Islamic Distinctiveness and Prohibition of Imitation of Non-Muslims: A Rational Review

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Abstract:
This study is an attempt to present the Islamic direction for Muslims on prohibition of imitating non-Muslims in the context of cultural fusion and exchange in this global village especially after the scientific developments. Islam has its own traditions and core values and demands its followers to adhere to it firmly in every sphere of life. In this article, the logical reasonings about the prohibition of imitation of infidels has been described in detail. What are the reasons why a Muslim individual cannot adopt the ways and methods of others? Many renown scholars opine that the prohibition of imitation or resemblance with infidels is not correct in terms of wisdom while some other scholars claim that wisdom never prevents resemblance with other individuals, groups, and entities. The answer to such doubts is given in this paper and it is stated that common sense not only prevents imitation with non-Muslims, but common sense shows that every nation has its own culture and civilization that is why wisdom dictates to avoid or refrain from the imitation with other people. Every intelligent person follows the ways and culture of his own nation and he never follows the ways of any other nation. The intellect claims that the one who follows the ways of other people is not called a wiseman. According to wise people, the wise one is the one who follows the ways of his people. In this paper, such questions, objections and queries has been answered in the light of logics and Islamic Shariah.

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Keywords: *Logic, Muslim, Imitation, Infidels, Non-Muslims, Culture, Civilization.*

Introduction

Imitation of non-Muslim has never been an issue of contention between the Muslims in early ages of Islam. All the companions of the Holy Prophet and Holy Prophet himself strictly avoid to imitate or resemble non-Muslims. But, after the golden era of Islam or after the demise of the companions of the Holy prophet, when Muslims reached in other continents and interacted with other communities, they had the opportunity to live with modern civilization and nations of the world especially Iran and Rome the two superpowers of the world at that time. The issue aroused and settled by the Jurists in the light of Quran and Sunnah. Now a days, in the age of post modernism, this issue once again aroused in Muslim world. But this time, the whole scenario is different. The entire community wants to settle the issue on logical basis apart from religious guidance too. Because, the philosophical interpretations are more reasonable in this day and age. In this study, the imitation of non-Muslims has been described in the light of logics and wisdom.

Definition of Imitation

The word Imitation is derived from Latin word imitation which means “the action of using someone or something as a model or a thing intended to simulate or copy something else[1]” It is a behavior whereby an individual observes and replicates another's behavior. Imitation is also a form of that leads to the "development of traditions, and ultimately our culture. It allows for the transfer of information (behaviors, customs, etc.) between individuals and down generations without the need for genetic inheritance. The word imitation can be applied in many contexts, ranging from animal training to politics. The term generally refers to conscious behavior; subconscious imitation is termed mirroring. The word Mimesis, is Greek which means “imitation”. Plato and Aristotle spoke of mimesis as the re-presentation of nature. According to Plato, all artistic creation is a form of imitation: that which really exists (in the “world of ideas”) is a type created

[1] . https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/ accessed on 31-07-2024

by God; the concrete things man perceives in his existence are shadowy representations of this ideal type. Therefore, the painter, the tragedian, and the musician are imitators of an imitation, twice removed from the truth. Aristotle, speaking of tragedy, stressed the point that it was an "imitation of an action"—that of a man falling from a higher to a lower estate. [2]Imitation is called Tashabbuh in Arabic. It is an Arabic word that comes from Shabah and it means to be similar, to be like, to be mixed with each other, to be of the same attribute, or to imitate. If something is similar to another thing, then it will be said that this thing is similar to it or similar to it. Its plural is اَشْبَاهٌ. Arabs speak when one thing is similar to another thing, then they say that this person is similar to his father in doing wrong, or similar to his mother. According to Ibn Arabi, this word is used when a person is humble or weak. Anything belonging to a non-Muslim that is special to him in such a way that if a Muslim uses it, it would be a deception for him to be a non-Muslim is called Imitation. [3] Leaving one's reality and one's form and existence and getting integrated into the reality and its form and existence of another nation is called Imitation. [4] We may conclude that imitation is intentionally or consciously copying of something else and if this is happened by chance then it will not be called imitation or resemblance.

Imitation according to Quran

There are so many verses about the prohibition of imitation with infidels.[5] In these verses it is clearly stated that Muslims should avoid imitating the infidels. Allah almighty mentions about the imitation of infidels:

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[2] . https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imitation accessed on 31-07-2024

[3] . See please: Allah Ditta, and Asmatullah. 2018. "Analytical Study of the Viewpoints of the Jurists about the Rulings of Imitation and Its Types". Journal of Islamic and Religious Studies 3 (1). Haripur, Pakistan:1-16. https://doi.org/10.36476/JIRS.3:1.06.2018.01.

