

34958 - Ruling on participating in satellite channels for the purpose of da'wah

the question

What is the ruling on participating in satellite channels for the purpose of da'wah?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Calling people to goodness is one of the central issues of Islam, because it is the basic means of spreading Islam and achieving justice, whether that is done by enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, or by setting a good example. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam), enjoining Al-Ma’roof (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:104]

Ibn Katheer said: “What is meant by this verse is that there should be a group from among this ummah that is devoted to this purpose, even though that is obligatory upon each individual, each according to his means. It was narrated in Saheeh Muslim that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘Whoever among you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand [by taking action]; if he cannot, then with his tongue [by speaking out]; if he cannot, then with his heart [by at least hating it and feeling that it is wrong] - and that is the weakest of faith.’”

The virtue of doing this for the purpose of da'wah is almost without parallel. Allaah says

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(interpretation of the meaning):

“And who is better in speech than he who [says: ‘My Lord is Allaah (believes in His Oneness),’ and then stands firm (acts upon His Order), and] invites (men) to Allaah’s (Islamic Monotheism), and does righteous deeds, and says: ‘I am one of the Muslims’”

[Fussilat 41:33]

It goes without saying that whatever a person undertakes to do must have ways and means, so as to achieve the desired goal.

The means come under the same rulings as the ends; so the means of doing something haraam is also haraam, and the means of doing something obligatory is also obligatory, and so on.

See al-Furooq by al-Quraafi, 144.

So the means to a legitimate end must also be legitimate. Da’wah needs means in order to convey the message to those who are accountable; those means include setting a good example, speaking good words from the minbar, debating, writing, etc.

“Every means that helps to achieve the goals of da’wah may be used, so long as it is not haraam.”
Al-Mawsoo’ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaitiyyah, 20/332.

Many media and means of communication have appeared in modern times, starting with newspapers and magazines, then radio, then television, telephones, telegraphs and fax machines, and most recently the Internet. So it has become possible to view live transmissions of events and engage in live debates with people from the opposite end of the earth.

The (materially) developed world has begun an intense competition in this means of communication in order to gain a greater influence in the process of globalization and each nation is trying to impose its civilization (intellectual and material).

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The Muslim world is in state of shock and is dazzled by all this progress, and the Muslims differ in their responses to this new state of affairs. Some of them are eager to embrace this civilization without reservation, out of admiration for it.

Some of them have chosen to ignore it and reject it, believing that this is the appropriate attitude to have.

Some of them have chosen to study it vigilantly and to interact with it in a cautious manner. You, my brother, know full well that the first and second attitudes are not wise.

The right attitude is the third one.

As Shaykh Muhammad al-Ameen al-Shanqeeti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

“Our attitudes towards western civilization are limited to four kinds, to which there is no fifth:

- 1 - Ignoring this civilization, both good and bad.
- 2 - Adopting it in full, both good and bad.
- 3 - Adopting its bad things and rejecting its good things.
- 4 - Adopting its good things and rejecting its bad things.

The first three options are undoubtedly wrong; one of these options is undoubtedly right, and that is the last one.”

Adwa' al-Bayaan, 4/382.

In the light of this introduction, we will now move on to discussion of the media satellites and radio stations, whether in Arabic or other languages, and whether they are cultural, or sporting, or advertising, or artistic, etc., or they are general and not specialized.

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The persistent question which arises among those who have a sense of protective jealousy and pride in their religion, be they scholars, seekers of knowledge, educated people or common folk is: to what extent is it Islamically acceptable to interact positively with these media (TV and radio channels), by taking part in debates, discussions, fatwas etc. Is that allowed in Islam or not? What is the evidence for that?

Before we embark on this discussion, we must note an important point, which is that we will come across an old dispute about radio and TV, and we will not pay any attention to the view that rejects them and considers them to be unacceptable and idle entertainment, or objects to the use of images in TV.

I say we will ignore that and accept the view of those who say that they are ordinary means that it is possible to use them in a beneficial way without doing something haraam.

The ruling on participating in Arabic satellite channels etc:

It seems that there can be only two views on this issue:

1 - That it is not permissible to participate in them

2 - That it is permissible to participate in them

Some scholars do not discuss the matter in such a straightforward manner; rather they think that it is subject to further discussion, which we will highlight below.

I will try to discuss the various opinions and examine their evidence and analyze it as much as I can:

1 - The view that we should not participate:

The most prominent evidence for that is:

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1) That it is a means that is based on something false and that it is not primarily aimed at spreading virtue and proclaiming the word of Allaah, rather it was established for an unworthy purpose, and no matter how much people's aims may vary, they are almost all engaging in one thing which is unacceptable and idle entertainment.

Almost all these channels agree that women with their charms, beauty and speech are the most important means of attracting viewers.

Music and singing – whether eastern or western – is the other means of attracting viewers.

That is in addition from the obscene content, whether it is a debate, songs or even the news. This is even if it is free from sins that imply kufr.

As this is the case, then it is essentially corrupt.

