

(Questions Relating to Ashura/Karbala (8

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

One of the precepts strongly recommended by the divine law of Islam [shari'ah] is holding ceremonies with the intention of paying homage to the signs of Allah. Upholding this precept is considered an act resulting from the piety of the hearts.

There is no dispute or disagreement among the various schools of thought regarding the essential verdict pertaining to this precept. Disagreement, however, lies in the question of whether application of this verdict must be determined by divine decree alone or whether instances of its application can also be determined by common sense and wisdom.

In this chapter regarding mourning and paying homage to Allah's saints [awliya'], we will examine this difference of opinion.

Different types of religious rites and ceremonies

Religious rites, which have been subject to objection or disagreement by certain sects of Islam, are of diverse kinds listed as follows:

1. Celebrating the birth anniversaries of the great personalities of the religion, such as birth anniversaries of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). The Wahhabi sect considers such celebrations to be acts of innovation in religion. They contend that celebrating these days amounts to heresy [bid'ah], straying and deviation.
2. Celebrating memorable days in the history of Islam like days on which great events happened, such as the day when the Holy Prophet (S) was appointed to prophethood, the day the glorious Battle of Badr took place, the day the Battle of Khandaq occurred, the day of the Conquest of Mecca, the night of the Prophet's (S) ascension to heaven [laylat al-mi'raj], the night of his migration to Medina, the Day of Mubalah,¹ the Day of Ghadir², and other similar events.
3. Another level of holding religious rites and paying homage to the signs of Allah occurs, for example, when followers of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) inhabit and improve the areas around the graves and shrines of the religious awliya'. The followers of these infallible people build domes and minarets over their shrines in order to serve as a declaration to mankind that the people buried there are the true Imams and divine leaders for mankind. Therefore, the act of raising shrines on their graves serves to invite people to follow the Fourteen Infallibles (as).
4. Yet another way of paying homage to the signs of Allah is when Muslims make diligent efforts to preserve geographical places where important events took place. For instance,

Muslims have preserved the sacredness of the location where the event of Ghadir took place, the Cave of Hira',³ the place where the Battle of Badr occurred, the mosques wherein the Holy Prophet (S) performed prayers, and various other places of this kind. Nowadays, many Muslims visit these sacred places with the hope of seeking gifts of divine favor.

5. Organizing mourning ceremonies in memory of Imam al-Husayn (as) and the other awliya' of Allah is another way of paying homage to the signs of Allah. This takes the form of establishing memorial gatherings to commemorate the lives and the struggles against oppression of these great people. Muslims all over the world establish memorial ceremonies to honor Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom and recite accounts of his sufferings and the hardships imposed upon him, his family and all his companions in an attempt to keep alive his battle against corruption and oppression.

6. Another type of religious ceremony is gathering to recite group prayers and supplications with a common intention.

Reasons for the preference for holding ceremonies

People who believe that it is permissible and even desirable to hold religious ceremonies have resorted to a number of proofs. We will now refer to some of them:

A. Verses of the Holy Qur'an that permit ceremonies

There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an which talk about organizing and holding ceremonies:

1. "O you who believe! Do not violate the signs (rites) appointed by Allah nor the sacred month, nor interfere with the offerings, nor the sacrificial animals with the garlands, nor those going to the Sacred House seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord."⁴

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَجْلُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا آمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامَ...﴾

We can infer two possibilities from this verse:

- a. One possibility is that the verdict is affirmative; meaning that Allah has in fact ordered believers to pay homage and reverence to religious signs and rites.
- b. The other possibility is that the verdict is prohibitive, meaning that Allah intends to prohibit laziness when it comes to organizing divine rites. In other words, Allah has forbidden negligence as regards holding religious rites when we have distinguished their instances of application.

2. "That shall be so [the rites of the pilgrimage to Mecca], and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this is the outcome of the piety of the hearts."⁵

﴿ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعِظَّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ﴾

This is the most clear and indisputable verse of the Holy Qur'an which proves the permissibility

of holding religious rites. This verse denotes in a general and explicit way that paying homage to divine rites is an act beloved by Allah.