[4] . Idress Ahmad Kandhalvi, Seerat Mustafa (Karachi:Kutab Khana Mazhari Gulshan Iqbal, N.D.) v. 3 p. 365

[5] . See please: Qadri, Dr. Allah Ditta, تشبہ بالکفار اور قرآنی تعلیمات:ایک تحقیقی جائزہ (Imitation of the Infidels and Quranic Teachings: A Critical Overview) (March 11, 2020). Al-Tafseer Biannual Research Journal Karachi, 2020, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3667604 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3667604

And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you, and you have no supporters other than Allah, then you should not be helped.[6]

That is why the Muslims should evade imitating the infidels.

Imitation according to Hadith

Many sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ provide guidance in this regard that Muslims should not imitate the disbelievers in any way. Whether these issues are related to the worldly matters or religion. Moreover, whether this problem is related to beliefs, worship, or daily life issues. Muslims have to refer to Quran and Sunnah for guidance. If a Muslim adopts the likeness of a non-Muslim, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, He who copies any people is one of them.[7]

Imitation of Non-Muslim: A Rational Guidance

The defects and flaws of imitation are obvious to every intellectual and intelligent person, because a Muslim who believes in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah will never want to adopt the ways of the misguided and deceitful people. But it is a rule that the people are more influenced by the rational argument instead of the traditional one. Shaikh Ashraf Ali Thānvī writes:

"The rational reason is that if a person who is confused about the problem of Imitation, at the time of the perfect ease, a female suit is presented in the general public and asked to wear it, I am sure that if they can do it, then do not hesitate to take the life of the supplicant. If the issue of imitation is not valid, then why is there so much anger and irritation expressed by asking for resemblance with a woman, when there is little difference from being suspicious with a Muslim. If there is displeasure because of disbelief, then there should be more honor and regard due to differences of religion than imitating infidels[8] .

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[6] . Al-Quran,

[7] . Sulaimān b. Ash'ath Abū Dāwūd, Sunan Abū Dāwūd(Beirūt: Al-Maktaba al Asriah, N.D.) Hadith No. 4031.

[8] Ashraf Ali Thānvī, Iṣlāḥ al-Rasūm, p. 38

Some people say that if there is one thing that removes the imitation, then the imitation is not effective, for example, if he wears a pant shirt and has a beard on his face, then because of this beard, he is not suspected of being a disbeliever. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, while clarifying the invalidity of the fact, writes: "If the attributes are similar, and there are hundred things of resemblance, if one is not, there will be no similarity. In the opinions of such people, the importance of Islamic Shariah is self-evident that they did not give due importance to it, but reasons and logics have also been left behind. As long as this acquitted person will not think that he is wearing a woman's dress from head to toe, skirt, mehndi on his hands and feet, only wearing a hat on his head, there will be no resemblance, that this small difference is enough to dispel the imitation. This is not but a crude illusion.

Rather, what is the need for a hat, along with this woman's clothes, put a beautiful Dupatta on the head and tie the braid, the mustache on the mouth will be enough to dispel imitation. Although every rational person will know such a person as a woman, but if he wears all the clothes of a man, rides on a horse and talks with a ring on his nose, then all the rational people will laugh at him and call him a shemale. Due to his one action, the people will ignore his clothes and weapons. Will any rational person agree to do this or anyone even accept to commit such an act? While imitation of a disbeliever is a thousand degrees higher in evil, malicious and sinful from imitation of a woman. May Allah Almighty guide the Muslims. Amen! And Allah knows best.".[9]

So, just as a Christian is distinguished from a Jew and an idolater by his characteristics of religion, a Jew is distinguished from a Christian by his national characteristics, an idolater is distinguished from a Christian and a Parsi by his specific polytheistic movements.In the same way, an Islamic person or a Muslim is different from a Christian, a Jew, a pagan, a Parsi, an atheist, and a Christian due to his specific religious beliefs and actions, and by believing in his distinguished Shariah and its commandments. The Muslim is distinguished from all other human beings in the same way. Just as the seeing is separated from the blind, light from darkness, sunshine from shadow, and the living from the dead. So as long as the qualities of

[9]. Ahmad Razā Khān Barelvī, Fatāwa Raḍawiyya. Lahore: Razā Foundation, 1423 A.H. V. 24 p. 551-52

the seeing are in the seeing, he cannot be blind, and as long as the qualities of light are in the light, it cannot become darkness, as long as the qualities of the sun are in the sun, it cannot be a shadow, and as long as the qualities of the living are in the living. He cannot be dead and likewise as long as a Muslim has the characteristics of a Muslim, he cannot be a disbeliever.