(a) Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And when you (Muhammad) see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses (of the Qur’aan) by mocking at them, stay away from them till they turn to another topic. And if Shaytaan (Satan) causes you to forget, then after the remembrance sit not you in the company of those people who are the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers)”

[al-An’aam 6:68]

Al-Shawkaani said: What is meant is that if you see those who engage in a false conversation about our Signs by belying them or mocking them, then leave them and do not sit with them to listen to such a great evil, until they change the subject.

(b) Allaah says, describing the slaves of the Most Merciful (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those who do not bear witness to falsehood, and if they pass by some evil play or evil talk,

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they pass by it with dignity”

[al-Furqaan 25:72]

Al-Tabari said concerning this verse, after mentioning the views of the mufasssireen as to what was meant by al-zoor (falsehood): the most correct view is that it means those who do not bear witness to any kind of falsehood, whether it be shirk, singing, lying or anything else, everything that is to be called al-zoor (falsehood), because Allaah has described them in general terms as not bearing witness to any kind of falsehood.

Then he mentioned something similar with regard to the interpretation of al-laghw (evil play or evil talk).

(c) This place is like a gathering in which sacred limits are violated. Al-Nasaa’i narrated with a jayyid isnaad that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever believes in Allaah and the Last Day, let him not sit at a table where wine is being served.” See Fath al-Baari, 9/250.

These texts are applicable to these satellite channels etc, which poke fun at the word of truth and those who call others to the truth, as they may devote a few minutes to the truth amidst hours of falsehood.

“And leave alone those who take their religion as play and amusement, and whom the life of this world has deceived”

[al-An’aam 6:70]

2 - When people of virtue to get involved with them, they give them some measure of legitimacy, which is exploited by the owners and financers of these channels, and by those who listen to them and watch them, thus causing confusion for the simple-minded.

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2 - The view that it is permissible to participate

Those who say that it is permissible to participate quote some evidence:

(1) They say that we must differentiate between things which are haraam in and of themselves, such as wine, music, speaking falsehood and the things that lead to that, because not everything that may lead to haraam is necessarily haraam itself.

Al-Quraafi said in al-Furooq (no. 58): Note: the means that leads to something haraam may not be haraam itself, if it serves a certain purpose, such as giving money to a man who will consume it unlawfully so that he will not commit adultery with a woman if that cannot be warded off in any other way.

Ibn al-Qayyim said in l'laam al-Muwaqqi'een (2/137): What is forbidden in order to block the means that lead to evil may be permitted if it serves a greater purpose, such as allowing a man to look at a woman when proposing marriage to her, when bearing witness and for the purpose of medical examination or treatment.

Media and means of communication come under this heading. Indeed they are permissible in and of themselves, based on the fact that if the believers owned them and used them to spread the truth, there would be no doubt as to whether they are permissible. They would be like platforms and clubs that are used as a means for discussion and conveying the message.

The fact that they are used as a means of spreading doubts and provoking desires should not prevent righteous people from playing a role in them and urging the owners so that they can spread the truth, or some of it, as much as they can.

Imagine a cultural club or meeting place that many people go to, which opens its doors to all comers, and most of those who come are followers of falsehood. Is it not essential that people of virtue and daa'iyahs should also participate in that case?

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Indeed, and it seems that there is no great difference between these media and these clubs.

Perhaps what lends weight to this analogy is the fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to attend the gatherings and marketplaces of the people of Jaahiliyyah for the purpose of da'wah.

It was narrated that Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allaah SAW stayed in Makkah for ten years, following the people in their camps in 'Ukaaz and Mijannah, and during the Hajj seasons in Mina, saying, "Who will support me in conveying the message of my Lord, and Paradise will be his?" Narrated by Ahmad in al-Musnad, 3/322.

It was narrated that Rabee'ah al-Deeli said: I saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) during the Jaahiliyyah in the market of Dhu'l-Majaaz, saying, "O people, say Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah and you will prosper!" Its isnaad is hasan.

It is well known that 'Ukaaz, Mijannah and Dhu'l-Majaaz were marketplaces during the Jaahiliyyah where the Arabs used to gather and recite poetry and boast to one another, and they would even complete or dispute one another.

(2) It is well known from the biography of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that he used to mix with the mushrikeen and Jews and Christians for the purpose of calling them to Allaah (da'wah). Some mushrikeen or Jews would sit with him and debate with him, and he would recite Qur'aan to them.

The evidence for that is mutawaatir.

For example, Usaamah ibn Zayd (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that he rode behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) on a donkey to visit Sa'd ibn 'Ubaadah who was sick. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) passed by a gathering where 'Abd-Allaah ibn Ubayy ibn Salool was present, and in the gathering there was a mixture of

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Muslims, mushrikeen and Jews. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) greeted them, then he stopped and got down from his mount, called them to Allaah and recited Qur'aan to them. This was mentioned in a lengthy story that was narrated by al-Bukhaari in his Saheeh in his commentary on Soorat Aal 'Imraan, chapter 14.

If it is permissible to mix with the mushrikeen, despite the fact that that is sometimes accompanied by rejection or mockery of the truth, then the media may also be used as a platform for proclaiming the truth. There is no great difference between mixing with a kaafir and debating with him, in the sense that in both cases you will hear opposing views.