3. "And as for the camels (of sacrifice), We have made them of the signs of Allah for you, for you therein is much good."6

﴿وَالْبُذْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ...﴾

In this verse, the discriminate [tab'idiyyah] preposition "of" [min] (of the signs) has been employed. It denotes that the camels brought for sacrifice during the days of the hajj are also considered the signs of Allah.

4. "Surely, Safa and Marwah are among the signs appointed by Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit to it, there is no blame on him if he goes around them both."7

﴿إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتِ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا...﴾

There is no blame on you seeking bounty from your Lord, so when you hasten on from" .5

'Arafat, then remember Allah near the Holy Monument..."8

﴿فَإِذَا أَقَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ...﴾

This Qur'anic verse intends to pronounce and hence permit holding religious ceremonies, but it has employed the Arabic word "mash'ar" instead of the word "sha'a'ir", which has been used in the other previously cited verses. Both these words connote 'upholding the signs of Allah'.

B. Analogous verses permit celebrating signs of Allah

Analogous verses are verses which allude to celebrating the signs of Allah but the word "sha'a'ir" has not been explicitly used in the wording of the verses.

1. "And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path, that they may witness advantages for them and mention the name of Allah during stated days over what he has given them of the cattle quadrupeds, then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy. Then let them accomplish their needed acts of shaving and cleansing, and let them fulfil their vows and let them go around the Ancient House. That (shall be so); and whoever respects the sacred ordinances of Allah, it is better for him with his Lord."9

﴿وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ * لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْبَاطِنِ الْفَقِيرِ * ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ * ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ﴾

Scholars of the divine message and commentators of the Glorious Qur'an regard the above mentioned verse—which indicates veneration of divine ordinances—as an enjoinder to

perform religious rights. This is because according to principle, just as one can reason using a rationale regarding a specific subject so also may one reason using rationales regarding similar subjects or subjects that have something in common with the intended subject. However, this is only valid when the subject is generic or of a general type that includes many objects; otherwise, there would be an invalid analogy. In other words, although this verse is specifically about the hajj ceremony, at the end of the verse 'sacred ordinances of Allah' are mentioned generally, so the verse can be applied generally.

2. "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse."¹⁰

﴿يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

Because this verse comes along with verses about holy war [jihad], inviting people to the Oneness of Allah [tawhid], and propagating religion, it can be inferred that the part of the religion that the enemies of Islam want to extinguish is, in fact, the divine signs and rites which have been alluded to in the verse, "And whoever respects the signs of Allah, this is the outcome of the piety of the hearts."¹¹

3. "In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings."¹²

﴿فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُرِّ وَالْآصَالِ﴾

If we take the verse that comes before this verse, the Verse of Light [ayat al-nur], into consideration, it shows that "in houses" [fi buyutin] means those houses wherein the light of Allah shines and the centres where the light of religion radiates. These places are the sources of radiation of the light of religion. They are centres of guidance and venues of observing the divine law of Islam [shari'ah]. Allah, the Exalted, has willed that these radiant houses should be revered and elevated in status. These places deserve to be venues of continuous remembrance, worship and obedience of Allah. We can deduce from this Qur'anic verse that Allah has willed that every place which serves as a custodian for the exposition of Islamic laws and divine teachings (the light of Allah) has to be honored and revered.

We can also infer from the same above-mentioned verse that sha'a'ir (the signs and rites of Allah) are not confined to any particular place; that is to say, they are not confined only to the rites and ceremonies of the hajj or other rites of worship specifically mentioned. On the contrary, everything that serves to spread and propagate divine laws is included in the meaning of sha'a'ir, and anything that propagates Islamic knowledge and teachings is also included in the meaning of this word.

4. "And He made lowest the word of those who disbelieved; and the word of Allah, that is the

highest; and Allah is Mighty, Wise.”¹³

﴿... وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

It can be understood from this verse that those things that serve to honor the word of Allah and to exterminate unbelief [kufr] are among the goals and objectives of divine law and religion.

5. “And Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way (to triumph) against the believers.”¹⁴

﴿... وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾

This blessed verse alludes to another dimension of the reality of the word sha’a’ir and that reality is the aspect of proliferation of the glory and esteem of Islam and Muslims. Another aspect of sha’a’ir is veneration of the Word of Allah [kalimat Allah] and attaching special importance to Muslims in general.

