192671 - Watching animated movies and shows that contain matters contrary to Islamic belief or associate others with Allah

the question

I want to ask about the ruling on watching some anime productions, such as Naruto, seeing that they contain some matters that are contrary to Islamic belief, such as reviving the dead.

Does the sin of watching these productions reach the level of disbelief (kufr)? Or does this ruling apply only to one who accepts and is content with that disbelief?

Detailed answer

Anime is a Japanese word referring to a specific type of cartoon or animated movie, or to a specific technique of making cartoons, in which many shots are based on zooming in and out on a single fixed (non-moving) image to give an impression of movement, in contrast to traditional cartoons which are based on hundreds of different images that vary slightly from one another so as to form a segment of movement.

In principle, anime is no different in context and ruling from other kinds of cartoons and animated movies. On our website we have discussed these productions in detail, and highlighted some of the positive and negative effects they may have on young people. Please see fatwas no. 71170 and 112018 .

To sum up, it is not possible to give one shar'i ruling on all cartoons and animated productions, because they vary with regard to storyline, the messages they convey and what they contain. Moreover, they vary in their impact on children and whether they motivate them to acquire good or bad characteristics. Hence each movie is subject to its own particular ruling, after it is studied and critiqued by specialists in sharia, education and psychology.

We have previously quoted some rulings on some of these productions, after studying and critiquing them. You can see the outcome of these studies in the following fatwas: 115149.

We have not researched in detail the issue of the famous anime show Naruto, the episodes of which number in the hundreds, because that would require some researchers to spend a long time examining the show, the values it promotes and the contents of its story. However, we may mention, on the basis of our discussion on what we have mentioned in previous answers, some general guidelines and rules to help the researcher to determine the shar'i ruling on any of these shows that he watches, for there are many of these shows. General guidelines give researchers the ability to work out the shar'i ruling on any one of these movies and shows.

One of these guidelines that we want to explain and highlight here is the importance of restricting or controlling the fantasy elements in anime productions or cartoons in such a way that they do not contradict Islamic beliefs, such as reviving the dead, witchcraft, knowledge of the unseen, and the like. This is something that we have referred to in previous fatwas: 1107, and 115294.

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said – after mentioning the prohibition on witchcraft, soothsayers and other kinds of charlatanry –: [and it is also haram] to watch one who performs any of those actions, as is quite obvious, because that is helping in sin. Moreover, I read in the fatwas of [an-Nawawi] a clear statement to that effect. The saheeh hadith, "Whoever goes to a fortune teller, no prayer will be accepted from him for forty days" also supports that." (Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj 8/62).

Imam ar-Ramli (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It should be understood that it is haram to watch such haram things, because that is helping them in their haram actions.

End quote from Haashiyat ar-Ramli 'ala Asna al-Mataalib (4/344).

Having said that it is haram to watch shows and movies that contain witchcraft, or beliefs and actions that involve disbelief and falsehood, simply watching them does not reach the level of disbelief (kufr), so long as there is no indication that the person who is watching is pleased with or accepts the disbelief that it contains.

And Allah knows best.