39189 - Is a woman who puts her hair on the side included among those mentioned in the hadeeth about “maa’ilaat mumeelaat”

the question

Is what is meant by the women who are maa’ilaat in the hadeeth gathering the hair and putting it to one side?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Imam Muslim narrated in his Saheeh that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There are two types of the people of Hell whom I have not seen, men with whips like the tails of cattle with which they strike the people, and women who are clothed yet naked, maa’ilaat mumeelaat walking with an enticing gait (or turning away from righteousness and leading others astray) with their heads like the humps of camels leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise nor smell its fragrance.”

With regard to the phrase maa’ilaat mumeelaat, there are four opinions among the scholars:

1 – That they turn away (maa’ilaat) from chastity and righteousness, i.e., they commit sins and wrong deeds, like those who do immoral actions or fall short in performing obligatory duties such as prayers etc.

And mumeelaat means that they lead others astray and call them to evil and corruption. So by their actions and words they lead others to corruption and sin and they commit immoral actions because of their lack of faith or weakness of faith.

2 – That maa’ilaat refers to their enticing walk and mumeelaat refers to the movement of their shoulders.

3 – That they incline towards men and lead them astray with what they show of their beauty and

adornments etc.

4 – That they style their hair in the manner of prostitutes and style other women’s hair in the same manner.

See Sharh al-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim, 14/110

With regard to styling the hair, this means parting the hair in such a manner that there is more hair on one side than on the other. This was the sign of a prostitute during the Jaahiliyyah.

Some of the scholars are of the view that the hairstyle of the prostitute is what is meant by the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) “maa’ilaat mumeelaat”, but Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said: The correct view is that what is meant by al-maa’ilaat is those who turn away from what is enjoined upon them of modesty and religious commitment, and al-mumeelaat means those who turn others away from that.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said: maa’ilah in a general sense refers to anyone who turns away from the Straight Path, in her clothing, appearance, speech etc. And mumeelaat refers to those who turn others away, by using things which cause temptation, until people turn towards them.

With regard to gathering the hair together and putting it on one side, Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen said: The Sunnah is to part the hair in the middle, from the forelock at the front of the head up to the top of the head, because the hair has directions to the front and the back and to the right and the left. So the kind of parting that is prescribed in Islam is in the middle of the head. As for parting it on the side, this is not Islamically acceptable, because it may entail imitation of non-Muslims and it may also be included in the meaning of the hadeeth in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There are two types of the people of Hell whom I have not seen, men with whips like the tails of cattle with which they strike the people, and women who are clothed yet naked, maa’ilaat mumeelaat walking with an enticing gait (or turning away from righteousness and leading others astray) with their heads like the humps of camels leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise nor smell its fragrance.”

Some of the scholars interpreted the phrase al-maa'ilaat al-mumeelaat as referring to those women who style their hair in such a way that there is more hair on one side or who style the hair of others in that manner, but the correct view is that what is meant by al-maa'ilaat is those who turn away from what is enjoined upon them of modesty and religious commitment, and mumeelaat means those who turn others away from that.

Parting the hair on the side was forbidden by some scholars on the grounds that it is imitation of kaafir women.

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah 17/126:

With regard to parting the hair on the side, that is an imitation of kaafir women, and it is proven from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that it is forbidden to imitate the kuffaar. End quote.

If we assume that parting the hair on the side, for example, was the sign of kaafir women or immoral women at one time, then that ceased to be the case and this became widespread among Muslim women, and no one would think that the one who does that is a kaafir or immoral woman, then in that case it is no longer regarded as imitation of the kuffaar, so it is not haraam.

Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath (1/307), when discussing al-mayaasir al-arjawaan, which was a small pad or pillow that a horse-rider places beneath him, which was a custom of the non-Arabs: If we say that this is not allowed because it is an imitation of the non-Arabs, then this is for a religious purpose. But if that was one of their symbols at that time, when they were kuffaar, but it is no longer unique to them, then the idea of imitation no longer applies and it is no longer makrooh, end quote.

He also said, refuting those who regarded wearing the taylasaan (a shawl-like garment worn over the head and shoulders) as imitation of the kuffaar, because it is the clothing of the Jews as mentioned in the hadeeth of the Dajjaal: It was appropriate to quote the story of the Jews as evidence at the time when the taylasaan was unique to them, but that is no longer the case, so nowadays it is one of the things that are permissible. Fath al-Baari, 10/274.