

The Conditions of Pictures and Photography being Impermissible in Light of the Shari'ah

التصوير لأحكام التصوير الفوتوغرافية – هو الله الخالق البارئ _____ له الأسماء الحسنى (الحشر-24)
﴿إِنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الَّذِينَ يَضَاهُونَ بَخْلَقِ اللَّهِ – صحيح مسلم، ج 2: ص 201﴾

مصوّر في النار يجعل له ها نفساً فيُعَذِّبُهُ في جهنّم. (صحيح البخاري: 2225 / صحيح مسلم: 2110)

Saeed bin Al-Hasan رضى الله عنه stated: An individual came in the company of Abdullah Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه and asked: 'My work involves creating pictures, please could you tell me the ruling of this in the Shari'ah.' Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه said to him: 'Come close to me.' When that individual became close to Sayyidina Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه, he (Ibn Abbas) placed his hand on the man's head and said: 'I wish to tell you that thing which I heard from RasulAllah ﷺ myself. He ﷺ said: "Every person who makes pictures will enter Hell fire, and all the pictures that he made, Allah ﷻ will place life in them and they will be placed upon him as a punishment in Hell fire."' (Saheeh Bukhari #2225, Saheeh Muslim #2110, At Targeeb Wat Tarheeb #4609)

Then Sayyidina Ibn Abbas رضى الله عنه said to him: 'If you must make pictures for a livelihood, make it of those things which do not have a life (trees, mountains, landscapes etc)'.

The Shari'ah of Islam has not permitted creating pictures of living things or even taking pictures of them. In the present age, this habit has spread throughout the World, the indication of this being prohibited in Islam is clear, be it within the learned or the lay-person... such is the prevalence of this deed now taking place that it is not even considered incorrect or a sin. The pure lands and sites in Islam also are not free from people indulging in this sin, within their very midst, people are performing Tawaf and instead of being attentive to Allah ﷻ, they are taking pictures and videos of themselves and sending them to people all over the World. The respect and honour of these places is not found on the whole, the actions performed are similar to the acts of people sightseeing in the Taj Mahal and other wondrous tourist attractions. It is seen to be more the case of people utilising their wealth to 'holiday' in the Haramain Sharifain, rather than go there to reflect, rectify themselves and repent.

Furthermore, the disrespect and lack of honour even at the Rawdah of RasulAllah ﷺ is such that people, instead of **presenting** their Salam and seeking **intercession**, they take pictures and videos as a token of their visit. Have those who perform Umrah and Hajj in such a manner ever thought; that thing which RasulAllah ﷺ himself severely warned his Ummah of and forbade them from doing, they are partaking in this in front of him.

The sanctified sites of Islam should be completely free of any such evil and sin, however, this is still prevalent there amongst people of all nations and standing in society. The amount that this is further found to be taking place in weddings and other 'normal' situations without a real need is unfathomable.

Why are pictures & photography prohibited in Islam?

The reason that the Shari'ah of Islam has prohibited taking pictures & photography in Islam can be deduced from 5 basic points which are found in the Sahih Ahadith.

1. It is the quality of Allah ﷻ to be the Creator and nothing can be comparable to Him (in creating anything)

'He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, (Al Musawir) the Bestower of forms...' (Surah Al-Hashr, 24)

There are also very severe warnings against the making of pictures found in the Saheeh Ahadith.

Aisha رضي الله عنها related that RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'One the Day of Judgement, the most severe punishment will be given to those who competed with Allah in His quality of being the Creator.' (Bukhari vol2, p880)
Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه and Abdullah ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه related that RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'Whoever makes pictures of a living thing in the World, he will forced to put life into it on the Day of Judgement, even though he will be unable to do so, he will be punished due to this.' (Saheeh Bukhari vol2, p880)

2. To go beyond the limits in respect and honour of Allah's Creation

An important reason for Islam to prohibit the making & taking of pictures is that this can slowly lead people to the doors of Kufr and Shirk. Just as in the nation of Nuh عليه السلام, they would make pictures and statues of their pious elders and after many generations it led to people worshipping them as idols. This is why the Shari'ah has forbidden this to prevent people going into excess and possibly falling into this grave sin of associating partners with Allah ﷻ.

Ummal Mumineen, Sayyidah Umme Habiba رضي الله عنها and Sayyidah Umme Salmah رضي الله عنها described the internal decorations and pictures of the Churches of Ethiopia to RasulAllah ﷺ. He ﷺ stated: 'These are those people, who when a pious person from amongst them would pass away, they would create a place of worship upon their graves and place these pictures within them. These people are a despicable creation in the sight of Allah.' (Saheeh Bukhari #434)

In our present age, the example of this is still found in the Christian churches, but is also very relevant even of the graves of Muslims and their pious elders. We see mausoleums being created, then being decorated, pictures of the deceased hanging and people even worshipping the deceased therein. Apart from this, we even see the pictures of political leaders, influential figures and relatives etc found in the houses of Muslims, all of this is prohibited.

