 - Should the Muslim pay attention to people’s tastes and customs and let his garment hang below his ankles? Is there any isbaal involved in wearing pants?

the question

What is the ruling on wearing pants that come below the ankle in modern society without showing off? Because if he raises them above the ankle it will spoil his appearance and attract the attention of others. I hope you do not think that my question is just for the sake of argument or that I am being scornful about this matter; it is a serious enquiry because this issue is bothering me a great deal, especially in the workplace.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It should be noted that the rulings of sharee’ah have not come to humiliate the Muslim or make him a laughing stock among people; rather they have brought that which is good for all people in their religious and worldly affairs. If you think about the state of the world you will find this to be true. Actions that go against Islam have become widespread everywhere on earth. Look – for example –at the effect that mixing between women and men has on nations; look at the effects of permitting alcohol; look at the effects of wanton display and unveiling; look at the effects of false freedoms on those nations. They are the nations that are most affected by anxiety and depression, they have the highest suicide rates, they are the nations where wife-beating and murder of wives is most common, and there are many other examples. What we say is based on their own statistics. But this is not the place to discuss that in detail. Rather it is just a hint of what we want to convey to you and other readers to whom the shaytaan may insinuate that it is not good to implement some of the established principles of Islam. We do not think – in sha Allaah – that you are one of them, but this does not mean that we should not draw attention to the matter.

Secondly:

It should be noted that the Muslim should not pay attention to people and their customs when it has to do with a duty that Allaah has enjoined on him or a prohibition that Allaah has forbidden him to do.

Yes, the Muslim may pay attention to people and their customs with regard to things that are mustahabb, permissible or makrooh, but when it comes to things that are obligatory or forbidden, it is not permissible for him at all to ignore them for the sake of people.

Some people mistakenly quote as evidence the hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah which says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) refrained from demolishing the Ka’bah and rebuilding it on the foundations of Ibraaheem (peace be upon him), and they take that as evidence that one may refrain from doing obligatory duties, but this is obviously mistaken. If that had been obligatory for him (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he would not have refrained from it for the sake of softening people’s hearts. Rather it was permissible. There follows the hadeeth in full, and the scholars’ comments on it.

It was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to her: “O ‘Aa’ishah, were it not that your people have only recently left Jaahiliyyah behind, I would have ordered that the House be demolished and I would have incorporated into it what was left out of it, and I would have placed (the door) at ground level and given it two doors, a door on the east and a door on the west, and thus I would have rebuilt it on the foundations of Ibraaheem.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari (1509) and Muslim (1333).

According to another version: “I am afraid of putting them off.”

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

It is well known that the Ka’bah is the best waqf on the face of the earth. If changing or altering it had been obligatory, he would not failed to do it. Thus it is known that that was permissible and

that it would have been better, were it not for what he mentioned about Quraysh being new in Islam. This has to do with altering its structure. From this it is known that it is permissible in general.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (31/244).

And he (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

He left that which was better in his view so as to avoid putting people off. Similarly, if a person thinks that it is better to say the Basmalah out loud but he is leading in prayer people who do not like it, or vice versa, and he does what is in accordance with their view, then he has done the right thing.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (22/268, 269).

And he said:

He (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)) moved from the better option to another option because this would achieve harmony and soften people's hearts, as he said to 'Aa'ishah: "Were it not that your people have only recently left Jaahiliyyah behind, I would have demolished the Ka'bah and given it two doors." In this case he left what was better for the sake of harmony and softening hearts.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (26/91)

Thirdly:

With regard to letting garments come below the ankles (isbaal) in general, and with regard to pants in particular, several points should be noted:

1 – Letting garments touch the ankles is a major sin. The prohibition on isbaal is not only due to arrogance; rather it is haraam in and of itself, and it is itself a kind of arrogance. If arrogance of the heart is added to that, then the sin is greater.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Ibn al-'Arabi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: It is not permissible for a man to let his garment go past his ankle and say "I am not letting it drag out of pride," because the prohibition refers to it by name. It is not permissible if a thing is prohibited by name to say "I will not comply with it because the reason does not apply to me." This is an unacceptable claim, rather his letting his garment drag is indicative of his arrogance. End quote.

To sum up: Isbaal implies letting the garment drag, and dragging the garment implies showing off, even if the wearer did not intend to show off. This is supported by the report narrated by Ahmad ibn Munay' via another isnaad from Ibn 'Umar in a hadeeth which he attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "Beware of letting your izaar (lower garment) drag, for letting the garment drag is showing off."

Fath al-Baari (10/264).

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

"Beware of letting your izaar (lower garment) drag, for letting the garment drag is showing off." So all isbaal is regarded as showing off, because in most cases it is nothing else. Whoever does not let his lower garment drag in order to show off, his action is a means that leads to that, and means come under the same rulings as the ends.

Majmoo' Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (6/383).

See also the answer to question no. 762 which explains the evidence for isbaal being haraam.

2 – It is not permissible for anyone to divide the religion into essential and trivial matters and those who divide it in this manner regard letting the garment hang below the ankles and shaving the beard as trivial matters. This is wrong, and the cause of it is ignorance of the rulings of Islam. These two actions are major sins. Look at how those who hold this view take the matter of committing major sins lightly because of this view.

See the response to them in the answer to question no. 12808.

3 – Isbaal is not just the issue of the thawb, rather it also applies to the izaar (waist wrapper or lower garment), pants, shalwar and abayahs, and any other garment that the Muslim may wear.

4 – We should point out that that which is worn to mid-calf is the izaar. The thawb and pants are not worn in this manner, rather they are worn above the ankle and it is not permissible for them to touch the ankle.

We have discussed these two issues (4 and 5) in the answer to question no. 10534.

5 –It is not permissible to wear pants if they are tight and show the shape of the 'awrah.

See question no. 69789

And finally:

6 – Letting the pants come below the ankle is a major sin. Based on that, no attention should be paid to people's taste and opinion about shortening them in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as we stated at the beginning of this answer. In fact we are surprised by the one who regards this shortening as spoiling the appearance of the Muslims but he does not regard the shortening of women's clothes to mid-thigh in the same way, and he does not regard the repulsively tight pants worn by some young men in the same way, or the low-slung pants that some young people wear, or the haircuts of young people which resemble animals such as lions, roosters, ducks and mice.

The brother who adheres to shortening his garments should not go to extremes in that. The ruling is that letting the garment come below the ankles is haraam, and there is no room for paying attention to people's views on this matter. As for going to extremes in shortening them, there is room for manoeuvre. The brothers who adhere to this ruling should not expose themselves to mockery or focus this issue with people at the expense of other issues, and they should not create barriers between themselves and the people by going to extremes on such issues where sharee'ah has given room for manoeuvre. They can pay attention to the customs of their country and if they

lengthen their garment to just above the ankles so as to prevent people from mocking them and so as not to create a barrier between themselves and the people, there is the hope that they will be rewarded more than those who shorten their garments more.

Letting the pants come lower than the ankle is a haraam action and no attention should be paid to people’s tastes and customs. The accountable Muslim has no right to go against this ruling for the sake of people. As for the degree of shortening, if he pays attention to the customs of his country and how people will look at him, that will be better for him.

And Allaah knows best.