As long as the overall characteristics and signs of Islam are present in the nation, that nation will definitely remain distinct from any other nation. Finally, we reached the end of insight and the conclusion that characteristics of religion create characteristics of nations, and the remaining of these characteristics and forms is the remaining of religion and nation. If the same characteristics, norms or habits are removed or mixed or resembled with any other nation then the nation and religion are to be destroyed. We call this legislative intermingling and mixing and mingling, whether it is prominent in beliefs or actions, we can say that this is the imitation of others. One can say that this is the fact that when this matter has started in relation to religion, that relationship with religion could not be resolved again and finally the religion has been destroyed by imitation.

In the same way, the responsibility of the destruction of great nations and great religions is on the neck of this resemblance and imitation. The same suspicion deprived the Arabs of the light of the Abrahamic religion a few centuries ago, and when Umar bin Lahiy brought an idol from Syria and placed it in the Kaaba and laid the foundation of idolatry in the House of Allah. When idolatry was started in the house of Allah, polytheism began to spread. Due to suspicion of polytheists, germs of disbelief and polytheism spread throughout in Arabia, and these polytheists were called the polytheists of Mecca and not the followers of the Abrahamic religion, only because of imitation.

Shaikh Abdul Qadir Ropari writes about the reason of imitation: "It is a fact that sharing in sex or in any attribute has a special attraction within itself, which affects naturally or habitually, but also has the quality of conquering the brains. If you look broadly, you will know that sex is associated with sex in all animals, even an ant or an insect wants its own sex and is happy to live with it. That is why someone has said:

کند ھم جنس باہم پرواز، کبوتر با کبوتر باز با باز

The same sex flies together, pigeon by pigeon and bird by bird. This is the state of animals in general, because human beings are superior to all

creatures and because of the intelligence, they are distinguished from all other animals. Therefore, in addition to sexuality, there is also a great effect of sharing characteristics. Although sometimes the same process of attributes occurs in other animals too. This is a process. Therefore, in some genders, children are happy with children. If people of different characteristics are sitting in a crowd, then you will see that everyone will be inclined towards their own gender. An old man will look at the old man, if there is an English speaker, he will want to meet an English speaker. If there is a scholar of religion, he will pay attention to the scholar of religion. The good will be associated with the good and the bad with the bad.

If they are of different religions, each one will have a magnetic attraction towards his own religion, even the participation of the name alone will create passion. A Christian will keep his co-religionist even a Hindu chamar will also do the same thing. Therefore, when two people participate in an attribute, there will be an effect of this participation especially in their hearts, which will be a cause of attraction towards each other, even if two strangers of the same country see each other in a foreign country, will also feel courtesy for each other. Even if they want to meet each other, honor and religion will not stand in the way on this occasion. These things are observed day and night and the intellect also gives testimony to their correctness. Because when any attribute is found in a person, he will like it or dislike it.

If he likes, then when he sees the same attribute in another, he will surely be attracted towards him. As in a foreign country, a person is in a state of fear and loneliness. When he meets his fellow countrymen, a special feeling of pleasure takes place in his mind, which removes his fear and loneliness. Dress and manners also fall under the same principle. For example, the people who wear Gandhi's hat have a lot of respect for Gandhi, it is as if it is their distinction. If someone is careless and says that there is nothing wrong with Gandhi's hat, he is committing a double blunder. Today he likes this hat, tomorrow he will like something else. The time is not far that he will become the same as he likes. Because these things have their effect slowly like the sound of an ant. This is the reason that Hazrat Umar used to write to his nobles and generals:

ارتدوا و اتزروا وزیوا بزی العرب الاول

Wear a chador, tie a loincloth and adopt the style of the first Arab. The meaning was that it should not happen that today a little bit effects on the natures of commanders will become more on tomorrow. The result of

which is distance from Islam, that is why these words have been mentioned in a holy tradition. God Almighty says:

That is, don't ride like enemies, don't wear clothes like them, don't live in houses with them, otherwise you will also become my enemies like them.

لا تركبوا مراكب اعدائی و لا تلبسوا ملابس اعدائی و لاتسكنوا ساكن اعدائی فتكونوا اعدائی كما هم اعدائی[10]

Don't ride like my enemies, do not wear the clothes of my enemies, and do not live in the homes of my enemies, otherwise you will become my enemies like them.

