

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
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20015 - Ruling on circumcision

the question

What is the ruling on circumcision? What is the ruling on what some people do, where they flay the penis or the pubic area?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Circumcision is one of the characteristics of the fitrah (the natural state of man), and it is one of the symbols of the Muslims, because it is narrated in al-Saheehayn that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'The (characteristics of) the fitrah are five: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, trimming the moustache, cutting the fingernails and plucking the armpit hairs.'" So he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) started with circumcision and said that it is one of the characteristics of the fitrah.

Circumcision as prescribed by Islam involves cutting the foreskin covering the glans of the penis only. Those who flay the skin surrounding the penis or flay the entire penis, as is done in some savage countries, and claim in their ignorance that this is the circumcision prescribed in Islam, this is nothing but something prescribed by the Shaytaan and made attractive to the ignorant, and it is a torment to the one who is circumcised. It goes against the Sunnah of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the Islamic sharee'ah which is based on ease and which enjoins preservation of life.

It is haraam for a number of reasons, including the following:

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1-The Sunnah mentions cutting off the foreskin covering the glans of the penis only.

2-This is torture and mutilation, and the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade mutilation and torture of dumb beasts, committing outrages upon them or cutting off their limbs. It is more appropriate that tormenting the sons of Adam should be more forbidden, and a more serious sin.

3-This is contrary to the humanity and kindness encouraged by the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he said, "Allaah has decreed humanity in all things."

4-This may lead to disease or death of the one who is circumcised, and that is not permissible because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"and do not throw yourselves into destruction"

[al-Baqarah 2:195]

"And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another)"

[al-Nisa' 4:29]

Hence the scholars stated that it is not obligatory to circumcise an adult if there is the fear of any of these things happening to him.

With regard to bringing men and women together on a certain day to attend the circumcision and parade the child uncovered in front of them, this is haraam, because it involves uncovering the 'awrah which Islam dictates should be covered, and forbade us to uncover it.

Similarly, mixing between men and women on this occasion is not permitted, because of the fitnah (temptation) involved and because it goes against the pure sharee'ah.