



Imagine receiving a box of Belgian chocolate truffles and Swiss chocolate pralines, tastefully wrapped and stylishly packaged. As you unwrap the box, the artwork emblazoned on the packaging catches your eye. On opening the box, your delight and excitement only increases as you see that each chocolate has been individually decorated and lies carefully nestled in its own niche, separated from the other chocolates so that it can maintain its unique flavour.

However, on biting into it, the old saying comes to mind, “All that glitters is not gold”, for the chocolate is stale. Not only is it stale – it is infested with weevils and worms! For all the hype and excitement generated by the beautiful appearance, it turned out that the internal was rotten and corrupt and was thus fit for only the trashcan.

Next, imagine that the same Belgian chocolate truffles and Swiss pralines were served to you and they were fresh and bug-free. However, this time around, it’s the packaging that’s disgusting. Instead of being individually wrapped and tastefully boxed, with care, hygiene and attention to detail, it is unceremoniously plopped into a filthy, dirt-encrusted packet, that is stained with streaks of dried oil and other unspeakable substances that previously leaked inside.

In this case, though the chocolate may be fine, the packaging is so disgusting that you would hesitate to even hold the packet.

Though this example may be a blatant hyperbole (exaggeration), it drives home a very important point – the inside AND the outside are BOTH important.

The hadeeth explains to us that Allah Ta’ala does not look at our appearance and wealth, but rather looks at our hearts and actions. (*Saheeh Muslim #6543*) Some people have misconstrued this to mean that they can dress as they please, and men can shave their beards,

as long as they have a clean heart and harbour no malice. However, this is INCORRECT.

The correct meaning of the hadeeth is that Allah Ta'ala does not judge us based on aspects such as our skin colour, height, physical beauty, etc. Hence, a person endowed with beauty and an unattractive person, a black person and a white person, a short and tall person – all will be beloved to Allah Ta'ala if their hearts are filled with taqwa and their lives conform to the sharee'ah. On account of one being more attractive or fairer in complexion, he will not have an advantage over the other in gaining the proximity of Allah Ta'ala, as these attributes are not the basis of acquiring the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.

This hadeeth does NOT mean that there are no laws and injunctions of sharee'ah that pertain to one's external appearance. Rather, there are many injunctions of sharee'ah that pertain to one's appearance, such as laws regarding one's hair (the impermissibility of women cutting their hair short, and men cutting their hair in different lengths, etc.) as well as laws regarding one's clothing and many other aspects. Therefore, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) warned us that the person who applies a tattoo to their skin is cursed, and informed us that black hair-dye is impermissible, and that trimming the nails is a sunnah of all the Ambiyaa ('alahimus salaam), etc.

We thus understand that just as it is necessary for our hearts to conform to Deen, it is also necessary for our external appearance to conform to the sharee'ah. Both are required for one to be a perfect Muslim. To merely dress in an Islamic manner and appear as a Muslim, while bereft of Islamic values and character, is to conform on the outside while being spoilt on the inside. As for the laws of Islam pertaining to one's external appearance, then it is only a person whose heart possesses the quality of submission before Allah Ta'ala who will ensure that his appearance conforms to the sharee'ah.

In other words, the appearance that we choose, through our dressing, etc. is linked to submission of the heart. Dressing is also an action, and hence Allah Ta'ala will look at our dressing and may judge us accordingly.

May Allah Ta'ala bless us all to be perfect Muslims from within and without, internally and externally, aameen.□□

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