7850 - Women wearing perfume when they attend the mosque

the question

We have noticed at Taraaweeh prayers that some women come to the mosque wearing perfume that has such a strong fragrance that men can smell it if they walk behind or beside them. Some women tried to advise them, but they said that they wore perfume when coming to the mosque out of respect for the mosque. What is the ruling on this?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The point of reference for Islamic rulings must be the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, not one's own opinion, mood, desire or ideas about what is nice. Concerning this very issue many reports have been narrated which strictly forbid this (women wearing perfume when they go out). These reports include saheeh ahaadeeth in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade women to wear perfume when they go out of their houses:

1. Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari said: the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Any woman who puts on perfume then passes by people so that they can smell her fragrance, is an adulteress."

2. Zaynab al-Thaqafiyyah reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any one of you (women) goes out to the mosque, let her not touch any perfume."

3. Abu Hurayrah said: the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Any woman who has scented herself with bakhoor (incense), let her not attend 'Ishaa' prayers with us."

4. Moosa ibn Yassaar said that a woman passed by Abu Hurayrah and her scent was overpowering. He said, “O female slave of al-Jabbaar, are you going to the mosque?” She said, “Yes,” He said, “And have you put on perfume because of that?” She said, “Yes.” He said, “Go back and wash yourself, for I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: ‘If a woman comes out to the mosque and her fragrance is overpowering, Allah will not accept any prayer from her until she goes home and washes herself.’”

The reason for this prohibition is quite clear, which is that women’s fragrance may cause undue provocation of desires. The scholars also included other things under this heading of things to be avoided by women who want to go to the mosque, such as beautiful clothes, jewellery that can be seen, excessive adornments and mingling with men. See Fath al-Baari, 2/279.

Ibn Daqeeq al-‘Eed said:

This indicates that it is forbidden for a woman who wants to go to the mosque to wear perfume, because this causes provocation of men’s desires. This was reported by al-Manaawi in Fayd al-Qadeer, in the commentary on the first hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah quoted above.

Having examined all this saheeh evidence, there can be no room for debate or argument. Muslim women have to understand the seriousness of the issue and the sin involved in going against this shar’i ruling. They should remember that they are going out to seek reward, not to fall into sin. We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound.

By the way, we recently read that biologists have discovered a sexual gland in the nose, i.e., there is a direct connection between the sense of smell and the provocation of desire. If this is true, then it is one of the signs that prove even to the kuffaar how precise are the rulings of this sharee’ah which came to preserve chastity and to block the ways that lead to immorality.