The meaning of sha’a’ir

1. Khalil ibn Ahmad Farahidi says, “Sha’artuhu (from the same root as sha’a’ir) means: I contemplated and reasoned it out and I understood it...”¹⁵

2. Jawhari says, “Sha’a’ir are the deeds and rites of the hajj, and anything which is a standard of obedience and banner of submission to Allah, the Exalted, is a part of sha’a’ir... and the sha’a’ir of a group of people in war is their banner which distinguishes them from their enemies. Also, ash’artuhu fasha’ara means, ‘I explained it to him, and he understood’.”¹⁶

3. Firuzabadi says, “Ash’arahu’l-amr means that ‘an order/command was made known to him’... and the shi’ar of hajj are rites, ceremonies and manifestations of the hajj...”¹⁷

4. Ibn Faris says, “Ish’ar means ‘manifesting and making something known by means of the senses’, and masha’ir means ‘things that are apparent and known’. Its singular is mash’ar, which means ‘position, situation or place which has been made manifest and apparent by means of certain signs’.”¹⁸

5. Qurtubi says, “Anything which is intended for Allah, the Exalted, and comprises a command serving as a sign of manifestation and declaration is called shi’ar or sha’a’ir. Shi’ar means ‘a sign or indication’ and ash’artu means ‘I declared’. Sha’irah means ‘a sign’, and the sha’a’ir of Allah refer to the signs and symbols of the religion of Allah.”¹⁹

What we can deduce from the preceding discussion is that the word sha’a’ir can be employed for sensory declarations. Also, according to the usage employed by the Holy Qur’an, this word indicates ceremonial declarations and propagation of religion and spreading the Light of Allah. This word has an additional aspect though and can also be employed to include the dimension of reverence and exaltation. Even though this dimension is not found in the essence and substance of the word sha’a’ir, it exists in the essence of words which are affiliated to the word

sha'a'ir.

In conclusion, sha'a'ir does not merely mean rites and ceremonies of the hajj as such. True, the ceremonies and rites of the hajj are called masha'ir because there is an aspect of declaring and manifesting in them. However, to put it another way, the sha'a'ir are not the religion of Allah in and of themselves, but exist as dimensions of honoring and revering the religion of Allah.

Implementation according to common sense and wisdom

When Allah, the Divine, has not intervened in the meaning of a given word, it means that the Divine Legislator has entrusted the duty of applying the meanings and themes of that word as is deemed relevant according to common parlance, common wisdom and based upon the judgement of pious people who are well-versed in the religious law [shari'ah].

The term 'sha'a'ir of religion' which has been exhorted and encouraged by Allah belongs to the above-mentioned group. For further clarity, we refer to three important points:

- a. Terms which are used in the language of divine law and there is no reason for them to convey and transmit any new meaning apart from their literal meanings, retain their original and literal meanings.
- b. If the Divine Legislator has supplied the meaning of a certain word, and has explicitly stipulated the manner of applying it, we must apply that word in the same manner He has stipulated. If Allah has not explicitly stipulated the meaning of a word, we must apply the meaning that is understood according to common practice and common sense.
- c. Things exist in two ways: genetically (relating to origin) and contractually. For example, the terms used for most transactions such as buy, sell and rent are forms of contractual existence. Correspondingly, the word sha'a'ir, which is often combined with words like Allah or religion to form compound words such as sha'a'irullah (the signs of Allah) or sha'a'iruddin (the signs of religion), can exist in these two ways. This is due to the fact that the genuine meaning of the word sha'a'ir is manifestation or propagation, and because the Divine Legislator has not assigned a specific meaning for this word, we must return to the two previous points (a and b above); that is to say, all compound words made from this root word retain their commonly understood meanings and the genuine meaning of such words must be interpreted through religious custom.

On the other hand, since sha'a'ir of religion indicate other issues, even though they are considered to be intrinsically genetic, sha'a'ir indicate contractual meanings, not genetic ones. Consequently, because the Divine Legislator (Allah) has not supplied the meaning of this word,

sha'a'ir, it therefore means what is understood from it by religious parlance. To put it briefly, we adopt anything which the Divine Legislator has stipulated and apply it in the way He has specified. However, with the passage of time, new instances will appear which are deemed an instance of sha'a'ir by religious parlance, common wisdom and pious people who are well-versed in divine law. Therefore, there is no reason to shun acting upon these cases. With all certainty, we include them among the general meanings which denote revering and exalting the signs of Allah.

