13633 - Ruling on making partial image in cases of necessity

the question

What is the ruling on making images, and is there is difference between a three dimensional image and other kinds of images such as photographs, or between pictures showing a complete image of a person and pictures which show only the face and chest and what is around them?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is clear that image-making is one of the blameworthy actions of the jaahiliyyah which Islam came to oppose. It is well established from clear, saheeh mutawaatir ahaadeeth that it is not allowed, and that the one who does this is cursed and is warned of torment in Hell, as in the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Abbaas which is attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “Every image maker will be in Hell, and a soul will be given to every image which he made so that it might torment him in Hell.” (Narrated by Muslim).

This applies to all images of animate created beings, humans and others. There is no difference between three-dimensional and other images, whether they were taken with cameras or produced by painting, engraving or other methods, because of the general meaning of the ahaadeeth.

Whoever claims that photographs are not included in the general prohibition or that the prohibition applies only to three-dimensional images and those that cast a shadow is making a false claim, because the ahaadeeth concerning that are general in meaning. There is no differentiation between one kind of image and another. The scholars have clearly stated that the prohibition applies to photographs and other kinds of pictures, such as Imaam al-Nawawi, al-Haafiz ibn Hajar and others. The hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah concerning the story of the curtain is clear, and what it indicates is that an image which is on a curtain is not three dimensional, rather it is a kind of drawing on cloth, but despite that the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)

counted it as trying to match the creation of Allaah.

But if the image is originally incomplete, such as a head-and-shoulders picture, etc., and there is removed from the picture that without which is could not live, then it may be understood from the comments of many of the fuqahaa' that this is permissible, especially if there is a need for such partial pictures. Whatever the case, one has to fear Allaah as much as one can, and avoid that which Allaah and His Messenger have forbidden.

"And whosoever fears Allaah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine"

[al-Talaaq 65:2-3 – interpretation of the meaning]