3. A picture can lead to negligence in worship

Wherever pictures are found, the peace and serenity of worship is diminished, as is the attention towards Allah ﷻ. This is the very essence of worship and is unattainable in such conditions where a person's mind is clouded with pictures and substitute thoughts.

Sayyidah Aisha رضي الله عنها hung a decorative curtain (with pictures) in her house, upon seeing this RasulAllah ﷺ said: 'Remove this from here as it causes my attention to be diverted in my Salah.' (Bukhari vol2,p881)

There is no need for us to gain proof of this statement of RasulAllah ﷺ. It is not necessary for a person to have a picture in front of them for it to be a cause of diversion. Many a time, where people watch films or view certain immoral pictures... it is very difficult to remove this from your memory. It is continuously flashing in and out a person mind, in and outside of his Salah, they are recollected during Ibadah, imagine on this basis what a dangerous thing immoral pictures are for our Iman and worship.

The etiquettes of Islamic gatherings

In this day and age, the Islamic gatherings and programmes that are conducted are many, whether they be in the masajids or in a hired function hall, where Islamic talks and gatherings are taking place people are seen making video recordings and taking pictures of the attendees.

It is also prevalent for the youth to record the function and speakers on their smart phones, rather than storing the advices in their hearts and adopting the teachings being propagated.

The programmes where actions contrary to the Shari'ah and Sunnah are taking place are devoid of spiritual blessings.

Remember, there can be thousands of reasons to seek to justify the acceptability and benefit of recording such speeches or functions, however, that action which has been explicitly prohibited by means of the Sahih Ahadith will always be treated as such and cannot be otherwise.

The recording and photographing of funerals and burial rites

RasulAllah ﷺ has advised us to visit the graveyards to increase our reflection upon death and have concern of the Akhirah.

It is also common nowadays for people to photograph and record the burial of a relative to send to those overseas, after doing so, they feel as though they have performed a great deed worthy of reward, to the extent that even when the body is being lowered into the grave the people should be making Du'aa for the deceased, even at this sensitive juncture people are occupied in doing a cursed act rather than seeking forgiveness and supplicating for their loved ones.

4. The Angels of Mercy are kept away from homes wherein there are pictures

Wherever pictures are hung, the Angels of Mercy do not enter that place. Ummal Mumineen Aisha رضى الله عنها related that she bought a cushion which was decorated with some pictures, when RasulAllah ﷺ came to enter the house and his gaze fell upon it, he did not enter the house. Sayyidah Aisha رضى الله عنها saw the signs of displeasure on the face of RasulAllah ﷺ, she asked: 'I seek the forgiveness of Allah and His Messenger, what is it that I have done wrong?' RasulAllah ﷺ asked: 'What is this (cushion)?' She replied: 'I bought this cushion so that you may rest upon it and use it as a pillow.' RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'Those that make pictures will be punished on the Day of Judgement and then will be told to place life into the pictures.' He ﷺ further stated: 'The house wherein there are pictures, the angels do not enter them.' (Saheeh Bukhari vol2, 881)

Imagine what a cause of deprivation of Allah's blessings it would be for a Muslim, that due to the presence of pictures, the Angels of Mercy do not attend their homes. Where the Angels of Mercy are not attending, then inevitably, there will be nothing but evil and vice taking control. It is unfortunate that this fact is not given more attention within our own homes.

I remember one incident from our pious elders, *Hadhrat Maulana Qari Siddiq Ahmed Bandawi* رحمہ اللہ who passed away in 1997, when a person invited Hadhrat to their house due to a lot of problems he was experiencing in his house, to assess the matters and make Du'aa there for Allah's blessings. Hadhrat went to their house and found the whole house was full of various pictures. Upon seeing this, Hadhrat said: 'What good is me making Du'aa here in the house, those that are supposed to say Amin are outside,' giving an indication towards the above mentioned Hadeeth, that it is not possible for peace and serenity to be in a house where pictures are as the angels of Allah ﷻ are not attending that house. For this reason the Muslims should be wary of this within their own homes and also advise their near and dear ones of the same.

5. Pictures are a means of generalising and spreading immorality

Pictures are one of the main causes of immorality and degradation of societies and cultures throughout the World today. Those things which a person would not feel comfortable viewing with one's spouse are now readily and easily available through the internet and smart phones. The reality of this fact is nothing we are unaware of. This is based on the foundation of pictures and photography being used in an immoral and illegitimate manner, beyond any boundaries that could have been envisaged even a few years ago.

Ummal Mumineen Aisha رضى الله عنها related: RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'Verily, the most severely punished individuals on the Day of Judgement will be those that made pictures.' (Saheeh Muslim vol2, p201)

It is astonishing that people view the one who advises others to abstain from sin as being abnormal and backward. Even after such extensive and severe proofs and warnings in respect of abstaining from creating pictures or making videos, it does not hold weight in our hearts. Yet, through the means of Social media, we are proudly updating our profile pictures and uploading pictures of ourselves, even in compromising situations, for the whole world to see, without a thought or reflection on the level of devastation this can cause in Dunya and Akhirah to ourselves.