Responses to doubts

Opponents of holding mourning ceremonies for Imam al-Husayn (as), such as the Wahhabis, have put forward some objections. In this section, we will discuss these doubts and skepticisms.

1. Only the Divine Legislator can originate laws

Some sceptics of holding religious ceremonies say, "Every ceremony that is based on religion has to be devised by the Divine Lawgiver (Allah). In cases where Allah has not devised a religious ceremony, holding such ceremonies will amount to innovation, heresy, deviation and attributing falsehood to Allah."

Response

With recourse to the exhaustive explanations which have already been given, there remains no room for doubt or skepticism about this issue because: Firstly, originating or officializing laws is of two kinds: exclusive and general. In the case of exclusive origination by Allah, the laws must be followed. Regarding general origination of laws, we adopt all dictates that Allah has specified, and in instances where the Divine Lawgiver has not mentioned specific religious rites and their instances of application, we adopt and act upon religious parlance.

Secondly, it has been stated in the principals of jurisprudence of Islam that if Allah orders his servants to carry out a general act and does not place any limitations on performing it, man is at liberty to apply that act in every way he likes so long as there is no specific restriction placed on it by divine law. A suitable example would be the place of prayer. Man is at liberty to pray in every place he likes so long as the place is not specifically prohibited by the religious law. The same rule is applied regarding revering and honoring the signs and rites of religion.

2. The necessity of delegation of authority by Allah

Some doubters say that if the Divine Lawgiver entrusts the matter of deciding when and how to hold religious rites to common parlance it follows that Allah has delegated religious lawmaking. They contend that this type of relinquishment is null and void.

Response

Application of a general rule to a current specific instance does not amount to entrusting or delegating one's lawgiving authority. Delegation in this sense is only true when the general rule has been obtained by common parlance. To put it another way, secondary meanings are of two types:

- a. Predicate secondary meaning: in which the essence is consequential; hence, the predicate is also consequential, such as loss, sin, forgetfulness, disinclination, anxiety, etc.
- b. Subject secondary meaning: which is defined as an instance that occurs to the subject, not to the predicate. The essences of these accompanying instances are not secondary but primary and only their subjects are secondary; such as instances which pertain to holding one's parents in high respect and paying due honor to a guest and other topics of this kind. Their predicates are primary, but their subjects are secondary; that is to say, different conditions apply in various instances.

About this particular matter, we say: paying due respect is a primary concept that is demanded by wisdom and divine law, but the customs and common practices that apply to paying due respect to others are subject to change and only originate in the subject of the predicate, not in the predicate itself.

In other words, respect itself is a constant, but the customs regarding respect vary. These customs have been entrusted to common parlance so long as there is no specific prohibition placed on the particular subject by divine law.

3. The halal (lawful) will be mistaken to be haram (unlawful) and vice versa

Some sceptics say that if Allah has ceded the command of holding religious ceremonies and other religious customs to common sense and wisdom, there will be mistakes in distinguishing what is unlawful [haram] as proscribed by Islamic law from the lawful [halal] because common sense and wisdom are not infallible. People are liable to make mistakes in perception and hence discern mistakenly. With use of common sense and wisdom, we are at risk of perceiving wrongly and of failing to distinguish correctly what is halal from what is haram and vice versa. Sometimes, something can be perceived to be halal when in actual fact it is haram. Sometimes the opposite could happen and an act that is halal will wrongly be perceived to be haram.

Response

Legalising that which is haram and making illegal that which is halal can only happen when one that is duty-bound makes a judgement about an act without presenting any sound reason, evidence or proof. In this instance, the above-mentioned protest put forth by the skeptics could be acceptable. However, if the act of putting forth new edicts is based on proper evidence

which conforms to divine law, even when that evidence is general in nature, there is no problem with such a decree because the evidence offered is correct.

4. This amounts to playing with basic doctrines of shari'ah

Some maintain that if creation or establishment of religious ceremonies has been entrusted to the discernment of common sense and wisdom, the result will be vain sporting with the fundamental doctrines of Islam and futile play with the fixed bounds of the religious law [shari'ah].