Parents give money to their children out of love, which gives them such a lick that gradually their life is ruined. A little theft makes them more prone to theft. A little theft leads to a habit of stealing more. If he steals a little, he is tempted to commit more big thefts. In the same way, everything becomes a little too much. Those who like English clothes end up making a cross around their necks. He definitely hates the Islamic system, which is enough to kill a person.[11]

It is important to know the types of human actions in order to know which types of actions are subject to resemblance and imitation and which types of actions fall within the scope of justification or validity, but before discussing the types of human actions. It is meant to be refuted that Allah ﷻ also did not allow the possibility of resemblance in his various creative and developmental functions. Therefore, whatever creatures Allah created, even though they are different in shape, form, body, figure, and framework as well. They are similar in appearance, but they are very different from other members of their own species.

Look at the human being, billions of human beings have come, gone and exist in this world, but from the hair on the head to the feet, although they are all the same, two hands, two feet, two eyes, two ears, thirty-two teeth and a nose. etc. But despite this, the differences and variances between

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[10]. This is not the sayings of Holy Prophet peace be upon him, rather it is Israeli tradition and it is narrated by Hazrat Malik Bin Dinar. See: Ibn Hajar, Sheikh Shahabuddin Ahmad, 974 AH, Al-Zawājr an-Iqtrāf Al-Kabāyir, v.1 p. 25.

[11]. Hafiz Abdullah Muhaddith Roprī, Fatawa Ahl Hadith, AD 1964 according to 1384 AH, Idārah Aḥya al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyya D Block Satellite Town Sargodha, 1983. Vol. 2 pp. 578-81

them are not hidden from any person. Just look at the lines of the hands (fingerprints).

These random half-diagonal lines look the same to each individual, but thanks to the creation of Allah Almighty, even though these minor marks of the fingers are the same, they do not have the slightest resemblance to any other person. In this modern era, the identification of people with the help of these fingerprints is obvious to everyone. Likewise, the eyes, nose, ears and face are different from other people. That is why, different methods are being used by various firms to identify the people with the help of eyes or face for as well. Face lock or eyes lock technology being used in modern-day phones is also an example of this method.

When the Creator created the celestial bodies, he made each one different from the other, the stars from the planets, the moon from the sun, and the earth from the sky, and he did not make the earth the same, the desert from the field, the forest from the mountain. He also made the river different from the sea. That is Allah, the Exalted, has given each creature a separate identity and distinction, whether all these creatures belong to the same species or to different species, so the difference between a tree and a bush, grass and bamboo, donkey and a horse, a cat and a lion, a bird and an animal, animals and fossils, soil and stone, poison and antidote, sugar and vinegar, and honey and aloes is clear to every intelligent person and it is as evident as the sun of the day.

A wise person organizes these things in his daily life and takes them into consideration, then a wise person should also take care of these matters in his religious matters too. He should distinguish himself from the religious point of view as well.

Although Judaism, Christianity and Islam are three divine religions, but if you take a look at their individualities and distinctions, you will find that these three religions have different ways of worshiping, their places of worship are different. Their times are different, prayers are different, fasts are different, Eids are different, commands are different, guidelines are different, days are different, the books are different, the Shariah and prophets are also different. So, when God the Holy One wants and intends to have a separate identity from every creature, a Muslim also has to maintain his own separate identity despite these many similarities. This is the requirement of the Shariah.

So, when God the Holy One wants and intends to have a separate identity from each and every creature, a Muslim also has to maintain his own

separate identity despite these many commonalities. Allah, the Exalted, has distinguished the Muhammadan Ummah from other ummahs so much that Allah, the Exalted, will arrange it on the Day of Resurrection too. Therefore, it is narrated from Huẓayifah that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "My reservoir will be greater than the distance from Aden to Elah, and by Him in Whose Power is my life, I will drive away people from this reservoir as a man drives away alien camels from his own reservoir. The Companions said: O Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless you and grant you peace, will you recognize us? He said: Yes, you will come to me with shining bright faces and hands and feet because of the signs of ablution and this sign will not be in anyone except you.[12]

Maulana Idris Ahmad Kandhalvī writes that there is no other source of distinction among nations except national characteristics, unless these specific forms and characteristics are protected, the distinction of nations cannot remain. So, as long as the religious and social characteristics of a nation remain, that nation also continues to exist on the map of the world. When a nation abandons its characteristics and forms and adopts the characteristics of another nation and this nation assumes resemblance with another nation. Then, this nation has now perished and now has no particular existence left in the world.[13]

