

QUESTION:

Can the Scholars of the mighty religion Islam please advise on the following issue: I have colleagues at work who are homosexual and they ask me about the Islamic viewpoint on homosexuality. I tell them that homosexuality is a sin in Islam. I have heard other people argue to them that homosexuality should be treated as an illness. However the general rhetoric around this point is that people are trying to demonise Islam to say it is backwards and not conforming to the times we are living in.

Lots of these homosexuals/non-Muslims say that Islam punishes homosexuality on earth. I have no knowledge and I'm failing to respond to them in manner that doesn't make Islam seem bad.

ANSWER:

All praises belong to Allāh, Creator Most Sublime Who is Uncreated. Who created mankind from a single male and female and made them into peoples and tribes that they may know one another. Everlasting peace and ceaseless blessings be upon our Master, Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ, upon his purified family, his esteemed companions, and whomsoever follows in his blessed footsteps until the last day.

As-Salāmu 'Alaykum wa-Raḥmatu'Llāh

Allāh ﷻ has said in the Qūr'ān:-

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! We have indeed created you from one man and one woman, and have made you into various nations and tribes so that you may know one another; indeed the more honourable among you, in the sight of Allāh, is one who is more pious among you; indeed Allāh is All Knowing, All Aware. [49:13]

And Allāh ﷻ has said in the Qūr'ān:-

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And among His signs is that He created spouses for you from yourselves for you to gain rest from them, and kept love and mercy between yourselves; indeed in this are signs for the people who ponder. [30:21]

Primarily, in light of the aforementioned two verses of the Qūr'ān and according to the teachings of Judaism and Christianity, the origin of humankind is a result of the union between Adam, the first man, and his wife Eve, the first woman (upon them both peace).

It is the heterosexual union between man and woman for the purpose of procreating that has guaranteed the existence of our species since the dawn of man. It is this very relation that Islām advocates as legitimate, within the threshold of marital fidelity, for the continuation of humankind on earth and the inhabiting of it. All other relationships, premarital, out of wedlock heterosexual and homosexual are therefore understood to be unlawful in Islām. Allāh ﷻ has said in the Qūr'ān:-

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوَاجَ إِنَّمَا كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا

And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way. [17:32]

Unlawful sexual relations are against the primary value system of permissible heterosexual relationships as the normative way for the continuation of legitimate progeny. All types of unlawful relations are impermissible in Islām and moreover are classified as enormities within all major world religions.

The question arises is Islām a homophobic religion? One must understand Islām does not single out homosexuality; rather Islām categorically censors all sexual relations as unlawful and therefore sinful except what occurs between husband and wife.

A person with a homosexual inclination can be an entirely observant Muslim as long as he or she does not act out that inclination, just as, a person with a desire to commit adultery or fornication can be an entirely observant Muslim as long as he or she does not act out that inclination. It is the acting upon that one is brought to task for and not the thought or inclination independently. In this regard the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ said:-

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَجَاوَزَ لِأُمَّتِي عَمَّا تُوسَّوَسُ بِهِ صُدُورُهَا . مَا لَمْ تَعْمَلْ بِهِ أَوْ تَتَكَلَّمْ بِهِ

“Allāh has forgiven my nation for the whispering of their hearts, so long as they do not act upon it or speak of it” [Sunan Ibn Majah].

As for such whispering or homosexual inclination, there is an ongoing debate whether this is to be attributed to nature or nurture. Irrespective of contemporary arguments that genes influence

us, there is no dispute in the nature of freedom and choice of an individual. The fundamental principles of the law do not change and if an individual makes active choices encroaching the divine law, whereby opting for homosexuality, a perversion of the communal norm of heterosexuality, then Islamically, punishment is expected. Unlawful sexual relations can only be censored and subsequently punished when/if the individuals are caught in flagrante delicto with witnesses. One may protest this is homophobic but in reality the same if not more severe punishment exists for the heterosexual couple engaging in public lewdness. This is also found within the British common law which dictates punishment for outraging public decency and any act contrary to the Public Order Act 1986 and also the Sexual Order Act 2003.

Some may argue, but the Islamic punishment is too severe. Know that there exists difference of opinion with regards to the severity of the punishment. Prior to presenting this, one must understand, Muslims are expected to respect the law of the land, to take measures that mitigate hatred, and to strive for peace and good relations. Yet this does not mean sacrificing their religious values. There exists a disparity between the sinner and the sin, with the latter being perceived as repugnant as it contravenes divine legislation and the former exhibiting primal urge to satisfy innate lust but channelled incorrectly.

As aforementioned, there is a difference of opinion for the punishment for open homosexuality. Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah ta'aala) the founder of the Hanafi school (mainstream Islamic legal school) presented the view that a discretionary punishment and not capital punishment is applicable for such an act. And this is the authoritative view of the school:-

يعزر ويحبس حتى يحدث توبة

“(For the one who is openly homosexual) discretionary punishment and jail until he is repents.”

[Mukhtasar Tawahi]

Those arguing that homosexuality is normal and must be accepted as a norm in today's society are only able to voice this opinion thanks to a very long line of heterosexual predecessors.

And Allāh ﷻ knows best.

Ustadh Abu Dihh'ya Asid Shafait