Response

It seems that one who raises such an objection desires to reject the holding of religious ceremonies and perhaps harbours fears about acts which actually amount to spreading and publicizing the shari'ah not distorting it as they contend. In fact, propagating the shari'ah is an act that Qur'anic verses have emphasized.

Allah, the Exalted, says

﴿... اللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ﴾

Allah has willed to spread His light and religion and shari'ah."

He also says

﴿... وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا﴾

And Allah has willed that His religion should be high and honored."

Holding religious ceremonies is one of the many ways of propagating the shari'ah. It is one way of exalting the divine law and completing the light of Allah. This is something that Allah has willed in a general way.

If the intended goal of propagating the religion and shari'ah is to bring about some change and transformation in these two, then without doubt this act is null and void. However, applying the general concept of the signs of Allah to new cases and different themes does not automatically change or transform the religion and shari'ah.

5. Extension of the concept to all instances

The skeptics also ask the following questions: if holding religious ceremonies and honoring the signs of Allah has been entrusted to people to decide, what difference is there with the different topics and instances of the shari'ah?

We know that common sense and wisdom do not have any right to interfere in instances such as prayer, fasting, hajj, zakat, khums, and other similar instances. We know that no group of people can set up conditions and limitations for themselves regarding these topics. How then could Allah entrust the issue of deciding about religious ceremonies to common sense and wisdom, and yet forbid it from interfering in the above-mentioned instances?

Response

The difference here lies in the restriction of certain instances; that is to say, one must differentiate between 'the reality of the shari'ah' and its lexical meaning. In instances where the subject is the reality of the shari'ah, the law of restriction to certain instances applies in full. This is opposed to instances where Allah has intervened in their subjects and meanings and has determined that the meaning of a particular word has to depend on its literal meaning. It is in such instances where Allah puts the instance and meaning to general application in its entirety when He legislates and makes a law applicable. For example, when Allah commanded us to be kind and beneficent to our parents, he did not place the reality of the shari'ah in this instance. He did not fix specifications or details regarding its exact performance. Therefore, that which is incumbent upon man is to do anything which is an instance of kindness and altruism to his parents. Allah has not placed limitations on this instance and has left it to retain its literal meaning.

This is opposed to those instances that Allah has categorized as part of 'the reality of the shari'ah' like the five daily prayers, hajj, fasting and other issues that pertain to submission and servitude ['ubudiyyah]. These are instances where we can not of our own accord add limits and conditions, but have to follow the limits and conditions which Allah has placed on them up to the Day of Resurrection.

However, as regards details which are outside the essence of that action, we are at liberty to do as we wish, like when deciding in which place we would like to perform our prayers, unless we know that there is a particular prohibition on a particular place. In Islamic jurisprudence, this is called 'reasonable and logical choosing' [takhyir-e 'aqli].

6. Desecration of fundamentals of Islam and pillars of the shari'ah

The doubters say that if those things pertaining to the laws of Islam are entrusted to people to decide, it will lead to irreverence [hatk-e hurmat] and insult to the foundations of Islam as well as the pillars of the shari'ah. It is clear that this is not compatible with the lofty aims and teachings of Islam.

Response

The literal meaning of hatk (the Arabic term for dishonor and violation), is tearing the veil of modesty or the covering over a hidden affair.²⁰ In Islam, the intended meaning is attempting to discover the weak points of Muslims.

Regarding the above scepticism, we agree that allowing people to freely decide issues of the shari'ah, such as issues and duties that are restricted, will doubtlessly lead to violating the honor of religion and the shari'ah and result in the foundations of Islam being held in mockery

and scorn.

However, in instances where the reality of the shari'ah are not stipulated by the Divine Legislator, the duty of identifying the applicability of a general instance to individuals has been left to the wisdom and the common sense of the people.

7. Some rites and rituals are harmful

Some people say that performing certain rites and celebrating certain signs of Allah will bring about a lot of harm for Islam and Muslims, especially holding mourning rites for Imam al-Husayn (as) the performance of which necessitates bearing a lot of sorrow and grief. They say that, according to the laws of Allah, repelling harm by whatever means is incumbent upon man.