That is why the Shariah dictates that the Muslim nation should be distinguished and separate from other nations in appearance, it should also be distinguished in dress, and it should also be distinguished in appearance. Because apart from the external sign, there must also be a sign inside the particular body, so it is circumcision and beard, and that external sign is clothing. Without these two symbols, there can be no identification, neither is beard alone sufficient, because boys do not have beards, how will they be identified? Moreover, some other nations or non-Muslim peoples have beards, they cannot be identified by anything except their clothes. Resultantly, both clothing and beard are required for Islamic distinction. The prohibition of imitating infidels is not prejudice and narrow-mindedness, but for honor and modesty, with the aim of protecting the

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[12] . Muslim bin Ḥajjāj Al-Qushaīrī, Al-Ṣaḥīḥ (Dār Iḥīāʾ Al-Turāth Al-ʿArabī, Berūt), Hadīth No. 583.

[13] . Kandhlavi, Idris Ahmad, Sirat Mustafa, Volume III, Page 365

Islamic nation and the Muslim Ummah from the destruction of imitating others. Because a nation that does not protect its characteristics and distinctions does not deserve to be called a free, independent and autonomous nation. That is why in Islam, imitation with infidels is strictly prohibited. The Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) says, "Whoever imitates a nation is one of them."

Today, Muslims have neither wisdom nor honor. They are also ignorant of their religion and their intellect has also gone. They have started to follow the habits and norms of others by ruining their Islamic civilization. No wise person will accept the likeness and resemblance of his enemies, in the same way Allah, the Exalted, does not like that his friends and those who take his name, i.e., the Muslims, adopt the likeness of his enemies, i.e., the disbelievers, or do something with the intention and purpose of their similarity and likeness. Allah Almighty says:

وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ ۙ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ اَوْلِيَاۤءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ[14]

And do not incline towards the wrongdoers, lest the Fire should catch you, and you have no supporters other than Allah, then you should not be helped.

Islam is a perfect and complete religion and it has come as an annihilator of all laws and Shariah. Islam does not allow his followers to imitate the followers of defective and abrogated nations. Adopting the likeness of others is also against honor and dignity. Just as the reality of each nation and each nation is different, so is the appearance and personality of each one. Just as the reality of each nation and each Ummah is different, so is the appearance and nature of each one is different. In this materialistic world, appearance and complexion is the source of discrimination. Similarly, one nation is considered distinct and separate from another nation because of its appearance. Islam is a flawless and sound religion as it is independent and consistent in its beliefs and worships and is not subservient or imitative to anyone. In the same way, Islam is consistent and independent in its norms and habits and is not submissive or imitative to anyone else. It is not permissible in any government that the army of that empire can use the uniform of the enemy army or use the flag of the enemy government. A soldier who behaves like this will be considered a mutineer

[14] . Al-Quran, Surah Hūd, 11:113.

and will be decapitated. Similarly, the Muslims (the friends of Allah Almighty) will not be allowed to assume the form of non-Muslims (the enemies of Allah and friends of Satan), which would cause any kind of suspicion on the part of the onlookers. Suppose that a party revolts against the government and that party makes a distinctive dress or emblem, then the government will never allow its loyalists to resemble the rebel party. It is surprising that a British general has the right to criminalize the use of German or Russian uniforms because he is an enemy of Great Britain, but the Messenger of God does not have the right to criminalize the ways, habits, norms, customs and behavior of those enemies of God. Why not, whoever will resemble God's enemies and will wear the same clothes and their uniform, then he will undoubtedly be considered as one of the enemies of God's army.

Conclusion

Islam does not allow its followers to wear the clothes of humiliation and falsehood and to imitate them so as not to resemble them. In the Islamic Shariah, the prohibition of imitating the infidels is not based on prejudice, but on honor, modesty, and self-preservation. So, just as the reality of Islam is separated from the reality of disbelief, in the same way, Islam wants its followers to be separated from their enemies. In the Islamic Shariah, the prohibition of imitating the infidels is not based on prejudice, but on honor, modesty, and self-preservation. A nation cannot be called a nation unless its characteristics and distinctions are durable and permanent. In the same way, the means of protecting the Nation of Islam and the Islamic Ummah from disbelief and atheism is nothing but preserving the Islamic characteristics and distinctions and protecting it from the likeness of the infidels. The believer should be separated and distinguished from the enemy of God. It is not permissible for the loyalist of the government to resemble the enemies of the government and the rebels, and to have the same color and the same clothes.