

4160 - Ruling on images and designs on pieces of jewellery

the question

What is the ruling on the following:

1. Pieces of jewellery on which the Name of Allah or names such as 'Abd al-Rahmaan, 'Abd-Allah etc., are written?
2. Pieces of jewellery on which signs of the zodiac (such as Aries, Scorpio, Libra, etc.) appear, whether they are imprinted or appear as a three-dimensional image that has a shadow? What is the ruling on praying wearing such items?
3. Pieces of jewellery on which the picture of a head appears – without the body?
4. Some pieces of gold which may be added to jewellery on which there is a picture of a man's profile, such as sovereigns bearing a profile of King George, etc.
5. Stars of David (Jewish stars) or crosses, or any other symbols that are connected to the Jews and Christians?
6. Gold rings that are designed specifically for men, which the shopkeepers say that they will not sell to Muslims?

Detailed answer

Firstly: it is not permissible to engrave aayaat from the Qur'aan or the Name of Allah on metals or stone, because this is not the purpose for which these aayaat were revealed, and because there is the fear that this would expose these aayaat and the Name of Allah to disrespect.

Secondly: using these signs of the zodiac is an idea that comes from jaahiliyyah and the Muslim is obliged to steer clear of this and of everything that could lead to a revival of these jaahili ideas. This is in addition to the fact that they involve pictures of animate beings. On this basis it is not permissible to make or collect jewellery that bears these images, or to pray wearing such items.

Thirdly and fourthly: the ahaadeeth which forbid images of animate beings are general in meaning and include all images which are called images of living beings. This also includes images of the head, so on this basis it is not permissible to make these pieces.

Selling and buying pictures of animate beings is not permitted, because it was reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Allah and His Messenger have forbidden the sale of alcohol, dead meat, pork and idols.”
(Agreed upon. Al-Bukhaari, 3/43; Muslim, 3/1207).

This prohibition exists also because it may lead to exaggerated ideas about those who are represented in the pictures, as happened in the case of the people of Nooh. In Saheeh al-Imaam al-Bukhaari, it is reported that concerning the aayah (interpretation of the meaning), “And they have said: ‘You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwaa’, nor Yaghooth, nor Ya‘ooq nor Nasr” [Nooh 71:23], Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “These were the names of righteous people among the people of Nooh. When they died, the Shaytaan inspired their people to set up stone altars in the places where they used to sit, and these were named after them. So they did this, but they did not worship them. But when that generation died and knowledge was lost, the worship of these people began.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6/73). And there are many other texts which also forbid making and using images of living beings.

This applies to anything that is in the form of an animate creature. With regard to items on which there are pictures of animate beings, whether those items are made of gold, silver, paper, fabric or are tools, if they are circulated among people in order to be hung on walls etc. in a manner which is not considered disrespectful, then it is haraam to deal in them, because of the comprehensive nature of the evidence which states that making images is haraam. But if the item on which there is an image is to be used in a manner that implies disrespect, such as a tool used for cutting, a carpet that will be stepped on, a pillow that will be slept on, etc., then this is permissible, because of the report narrated in al-Saheehayn from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), in which she said that she hung up a curtain on which there were images, and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) tore it down. She said: I cut it

up and made two pillows out of it, and he used to recline upon them. According to a version narrated by Ahmad: I cut it up and made two cushions out of it, and I saw him reclining on one of them and there was an image on it. (al-Bukhaari, 6/103, 214, 247; Muslim, 3/1168-1169, no. 2107). We should note that making images of animate beings is haraam and such images should not be used in crafts, on clothing or in anything else, because of the evidence referred to above.

Fifthly: it is not permissible to make jewellery that bears the symbols of kufr, such as crosses and stars of David. It is not permissible to buy or sell such items.

Sixthly: it is not permissible to sell gold rings which are made specifically for men if they are going to wear them. The shopkeepers' comments that they will not sell them to Muslims is no excuse, because they are in a Muslim country, and whoever lives in a Muslim country should not deal in anything except that which has been permitted by the pure sharee'ah of Islam. This argument is like the argument of the one who sells alcohol and says that he will only sell it to the kuffaar, because gold rings are haraam for men.