Response

Regarding religious rites whose general instances are not from the category of restricted instances, we apply it in such a way that will not lead to unlawful acts. Non-confined instances consist of such issues as respect for one's parents.

They can only be applied on the meaning that verifies and ascertains the general instance. This is because we do not claim that in general and in every circumstance every instance of non confinement is applicable to every meaning.

In other words, that meaning has not been particularly prohibited. On the contrary, it has been specifically made lawful or encompassed in a general law. Otherwise, what harm can holding mourning ceremonies and explaining Islamic laws pose for Islam?

8. Ridiculing the shari'ah

Some say that entrusting the application of the shari'ah in some instances to common sense will result in deriding and making fun [istihza'] of the shari'ah. And because it is incumbent upon every Muslim to protect the honor of the shari'ah, it is therefore clear that the issue of applying the shari'ah in all its aspects should be entrusted to none other than Allah.

Response

Making fun of something is of several kinds:

1. Derision which is not right and so null and void

This type of istihza' is not of concern because it involves mockery of something that is right and just in one ideology but misunderstood by those of other ideologies. For instance, sometimes people of other religions or ideologies ridicule or sneer at Islamic acts of servitude like prayer. This type of derision does not prove any deficiency or defect in the believers or in Islam itself.

2. Customary derision

This type of derision is a result of social differences in different environments and common

practices that pertain to them.

The actions of every group of people depend on their interpretation of their environment, but it is always possible to find other groups of people who understand things in a very different way. However, these differences should not make us prohibit the application of what we understand to be the truth.

3. Derision in a true sense

Some kinds of derision have true aspects and will therefore lead to true violation of the honor of the shari'ah and the religion. However, reason is capable of perceiving this kind of derision, because it is a matter of distinguishing decency from indecency. Therefore, in instances where the application of the general instance leads to real derision and scorn, we condemn and forbid such practices.

References

1. Mubahahlah was the day when the Noble Prophet (s) received orders from his Lord to challenge the Christians to come forward and engage in calling upon Allah to curse the liars. The Prophet was ordered to come with his near ones and the Christians too were supposed to bring their near ones. The Prophet came with al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Fatimah and 'Ali. The Christians changed their minds about engaging in this encounter and backed down. The Qur'an says, "But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say, Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars." (Surat Al 'Imran 3:61) [Trans.]

2. The day that Imam 'Ali (as) was appointed as the Prophet's successor. [Trans.]

3. Hira' is the name of a cave where the Noble Prophet (s) used to go on retreat for meditation before being appointed to the prophethood. It was actually while he was in the cave of Hira' when the first revelation from Allah was revealed to him: "Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man from a clot.

Read and your Lord is Honourable, who taught (to write) with the pen, taught man what he knew not." (Surat al-'Alaq 96:1-5) [Trans.]

4. Surat al-Ma'idah 5:2.

5. Surat al-Hajj 22:32.

6. Surat al-Hajj 22:36.

7. Surat al-Baqarah 2:158.

8. Surat al-Baqarah 2:198.

9. Surat al-Hajj 22:27-30.
 10. Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) 9:32.
 11. Surat al-Hajj 22:32.
 12. Surat al-Nur 24:36.
 13. Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) 9:40.
 14. Surat al-Nisa' 4:141.
 15. Kitab al-'Ayn, vol. 1, p. 251.
 16. Sihah al-Lughah, vol. 2, p. 699.
 17. Qamus al-Muhit, vol. 2, p. 60.
 18. Mu'jam Maqa'is al-Lughah, vol. 3, pp. 193-194.
 19. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 12, p. 56.
 20. Sihah al-Lughah
-
9. Surat al-Hajj 22:27-30.
 10. Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) 9:32.
 11. Surat al-Hajj 22:32.
 12. Surat al-Nur 24:36.
 13. Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) 9:40.
 14. Surat al-Nisa' 4:141.
 15. Kitab al-'Ayn, vol. 1, p. 251.
 16. Sihah al-Lughah, vol. 2, p. 699.
 17. Qamus al-Muhit, vol. 2, p. 60.
 18. Mu'jam Maqa'is al-Lughah, vol. 3, pp. 193-194.
 19. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 12, p. 56.
 20. Sihah al-Lughah