There is Consensus of the Ummah as to the impermissibility of taking or creating pictures and videos [تصویر سازی کی حرمت پر امت کا اجماع]

The Authentic Prophetic narrations which mention the impermissibility of pictures are in relation to those of living creatures. The Ummah is united on the prohibition of these types of pictures. This is not only the ideology of the deobandi scholars, rather the consensus and view of senior scholars of all schools of thought throughout the ages. However, in this day and age, where there is a requirement for photos to be taken to issue passports and licences etc. these are necessary and the sin of the deed is upon those who have made it a condition or legislative criteria. Whether the pictures are drawn, taken with a camera or upon a mobile phone, they are all impermissible and there is no differentiation in them.

It is regrettable that in our present time the means of making this action permissible (Halal), which is clearly defined from the Saheeh Ahadith and Shari'ah, was initially propagated by a group of scholars in Egypt. The famous scholar *Shaykh Muhammad Najeet Mute'i*, also referred to as Shakhul Azhar, he wrote a book called "إباحة الصور الفوتوغرافية" wherein he passed a Fatwa allowing the taking of pictures, labelling it as halal. In his time, many of the scholars of Egypt rejected his reasoning and argument as it was against the teachings of the Sahih Ahadith. This had a knock on effect, where his closest student, *Allamah Shaykh Mustafa Hamami* رَحِمَهُ اللهُ wrote in his book "النضمة الإصلاحية للأسرة الإسلامية", extensively rebutted his teacher's permissibility of taking pictures. He further wrote "the burden of the entire Ummah in following this fatwa of permissibility will be upon the neck of *Shaykhul Azhar*. He has opened the door of evil and vice for the entire Ummah."

In the same manner, *Shaykhul Islam Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri* رَحِمَهُ اللهُ was informed that some scholars were seeking to make the taking of pictures permissible. Hadhrat related certain Ahadith to rebut this ideology as a proof for the scholars to refer to. *Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Shafi Uthmani* رَحِمَهُ اللهُ published a book called "التصوير لأحكام التصاوير" detailing these Ahadith and arguments from *Hadhrat Maulana Shah Kashmiri* رَحِمَهُ اللهُ.

The conclusion is that in every generation of the Ummah, the scholars have treated the taking of pictures and videos of living things to be impermissible.

The Curse of Allah ﷻ be upon those who made pictures and movies of the Prophets ﷺ and the Sahaba رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ

All praise is due to Allah, who sent His Messengers to Mankind as a means of guidance and a blessing. From the first to the final Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Companions of the Prophet رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ, none of their pictures or images were allowed to be created or remain in the World in any form. However, the misguided ones have used their own imagination to create a form for Isa ﷺ (Jesus). Howsoever the matter may be viewed, if it is wrong it will remain as such... for example, wherever you go in the World, from the east to the west you will not find a uniform image of Jesus that is adopted by the Christians. There are many versions of the same individual, Jesus the Messenger of God, which have been dreamt up by artists. How can they all be correct? What is being worshipped? Do Christians regard all images of Christ they have created in the Churches as correct? Or is 1 correct and the others wrong? Or is it merely an idealistic representation, dictated by whoever created the image?

In the same manner, the statues of Buddha that are placed in temples vary from continent to continent. If you go to a Buddhist temple in India, the Buddha will have Indian features; in Myanmar it will have Burmese features, in China – Chinese features... which is correct? It is seen as nothing but a mockery.

The Mumineen in the entire World regard the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions in the form of an assumed image, not only as impermissible but as apostasy. This is due to the fact that the forming of a fake image of the pious predecessors is disrespect full and dishonour able to the status of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and those whom the Muslim world hold in the highest esteem.

Some non-Muslims say that there are those amongst the Muslims who make images of the Prophet and his Companions, so what's the problem with it? To the Muslim Ummah this is completely abhorrent and impermissible. This is an action which is perpetrated by the Shi'a and it considered apostasy by the Muslims. It is nothing but the same as that which the Christians have done in the Churches, making an image of a distinguished personality according to their own whims and desires. It has no reality within it and these people and their actions and ideologies do not have any connection to the true beliefs of Islam and the Sunnah of RasulAllah ﷺ.

May Allah ﷻ grant us the entire Ummah the understanding of this evil that is prevalent in society today and grant us the ability to protect ourselves and our families from its influence. آمين Ameen!

والله وحده هو المسؤول والمستعان وهو الهادي إلى سبيل الخير والسلام .
محمد يوسف دُنْكَا (كان الله له)

Mufti Muhammad Yusuf Danka
Croydon Masjid & Islamic Centre
06- Rabi-Al-Thani- 1435AH/ 07- February- 2014.