(3) It was narrated that 'Ubaadah ibn al-Saamit (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "We gave our oath of allegiance to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), pledging to hear and obey whether at times of ease or hardship, and not to compete with those in authority, and to do and speak the truth no matter where we were, without fearing the blame of anyone." Agreed upon.

Al-Nawawi said: The phrase "and to do and speak the truth no matter where we were, without fearing the blame of anyone" means, to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil at all times and in all places, with children and adults, and we will not compromise or fear anyone. Sharh al-Nawawi, 12/230.

If the Muslim is required to speak the word of truth wherever he is, then that includes the media and means of communication wherever they are.

(4) If we refer to the principle of pros and cons, then the benefits of participating in these media clearly outweigh any negative factors in several ways:

(a) Most of these media have a huge audience of Muslims and non-Muslims, male and female, from all levels of education. Some of them may hear the word of truth and respond to it and be

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influenced by it, so this is a great opportunity to convey the message.

(b) Not all these people are bad or averse to hearing the truth. Rather these media have penetrated the majority of homes and imposed themselves on the people, and people are exposed to all kinds of ideas and propaganda. So if righteous people play a role in the media then that will be equally effective.

(c) Although there may be some means of reform and da'wah in some Muslim countries, these means are not as attractive and influential as the media, which means that those who are influenced by them are few in number.

But the overwhelming majority is attracted to the satellites, and some people are even put off by the means of da'wah because they think it is addressed only to those who are religiously committed, and they do not count themselves as such.

It seems that the responsibility for conveying the message which is the duty of the scholars and thinkers dictates that they should utilize all possible permissible means, so that they can convey the message to all those people and thus free themselves from any blame. See al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 20/332.

Comparison

From this discussion it seems that the two points of view are very closely matched, but the second opinion seems to be more correct in the light of the reasons mentioned, and it is difficult to ignore them or regard them as insignificant.

With regard to the evidence for not allowing it, it is subject to further discussion:

·With regard to the verse:

“And when you (Muhammad) see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses (of

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the Qur'aan) by mocking at them, stay away from them till they turn to another topic.”

[al-An'aam 6:68 – interpretation of the meaning]

It may be said that if the caller to the truth can do his job without that being accompanied by any objectionable things such as mockery of religion, singing or music, or unacceptable advertisements, then doing that will not be counted as engaging in a false conversation (as mentioned in the verse), so it is not haraam. A similar response may also be offered to those who quote the hadeeth, “Whoever believes in Allaah and the Last Day, let him not sit with...”

·With regard to the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those who do not bear witness to falsehood...”

[al-Furqaan 25:72]

Those media are not in themselves falsehood, because they may be used for good or for evil, and it may be possible to set aside some time for good purposes that is not accompanied by any falsehood.

·With regard to the view that scholars and virtuous people taking part in satellite channels lends legitimacy to those channels:

This idea needs to be examined further, and that may vary according to the people involved and the circumstances.

We have reached the conclusion that the second opinion is more likely to be correct, for the reasons mentioned, but we should mention some guidelines and conditions here.

Among the most important of these in my view are:

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1)The time, place and circumstances should be suited to da'wah, and there should be nothing which is clearly forbidden according to sharee'ah such as musical instruments, the presence of made-up women, offensive advertising, propagation of false information about religion, and the like.

2)The daa'iyah or scholar should think it most likely that there will be benefits in his taking part. That should be based on evidence and circumstances, for example, he should feel that the people running the channel are keen to spread virtue, or feel that they are not content with their programming and are trying to change, or that be inviting him to take part they are trying to raise the standard of their content and improve the viewers' image of their channel, and so on.

3)The participants should be qualified and capable, both in terms of his personality and his knowledge. So the one who is weak in either of these regards should not be keen to participate, especially if that involves disputing with people who are opponents of Islam, because his weakness may undermine the cause of the truth that he wants to promote, and that may be attributed to Islam.

Based on this, the matter is not completely permissible, nor is it completely forbidden.

But I encourage every Muslim who feels protective jealousy and pride towards his religion not to place too many obstacles in the way of doing good. I remind him of the words of Imam Ibn Taymiyah, which he wrote in his book al-Hasbah about the attitude of some people towards doing good. He said: "Some people refrain from enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and fighting for the sake of Allaah so that submission will all be to Allaah and the word of Allaah will prevail, lest they fall into fitnah, but by refrain thus they fall into fitnah... This is the state of many religiously committed people who fail to do their duty of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and jihad so that submission will all be to Allaah and the word of Allaah will prevail, lest they be tempted with some kind of desires, when they have fallen into a fitnah which is

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greater than that which they are claiming to avoid. Rather what they must do is to do what is enjoined upon them and avoid that which is forbidden, and they are interconnected.

This is as much as I know, but over all those endowed with knowledge is the All-Knowing (Allaah). [cf. Yoosuf 12:76] If there is any shortcoming or error I hope that the readers will correct it.

And Allaah is the Source of strength.